

The dialectics of playwork:
A conceptual and ethnographic study of playwork
using Cultural Historical Activity Theory

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Abstract

This study offers an original analysis of contradictions inherent in playwork practice. It is ethnographic and political, using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), and taking an interpretivist and (post-) Marxist epistemological stance. Playwork's fundamental contradiction is that between understanding children's play as autotelic and self-organising on the one hand, and on the other seeking and accounting for public funding that requires services to address policy agendas. In CHAT terms, this is the dialectic between playwork's use value and exchange value.

Fieldwork data comprise participant observation in an urban open access Play Centre and semi-structured interviews both with the Play Centre playworkers and playworkers practising before the introduction of the 1989 Children Act. Such services were historically funded in deprived areas to keep children off the streets and on the straight and narrow. The Children's Fund, operational at the time of the fieldwork, was a contemporary equivalent within the totalising, future-focused 'risk and prevention' policy paradigm.

Playwork spaces were co-produced through a dialectical triad (Lefebvre, 1991) of adult planning (assuming outcomes), spatial practices (interventions) and lived moments of playfulness that both resisted adult intentions and gave rise to a hope that temporarily made life better. Open access playwork spaces were emotionally highly charged, both because of the nature of play itself – its exuberances and tragedies – and the children. This highlighted tensions between ideals of play as inherently good and the reality of adaptation to interpersonal, structural and symbolic violence characterising the children's lives. Play frames frequently fell apart as raw emotions seeped through, and settings operated on the edge of violence. Playwork subjectivities are performative and emotive. In particular three forms of dialectically interrelated hope were discernible: a far hope of policy projects, a revolutionary hope of emancipatory ideals, and a near, everyday hope in moments of playfulness. An ethics of playwork dispositions is proposed that moves beyond rational, universal rules or outcomes towards relational ethics, acknowledging the particularity of situations, emotions and the alterity of others (children and adults).

Author's 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Wendy Russell.' The signature is written in a cursive style with a trailing dot at the end.

Wendy Katherine Russell

22nd October 2013

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ACPR	Association for Children’s Play and Recreation, also known as Playboard
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CP	Contemporary Playworker (as research participant)
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CYPU	Children and Young People’s Unit
DCLG	Communities and Local Government
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
JNCTP	Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork
NCB	National Children’s Bureau
NCPRU	National Children’s Play and Recreation Unit
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NPFA	National Playing Fields Association
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
PP	Pre-1990 playworker (as research participant)
PPSG	Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group

S/NVQ	Scottish/National Vocational Qualifications
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WHO	World Health Organisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This study interrogates the contradictions inherent in playwork practice. It is an ethnographic and a political study, using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1987) as the framework for analysis and taking a broadly interpretivist and (post-) Marxist epistemological and theoretical stance. It pays attention to how the politically and geographically situated everyday practices of playworkers have developed over time and how playworkers navigate these contradictions to co-produce spaces where children can play.

Playwork theorists, practitioners and advocates have struggled for decades to find a language that describes what is unique about a playwork approach, why the work is of value and why it should be funded through the public purse. This process has highlighted some of the contradictions that lie at the heart of playwork. Central to this is the notion that adult involvement in children's play alters it, thereby compromising the formally endorsed principle that children's play should be freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated (Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group [PPSG], 2005) (see Appendix 1). This leads to playwork's most fundamental contradiction, that between its use and exchange value. Exchange value, as publicly funded labour, lies in playwork's capacity to address social policy agendas such as play-based learning, the development of social skills, crime reduction, physical activity/obesity reduction or community cohesion. Use value lies in creating spaces that support children's playfulness however that may manifest itself. Any attempt to direct playing towards policy outcomes risks turning it into something other than play. The analysis offered in this study looks beyond grand narratives and causal statements about playwork's value towards an appreciation of small moments of playfulness, the importance of caring and openness, of being comfortable with uncertainty, alongside (and often in a dialectical relationship with) assertions of instrumental value as a form of exchange value. Instrumental outcomes can only be ethically achieved if they are understood as a part of the overall assemblage that is a playwork setting: the combination of, *inter alia*, relationships, material and symbolic objects, space, histories, playfulness and caring that constitutes what is unique about this work.

CHAT sees all human activity as object-oriented (in order to achieve something) and artefact-mediated (enacted using both material and symbolic tools). Collective activity systems also encompass rules, community and division of labour, and are situated within networks of activity systems. Activity, as labour, is enacted through the processes of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. All these points and processes are fluid and together form a dynamic assemblage informed by history and the wider context. These systems are dialectic, developing through attempts to resolve inner contradictions (Engeström, 1987).

For this study, the object of playwork was identified as the co-production of a space where children can play (PPSG, 2005). Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) work on how spaces, as both ordered and lived, are constantly in the process of being contested and produced, the study brings to the fore the importance of moments of playfulness that erupt in the cracks left in adult orderings of time and space. These are part of everyday playwork, perhaps even its object (as use value). However, it is hard to capture these moments in the language of policy that seeks to fix and categorise play as an activity in order to articulate benefits that can speak to social concerns (as exchange value), because the uncertainties and unpredictabilities of use are in conflict with the measured instrumentalities of exchange.

Playwork spaces are emotionally highly charged, both because of the nature of play itself - its exuberances and its tragedies - and because of the particular children attending open access settings, which tend to be funded in deprived areas. This brings the question of class into the analysis, together with tensions between the ideals of play as inherently good and the reality of interpersonal, structural and symbolic violence that characterises these children's everyday lives. Play frames frequently fall apart as raw emotions seep through, and many playwork settings operate on the edge of violence. Playworkers build a repertoire of responses including contributing to the playful feel of the space, building attachments, and tight frame holding. Nonetheless, when violence erupts, playworkers can feel (momentary) shame at not realising the service ideal, before recovering and positioning the violence as part of the highs and lows of the work, enabling them to carry on.

Playwork subjectivities are brought into being through playwork activity, which includes the display of emotions, particularly hope. Three forms of hope are explored: the far hope of policy projects aimed at producing future citizens, a revolutionary hope that encompasses

far and near emancipatory ideals that life can be better and a near hope found in moments of playfulness in the here and now. The study ends with a proposed ethics of playwork that moves beyond rational and universal rules or calculating best outcomes towards a more relational ethics that acknowledges the particularity of situations and the alterity of others (children and adults). It proposes playwork dispositions of openness, playfulness, humility, restraint and patience.

1.2 The context and rationale for the study

There is no unitary statement that encapsulates the diverse and contested field that goes under the title of playwork. Perhaps the broadest and simplest statement is from Newstead (2004, p. 17) who describes it as ‘the art and science of facilitating children’s play’. In the United Kingdom (UK), playworkers work with (mostly) school-aged children in a wide range of settings including adventure playgrounds, play centres, out-of-school care schemes, play buses, holiday playschemes, play ranger projects (streets, parks and open spaces), hospitals, schools, refuges and prisons (Russell, 2010a). Playworkers’ articulations about their work tend to be couched in a number of discourses and models of practice that are often tacit, borrowed from other work with children and contradictory. In a review of contemporary literature on children’s play and play provision, Lester and Russell (2008a) found a dissonance among research, policy and practice. The dominant paradigm within policy is one that, at its most simplistic, sees children as the producing and consuming citizens of the future, developing along universal trajectories, with professional adults making technical interventions aimed at ensuring children are as close to the norm as possible (Strandell, 2013; Moss, 2007). The understanding of children’s play within this paradigm belongs to Sutton-Smith’s (1997) progress rhetoric, or Smith’s (1988, 2005) play ethos: it is a tool to be used in the socialisation project, a future-focused mechanism for learning and development.

The evidence from play research shows that it is its apparent non-utility (manifest in its characteristics of redundancy, spontaneity, emergence, uncertainty, flexibility, nonsense, unpredictability and self-organisation) that is the source of its unique impact on adaptive systems, contributing to resilience. Play is linked to pleasure, emotion regulation, stress response systems, attachment (including peer and place attachment), creativity and flexibility, openness to learning. However, this is not a predictable, cause-effect relationship acting upon isolated individual minds and bodies of children: development (as

lifelong change) emerges from interdependent interactions of genes, brain, body and environment (Lester and Russell, 2008a). It makes sense that there is a fundamental, evolutionary purpose to the irrational and non-utilitarian characteristics of playing, recognising this in itself presents a paradox (Sutton-Smith, 1999). Yet it is precisely this aspect of play that is occluded by policy initiatives that colonise it for adult-directed socialisation purposes. Powell and Wellard (2008) found an overwhelmingly instrumental view of play in their analysis of social policy relating to children and young people; such an instrumental focus can also be traced back through the history of play provision (Brehony, 2003; Cranwell, 2003; Hart, 2002). It is this tension between the instrumental value attached to play in social policy and the intrinsic value of play espoused in official articulations of playwork (PPSG, 2005) that gives rise to a number of other contradictions embedded in understandings of the nature and value of play and childhood. These include, but are not limited to, the nature of adult-child relations, and the relationship between children's everyday play lives and play as a matter of public policy.

Playwork as a sector is developing a number of discrete academic articulations. These take a defensive starting point, namely that playwork practice has deferred to the hegemonic construct of the child as in need of professional adult protection, correction and socialisation. An evolutionary standpoint (Hughes, 2001, 2006, 2012) asserts that playing has evolved in order to provide children with the mechanism by which they develop adaptive capabilities, yielding both ontogenetic and phylogenetic benefits. A psychotherapeutic perspective (Sturrock and Else, 2005) claims that playing is healing or that it can prevent the development of neuroses or psychosis originating in childhood. A developmental approach (Brown, 2008) sees a rich environment for play as fundamental to children's development. All three stances aim to illustrate why over-protective and over-directive adult practices ('adulteration') can constrain children's engagement in a wide range of play forms and therefore be detrimental for their health and development. Much of this theorising, broadly from branches of psychology, focuses on the individual child, albeit interacting with the environment. Any reference to the broader socio-cultural and political context is by way of justifying the need for playwork rather than as a context within which play arises and playwork operates. This represents a significant gap in playwork theorising and one that this study aims to address.

1.3 Epistemological standpoint

The approach taken to the arguments developed is one of *immanent critique* (Blunden, 2009, pp. 2-3), a method that was

originated by Aristotle, developed by Hegel ..., applied by Marx ... and by Vygotsky ... Instead of standing outside of a theory and pointing out its failings ..., immanent critique enters into the current of thinking itself, and follows the concept's own development ... This entails a line of argument marked by contradictions, rather than a series of smooth logical deductions – that is the whole point: to bring out the contradictions.

My exploration of playwork's contradictions builds on my immersion in the sector over nearly four decades and disturbs some lines of current thinking from that position. Playwork's unique ethos has developed over time and those who have contributed to it have served it well; however, some of these underpinning assumptions can also be critiqued, and what is offered here is an original starting point for such an immanent critique.

It was not my intention, at the outset of this study, to pay quite as much attention to Marx as I have. Certainly, Marx's method provided the foundations for Vygotsky's dialectical and socio-cultural approach, which in turn provided the basis for Cultural Historical Activity Theory. Beyond that, however, I had no inkling just how often he would crop up as a major influence on the authors whose work informs the analyses offered. This led me to consider whether Marxism is *the* theoretical approach. There are (at least) three reasons to resist this. Firstly, my approach is eclectic, maybe in places even contradictory, a form of *bricolage* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) rather than a singular dogma. Secondly, Marx's revolutionary theory, very much of its time, has been both discredited through misappropriation by communist dictators and supplanted by the neoliberal marketisation of public services and the post-industrial turn. Thirdly, 'Marxism was a legitimate offspring of modern capitalism and Enlightenment culture' (Therborn, 2008, p. 66), whereas the approach taken in this study is to question the objectivity, certainties and single universal truths that were the pillars of Enlightenment science, and open the door, dialectically, to postmodernism, or perhaps 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000).

Having denied Marx three times, there are also (at least) three reasons why he has threaded his way through my analysis, highlighted in these toasts to Marx's forthcoming bicentenary:

First, to Karl Marx as a proponent of emancipatory reason, of a rationalist scrutiny of the world, with a commitment to human freedom from exploitation and oppression. Second, to his historical materialist approach to social analysis – in other words, to his understanding of the present as history, with particular attention paid to the living and working conditions of ordinary people and to the economic and political materiality of power ... Third, Karl should be celebrated for his dialectical openness – his sensitivity to, and comprehension of, contradictions, antimonies and conflicts in social life (Therborn, 2008, p. ix).

In his wake, a number of political, sociological and philosophical forms of post-Marxism have developed, each reflecting their *zeitgeist*, and several of these writers find their way into my analysis. Mostly, these are the ones who have found space for the less rational elements of the human condition in their critique of Enlightenment desire for truth and neoliberal commodity fetishism, and whose versions of hope lie in openness to possibility, difference and playfulness.

1.4 Fieldwork

The fieldwork data comprise:

- records of participant observation over a month working alongside a team of playworkers at an open access play centre in a city in the East Midlands of England (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Play Centre’);
- transcripts of end-of-session discussions where playworkers reflected on the session while completing records required by funders;
- transcripts of semi-structured interviews with each of the playworkers at the Play Centre;
- transcripts of semi-structured interviews with playworkers who were practising prior to the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

In addition, the study has been informed generally by past and current playwork and other literature, my long involvement in the play and playwork sector (the last decade as an academic) and by discussions at conferences and workshops on the study’s particular themes.

1.5 The shape of the study

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first conceptualises the dialectics of playwork through the lens of the literature (Chapters 2-6), the second applies the conceptualisation through looking at playwork in everyday practice (Chapters 7-10), and the third moves towards ethical praxis (Chapters 11-12).

Chapter 2 opens with an introduction to Cultural Historical Activity Theory as the epistemological foundation and the framework for analysis. It provides the rationale for using CHAT, considers its origins in the Marx-inspired work of Vygotsky and colleagues, and describes its development in the work of Engeström (1987, 2005). CHAT sees all human activity as object-oriented and artefact-mediated. Engeström's (1987) triangular model of the collective activity system also embraces ideas of rules, community and division of labour, as well as the processes of labour identified by Marx (production, exchange, distribution and consumption). The chapter then considers some of the critiques of the approach (particularly determinism, essentialism and reductionism) and responds to these. The final section looks in more depth at dialectics as method, particularly as understood by Hegel and Marx, to which Lefebvre (2009) added Nietzsche's ideas to form his dialectical triad of knowledge/language, social practice and poesy/art/desire (understood here as play). This introduces the first of several triangular (trialectic) tropes that form the basis for the analysis offered in both the literature and fieldwork chapters.

Chapter 3 reflects on the significance of language as a mediating artefact. It considers speech and writing as ideology, the inadequacies and excesses of language, and the power and politics of knowledge production through language. It discusses the impossibility of accurate representations of truth and how this has been addressed dialectically within this *written* thesis.

Chapter 4 considers dominant discursive formations and regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980) that illuminate how childhood as a concept is produced, thereby offering a critique of how understandings of childhood affect and are affected by social practices, including playwork. It does this through the lens of dialectics, scratching away at some of the stark dualisms apparent in the early social studies of childhood, particularly that of nature/culture, before moving on to explore key dualisms in the development of social policy relating to children. Specific attention is given to Katz's (2008, 2011) triadic and dialectical construction of childhood as spectacle: as a site of accumulation, as ornament and as waste. This last is particularly relevant to the study of open access playwork, much of which takes place in

areas of social and economic deprivation. The chapter ends with a critique of adult-child relations as understood through the dualism of adult/child, and attendant dualism of being/becoming, to acknowledge the dialectical relationship between practices of social reproduction, theory and children's own lived experiences and cultures of play.

Chapter 5 introduces the contested (and adult) activity of knowledge production about the nature and value of children's play, specifically looking at key paradoxes: play's intrinsic and instrumental value; its irrationality and rationality in theory and practice; its freedoms and constraints; the relationship between the real and the not-real, and between play and not-play; and play's temporality in terms of past, present and future. This lays a theoretical foundation for the contradictory ways in which the playworkers in the study articulated their understandings of the nature and value of both childhood and play.

Chapter 6 returns to the CHAT model to theorise a playwork application, focusing on aspects of relevance to the study. It opens with a consideration of how playwork's mediating artefacts have developed, and of contemporary discourse as manifested in models of playwork. It then analyses the development of playwork's object, namely 'to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play' (PPSG, 2005), leading to a Lefebvrian (1991) consideration of the production (and related processes) of space, before looking at the playworker as subject. Following a brief analysis of rules, community and division of labour, thematic contradictions arising from this are identified. These are the primary contradiction inherent between playwork's use and exchange value, and the consequent contradiction between libertarian and paternalistic approaches across issues of planning, challenging behaviour, diversity and risk.

Chapter 7 describes the methodology and methods for the fieldwork. It outlines the objectives of the study and then offers a personal reflection on ethnography and insider research. The methods are described and the Play Centre where the participant observation was carried out is introduced. Research ethics are described, in terms of procedural requirements regarding participants, followed by a consideration of the ethics of ethnography. The discussion on data analysis and coding describes a *bricolage* approach of moving between the data in NVivo, printouts of fieldnotes and interview transcripts, audio recordings, the literature and my own journal to 'worry' the data and become familiar with it.

Chapter 8 draws on the data from the fieldwork to explore articulations (in interviews and post-session debriefs) and expressions (in observations) of playwork's object as the creation of a space where children can play (PPSG, 2005). Lefebvre's (1991) dialectical triad of the production of space (conceived, perceived and lived space) is used to explore how playworkers navigate the dialectics of use and exchange value, dominance and agency, power and resistance, alienation and authenticity, highlighting the significance of moments of playfulness.

Chapter 9 revisits the playworker as the subject of the CHAT model and considers three aspects: firstly, the emotionally charged nature of the work; secondly, playwork as affective and emotional performance, including the place of emotions in CHAT (Roth, 2007) and the concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983); and thirdly, continuing the theme of playwork as the production of a space in which children can play, it draws on the geographies of emotion and particularly, but not exclusively, hope.

Chapter 10 discusses violence as a theme that emerged from the fieldwork, but is almost invisible in playwork literature. It considers dominant constructions of youth violence within the broad sphere of professional work with children and young people and the particular arena of playwork itself, bringing both a historical and spatial analysis to this and setting it within the context of broader politico-spatial understandings of structural, symbolic and interpersonal violence. It offers an analysis of the playworkers' responses to violence and its relation to the service ideal of playwork, linking this to themes in Chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 11 moves from the spatially framed 'is' to a spatially framed 'ought', proposing a situated and relational ethics of playwork. It opens with a discussion on the development of the professionalisation of playwork, weaving history with a critical analysis of playwork's codes of practice as largely deontic and utilitarian. The chapter brings a moral philosophical gaze to playwork's object as the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991), to playworkers as emotional subjects (Throop, 2012; Sayer, 2005a, 2005b), and to discussions on violence drawing again on Lefebvre (1991) and Levinas (Altez, 2007). These themes are woven together through an exploration of playwork as a MacIntyrean (2007) social practice, extending this perspective into a consideration of playwork dispositions of openness, playfulness, humility, and of patience and restraint as dispositions of *not-doing*.

Chapter 12, the concluding chapter, opens with a reflection on the external factors that influenced the research before considering the contributions to methodology of ethnographic research that foregrounds small moments alongside the grander assertions regarding the value of playwork. This sets the foundation for a reflection on what the study contributes to the body of knowledge on playwork. Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory as a framework for an analysis of the dialectics of playwork as an activity system offered an original perspective that positions playwork within the politics of the production of space. Suggestions for future research are then offered.

PART ONE: CONCEPTUALISING PLAYWORK THROUGH THE LENS OF THE LITERATURE: AN OPENING POSITION

Chapter 2: Cultural Historical Activity Theory

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as the epistemological foundation and the framework for analysis. It provides the rationale for using CHAT, considers its origins in the Marx-inspired work of Vygotsky and colleagues, and describes its development by Engeström (1987, 2005). It then considers some of the critiques of the approach and responds to them. The final section looks in more depth at dialectics as method, particularly as understood by Hegel, Marx and Lefebvre.

A number of key themes and issues emerged during the search for an epistemology and a methodology, including: the contradictory nature of playwork, the difficulties in understanding and applying playwork theorising in practice, the lack of a discrete playwork discourse beyond developmentalism, and the lack of a socio-cultural perspective in playwork theorising. CHAT addresses these themes and issues directly. It provides the starting point for theoretical explorations of playwork and the framework for data analysis.

2.2 Cultural Historical Activity Theory as an analytical framework

The reasons for selecting CHAT for this study of playwork's contradictions are threefold. Firstly, it understands activity as a social phenomenon mediated by tools. Tools are 'cultural objects, social forms that develop historically' (Langemeyer and Nissen, 2005, p. 188); of particular significance are the symbolic tools of language and discourse. Secondly, mediating artefacts develop through attempts to resolve inner contradictions: CHAT is *dialectical*. Thirdly, the development of CHAT as theory and methodology has taken diverse routes from its origins in the work of Vygotsky (1978), allowing for a degree of epistemological flexibility and eclecticism. It can readily accommodate interdisciplinarity

(Blunden, 2009; Engestrom, 2005; Langemeyer and Nissen, 2005), making it suitable for an analysis of contradictory understandings of play across academic disciplines. Vygotsky's original method was psychological, and CHAT has mostly developed in the fields of cultural and critical psychology; however, this study draws on the method to offer a social, spatial and political analysis, opening the door for different articulations of playwork, thereby offering new mediating artefacts that are likely to create new contradictions.

CHAT developed from the work of Vygotsky in the 1920s and 1930s and, after his early death, of colleagues Luria and Lyont'ev (Engeström, 1987). Vygotsky is best known as a child development theorist; what is pertinent to this study is his method, which emerged from his dissatisfaction with the limits of behaviourism and which built on three concepts from Marx. The first is the idea of object-oriented human action as a way of bridging the gulf between idealism and materialism. The second is the contradiction inherent in all labour activity between use and exchange value. For Marx, human activity was understood as 'labour', initially as a way of taming nature to meet humans' needs and wants, and then, within a capitalist system, labour is sold as a commodity. The third concept is Marx's historical and dialectical materialism.

In placing human actions within a socio-cultural context, the behaviourist stimulus-response equation becomes triadic, the actions of the subject on and towards the object being mediated through artefacts (signs and tools) (Figure 1).

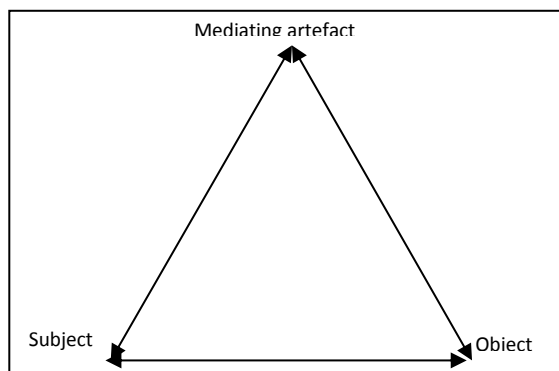


Figure 1: first generation model of activity theory

In later developments of the theory, Engeström (1987, drawing on Leont'ev's work) broadened the model out beyond individuals' actions to a *collective* activity system (Figure 2).

Engeström's third generation widens this out further to acknowledge the diversity, multi-voicedness and the interactions of networks of activity systems. It is the second generation model that forms the basis for this study; although the connections with networks of other collective activity systems are acknowledged and explicitly discussed in places, the focus is on playwork as a collective activity system.

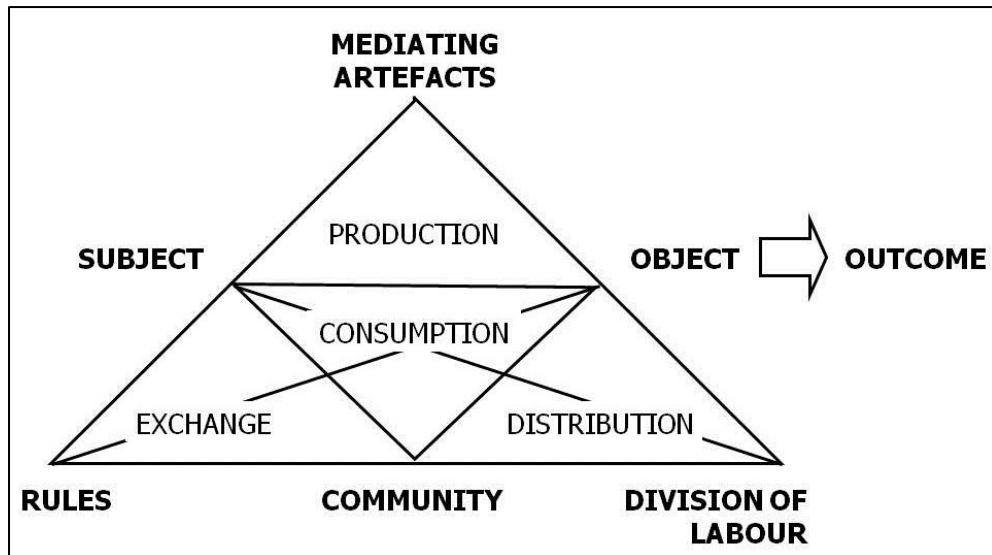


Figure 2: second generation model of an activity system, from Engeström (1987)

The collective activity model encompasses the rules that guide the activity, the community of actors and the division of labour. It also encompasses the four processes of labour identified in Marxist theory: production, distribution, exchange and consumption. How these might apply to playwork as a collective activity system is explored theoretically in Chapter 6, and then forms the basis for analysis of the fieldwork data.

2.3 Activity Theory, Vygotsky and Marx

Figure 2 introduces some key concepts underpinning CHAT that draw directly from the work of Marx. Cole and Scribner (1978, p. 6) place Vygotsky's work within its own Soviet cultural and historical context, describing the eagerness with which psychologists of the time sought to 'make their theories conform to the Politburo's most recent interpretation of Marxism', yet pointing out that Vygotsky genuinely felt Marx's dialectical materialism provided a potential solution to the problems then facing scientific research. Vygotsky's method predated post-structuralist criticisms of modernist (Cartesian) epistemology as too deterministic, too essentialist and too reductionist (Goonewardena, 2008). These three criticisms are considered in turn to show how they were fundamental issues of method for Vygotsky, although addressing them as discrete entities runs counter to the spirit of this method that recognises complex wholes as constituted through the relationships between the elements that co-produce them.

Firstly, determinism: a central principle of Vygotsky's method is that phenomena should be studied as processes rather than fixed, static entities; each phenomenon has a history characterised by changes that are both qualitative and quantitative (Cole and Scribner,

1978). This makes it a dialectical developmental theory of becoming, opening it up to criticisms of determinism and teleology. Grant (2010) suggests this can be bridged by differentiating 'determinist' teleology and 'discrete' teleology: rather than the desire for a specific, utopian, predetermined and unalterable goal for development, discrete teleology accepts the value of striving towards an end but recognises that this may involve different paths and unexpected turns depending on 'lived circumstance' (Grant, 2010, p. 223). Vygotsky (1978, p. 73) recognised the idiosyncratic and uneven nature of development:

We believe that child development is a complex dialectical process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes which overcome impediments the child encounters ... To the naïve mind, revolution and evolution seem incompatible and historic development continues only so long as it follows a straight line. Where upheavals occur, where the historical fabric is ruptured, the naïve mind sees only catastrophe, gaps, and discontinuity. History seems to stop dead, until it once again takes the direct, linear path of development.

Although Vygotsky is talking specifically about child development, the ideas are applicable to development generally, of humans, activity systems, societies and so on. In addition, the extract above, from *Problems of Method*, anticipates contemporary constructionist critiques of linear age-and-stage child development theories discussed in Chapter 4.

On the second criticism of essentialism, Engeström (2005, p. 28) asserts that mediation 'breaks down the Cartesian walls that isolate the individual mind from ... culture and ... society'. In placing human activity in its cultural and historical context, Vygotsky reflects Marx's theorising on the relationship between changes in society and changes in consciousness and behaviour (Cole and Scribner, 1987). As Langemeyer and Roth (2006, p. 25) show:

[H]uman development was interpreted as a process of enculturation and humanization, in which biological and cultural lines of development were interrelated through a co-evolution of the social basis as an 'environment' on the one hand, and the individual development in different forms of social agency and activity, on the other hand.

The third criticism of reductionism is addressed in Vygotsky's writings on 'units' of analysis. Engeström's (1987, 2005) collective activity system with a number of elements is arguably already a composite whole rather than a simple unit (Jones, 2009). Vygotsky's definition of 'unit' may help both respond to the charge of reductionism and address the issue of exploring discrete aspects of the activity system. For Vygotsky, a 'unit' (as opposed to an 'element') is the smallest part of the whole and it also embodies the whole, possessing '*all the basic characteristics of the whole*' (Vygotsky, 1987 [1934], cited in Langemeyer and Roth, 2006, pp. 25-26). This allows an examination of specific aspects of the activity system (for example, the object, or the process of production) in a manner that does not atomise or reduce because their interdependence with the whole system is acknowledged. What may begin as an exploration of, say, the object, inevitably encompasses analysis of the other points and processes. Engeström (1987, ch 2., p. 31) notes that his model (Figure 2) allows for 'the possibility of analysing a multitude of relationships' but that 'the essential task is always to grasp the systemic whole, not just separate connections'. Since the 'whole' is the networked activity system, this becomes the unit for analysis. The relationships within it can shift and change: objects can become mediating artefacts, rules can become objects, and so on. For example, children may be 'consumers' of a play setting; they are also producers, members of the community, and they may at times be the object or subject of the activity. In this way, the points and processes of the triangle are inseparable from the whole, and the whole inseparable from its networks with other collective activity systems.

How accurately versions of CHAT reflect both Vygotsky's and Marx's thinking is contested. Peim (2009) suggests that Engeströmian Activity Theory has been reduced to a technical, positivist and apolitical theory of progress, ironically stripped of sociocultural and historical context. Jones (2009, p. 49) elaborates, arguing that Marx's distinction between activity as the labour process and activity as the process of valorisation is confused and conflated in Engeström's assertion that the contradiction between use value and exchange value lies in the dual nature of commodities. Such a notion is problematic when applied to public services such as playwork. What might the commodity be that playworkers sell their labour to produce? If it is a space to play, as stated in the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005), this offers little market exchange value (other than in a relational role with other commercial activity systems in terms of consuming their products), and therefore cannot be seen as a commodity. Nevertheless, this does point to one of playwork's fundamental contradictions: the Principles (PPSG, 2005) state that the primary focus of playwork is 'to support and facilitate the play process ... [which] takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for

play when engaging with adult led agendas'. Yet those providing the funding for the work require adult agendas to take precedence. As is shown in Chapter 4, social policies embrace a specific construct of the child as a future producing and consuming citizen, and professional children's services are required to ensure that the children with whom they work develop the appropriate skills to take their place in this system. In this reading, the commodity that playworkers produce is not a space for play but the future citizen. This analysis places playwork within its socio-political context. The work of raising children, undertaken by families, professionals and (increasingly) the state, is a form of labour often referred to by Marxist writers as 'social reproduction' (for example, Katz, 2004, 2008, 2011). It remains hidden from much of mainstream discussion about labour, since it mostly takes place in the invisible spaces of the home and the institutions of childhood, the private rather than the public sphere, although, as with other binaries, the distinction between the two becomes blurred, particularly with increasing marketisation and commodification of care (discussed in Chapter 11). This highlights the difficulty of applying a purely traditional Marxist analysis, and despite the criticisms raised, Engeström's model does allow for fresh analysis of playwork's value within a public sector that increasingly places instrumental and economic value on both play and children.

Another contested concept within the CHAT community is that of dialectics. This is so central to the study that it requires some consideration here, starting with the major forerunners of dialectical thinking in CHAT, namely Hegel and Marx (although it can be traced back to Aristotle), and moving on to a discussion of contemporary interpretations and critiques to build a defence of the centrality of dialectics in this study.

2.4 Dialectics, dualisms and dichotomies

We want a world filled with fresh and stimulating experiences, but we also want the comforts and stability of home. We desire to be unbound, to wander freely, and to take what we please. But we also want to be needed, to have others hold us down and make our lives worthwhile ... security and stimulation, permanence and change, innocence and knowledge, love and hate – it is in our nature to contemplate the oppositions of life (Henricks, 2006, p. 1).

Hegel's concept of dialectic is often characterised in the phrase 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis', although he never used these terms (Stern, 2010). As a method of enquiry, it aims to avoid dogmatic assertions by considering their opposites, the relationship between

assertions and their opposites, and the contradictions inherent in this. In Hegel's master-slave debate, each is defined by their relationship to the other; if this is seen as fixed and static, neither the slave nor the master (as dialectical aspects of self-consciousness) can envisage any development or change in the quality of their life (MacIntyre, 1967). Yet the relationship is not static: through his labour, the slave can realise 'pure being-for-self' (Hegel, 1807, p. 117), but the master, dependent upon the slave for his identity, has no such self-affirming labour through which he can know himself; paradoxically, dependency and freedom become reversed. Dialectics is the basis for change; therefore, for a phenomenon to be understood, its history needs to be considered (Spencer and Krauze, 2006). Systematic enquiry needs to begin at the beginning, to examine the simplest unit of the issue at hand, for example the assertion that 'there is Being' (Stern, 2010); Hegel felt this process could lead towards a 'whole' or what he termed 'totality', the supremacy of the whole over the parts.

Hegel deals with a sequence of logical categories: being, becoming, one, many, essence, existence, cause, effect, universal, mechanism, and 'life'. Each is examined in turn and made to reveal its own inadequacies and internal tensions. Each category is made to generate another more promising one which in its turn will be subject to the same kind of scrutiny (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 82).

The process of questioning and unearthing a phenomenon's inherent contradictions (its differences, opposites, reflections or other relations) is the dynamic of 'negation'. Moving beyond this negation can lead to concepts that allow for the complex relationships of their parts or opposites; this is termed the 'negation of the negation'. Further questioning leads to a concept that both encompasses and transcends (the closest translation for the German word 'Aufhebung' is *sublation*) the preceding ones; in other words, whilst transcending the original contradictory concepts, the new one includes and changes their nature through the dialectical process. For Hegel, subject (consciousness, mind or *Geist*) and object (consciousness needs something of which it can be conscious) are not separately constituted and fixed entities but 'mutually constitute each other' (Langemeyer and Roth, 2006, p. 22). The dialectical relationship of Self and Other consists in the sublation of the Other into the Self in order to avoid a loss of Self, as described in the master/slave dialectic (Salih, 2002).

Marx's dialectics developed from Hegel's, continuing the principle of flux, movement and dialectical development, but also differed fundamentally. Indeed, Marx (1873, p. 14) stated

‘my dialectic method is not only different from Hegelian, but is its direct opposite’. Hegel was an idealist and Marx a materialist, interested in a rational and dialectical understanding of the real world rather than of concepts and Spirit. However, the ‘opposite’ of which Marx spoke is not a straightforward binary, and the relation between the abstract and the concrete can be understood itself as dialectical. Kipfer (2009, p. xix) highlights how this is illustrated in *Capital* (Marx, 1867):

In its various manifestations, capital can be grasped as a concrete abstraction, a contradictory fusion of content and form: concreteness and abstraction, quality and quantity, use-value and exchange-value. In the process, the commodity, money, or capital more generally, end up ‘weighing down on human relations’ even though they are the expression of these very relations.

In addition, ‘the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it’ (Marx, 1845, p. XI). Although Hegel explained history dialectically up until his time, he did not look beyond, assuming that his method served as an affirmation for the existence of capitalism. Marx moved from the idea of history as result to history as process, with each period being transitory and subject to change (Shortall, 1994).

Critiques of dialectics as method, particularly from poststructuralists, can be summarised as interrelated critiques of a linear, deterministic and totalising teleology, and of the essentialising nature of dualisms (Elden, 2008). Lefebvre’s (2009) ideas are presented as a counter to these criticisms, since his work forms the basis for much of the analysis in this study. For Lefebvre, sublation is an act, a realisation, a becoming (Schmid, 2008), but this can never be fully determined or finished, as the dialectical process continues ceaselessly. Lefebvre suggests that the dialectical method is not about essential opposites but about the openness of recognising negations and their contradictory relationship (as in the master/slave dialectic), and that the negation of the negation provides a new perspective on that contradiction:

The ‘dialectical moment’, that expedient of the mind which finds itself obliged to move from a position it had hoped was definitive and to take account of something further, thereby denying its original assertion, is to be found everywhere, in every age, although not properly elucidated. Hegel discovered the Third Term, which results once any determination has been enriched by its negation and transcended; it is produced rigorously whenever two terms are in contradiction, yet it is a new moment of Being and of thought (Lefebvre, 2009, p. 19).

This 'third term' becomes a signature ingredient in Lefebvre's dialectical method, and can be seen in his triad of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991) (elaborated on in Chapters 6 and 8), and also in his scathing criticisms of the power of knowledge and language (explored in Chapter 3). Schmid (2008, p. 33) traces the influences for his triadic dialectics to Marx (social practice), Hegel (language and thought) and Nietzsche (the creative, poetic, Dionysian act):

Material social practice taken as the starting point of life and of analysis constitutes the first moment. It stands in contradiction to the second moment: knowledge, language and the written word, understood by Lefebvre as abstraction and concrete power, and as compulsion of constraint. The third moment involves poesy and desire as forms of transcendence that help becoming prevail over death.

Lefebvre's triad is analytical (Schmid, 2008). It is this non-essentialist, non-deterministic triad and its possibility for Nietzschean play in Lefebvre's third moment that makes it such a fitting foundation for the analysis of childhood, play and playwork presented here. It is particularly relevant because of the potential for playwork to commodify or even fetishise play, and because of the importance of leaving space open for poesy. A dialectical approach is taken in various ways: in Chapter 4, Lefebvre's dialectical triad is applied to the production of childhood as social practice, as a site for the production of knowledge and as play; in Chapter 5, theories of play are examined in terms of it being a paradoxical phenomenon; in Chapter 6, playwork as an activity system is examined in terms of its historic and contemporary contradictions. These chapters provide the theoretical foundations for the analysis of the data from the fieldwork in Chapters 8, 9 and 10, which explore how the dialectics of playwork play out in everyday contexts and in playwork stories and conversations. Chapter 11 begins the process of considering what the descriptive analysis might mean for practice, through an exploration of ethical praxis, with Chapter 12 forming conclusions. Before this, however, the next chapter is a reflection on a different kind of dialectic, that of language, representation and power.

Chapter 3: Reflections on language as a mediating artefact and the conundrum of representation

We need fantasy to think the world, and to change it (Miéville, 2002, p. 48).

3.1 Introduction

This short chapter pauses to reflect on the significance of language as a mediating artefact in the CHAT model. It opens with a discussion of Vygotsky's understanding of signs and tools as distinct mediating artefacts, exploring critiques of this distinction. This leads on to the idea of language as an activity itself, allowing for the power of discourse and its relationship with activity to be acknowledged. The chapter ends with a discussion about speech and writing as ideology and the impossibility of accurate representations of truth, and how this has been addressed dialectically within this *written* thesis.

3.2 Signs and tools as mediating artefacts

In his development of human activity as object-oriented and artefact-mediated, Vygotsky draws on Engels' ideas of human labour and tool use as ways in which humans change nature and thereby transform themselves (Cole and Scribner, 1978), developing this to include sign systems (language as speech and writing, number systems) as mediating artefacts. Leiman (1999) suggests that Vygotsky's reliance on contemporaneous structural theories of linguistics impoverished his discussions on the mediating role of signs and created a false, dualistic distinction between signs as ideal phenomena and tools as material objects. 'Tools mediate object-oriented activity, whereas signs ... mediate social intercourse' (Leiman, 1999, p. 421). Leiman draws on Winnicott's ideas of transitional objects and potential space to show how material objects become symbolically imbued with intersubjective meaning through activity mediated both by tools and communication. Signs, therefore, are materially implicated and tools become ideal phenomena, but the relationship between the two is dialectical, playing out in 'the third part of the life of a human being, ... an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external

life both contribute' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 3). Leiman suggests that the end point of development is the separation of sign from referent, yet this is not a final destination, since

throughout our lives we retain the intermediate phases of experiencing where the object and its perception merge. Play, art, and religion are those areas of human experience that continue to make full use of the third area of experience (Leiman, 1999, p. 426).

There are echoes here of Lefebvre's dialectical triad that emphasises the significance of creative and emotional moments of poesy, magic, resistance, play and art, ideas that are explored in Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

3.3 Signs as (political) activity: discourse and regimes of truth

Having considered ways of subverting the dualism of sign and tool as mediating artefacts, the role of language as a mere mediator is now critiqued. Wells (2007) suggests that 'discoursing' could be an activity in its own right; certainly signs are more than conduits, since they both affect and are affected by activity. For Foucault (1980), discourse is a system of representation that bridges language and practice; it is the production of knowledge through language (Hall, 1997). Discursive formations emerge when particular ways of naming, representing and communicating about phenomena are repeated and come to be seen as common sense, or as 'regimes of truth'. Playwork discourse has changed over time, alongside changes in discursive formations that have produced knowledge about children and childhood, play, public services, and so on. Discourses influence social practices like architecture, technologies, institutional practices, legal systems and policy making, and so are very powerful.

Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power ... Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

This way of understanding power, as linked to the production of truth through discursive formations, recognises that it is co-produced through networks of social practices and the

technologies of regulation and control. Such a perspective shows how intimately interrelated signs and tools are within collective activity systems.

3.4 The fetishism and ideology of speech and writing: the power and limits of representation

This section begins with a very personal anecdote that illustrates the power of language and discourse in saying both too much and too little. When I was expecting my first child (over 30 years ago) I avidly read books on childbirth, seeking truths and knowledge that could both prepare me and help me articulate my needs and desires to more powerful health workers in attendance. My abiding memory, in the thick of it, was that what I was experiencing bore very little relationship to what I had read. I had two responses to this: either the books were wrong or I was not having the experience I should be having and was therefore somehow deficient. I vowed to write my own version of events. When I came to try this, however, I ended up using the same phrases and words that I had read in the books, and realised that the vocabulary and discourse of childbirth meant very little when isolated from the intensity of the actual experience. It said both too much, in the sense of reproducing normative ideals for the childbirth process against which birthing mothers could and should measure themselves – an orthodoxy of experience – and too little in that it could not hope to capture those intensities of sensation and affect. Years later, this story came back to me when I read these words of Lefebvre (1991, p. 28-29):

The fetishism of the spoken word, or ideology of speech, is reinforced by the fetishism and ideology of writing. For some, whether explicitly or implicitly, speech achieves a total clarity of communication, flushing out whatever is obscure and either forcing it to reveal itself or destroying it by sheer force of anathema. Others feel that speech alone does not suffice, and that the test and action of the written word, as agent of both malediction and sanctification, must also be brought into play. The act of writing is supposed, beyond its immediate effects, to imply a discipline that facilitates the grasping of the 'object' by the writing and speaking 'subject'. In any event, the spoken and written word are taken for 'social' practice; it is assumed that absurdity and obscurity, which are treated as aspects of the same thing, may be dissipated without any corresponding disappearance of the 'object'. Thus communication brings the non-communicated into the realm of the communicated – the *incommunicable* having no existence beyond that of an ever-pursued residue.

The research that is (re)presented here considers spaces and situations that are fundamentally to do with emotion, embodiment and power. Much is lost in the translation of particular and situated experience into representation of that experience, including the visceral embodiment of play, joy, nonsense, conflict, sadness, anger and other intense affects. Yet more is lost if this work is received with the expectation of absolute solutions and explanations for playwork's enduring contradictions and problems. It is not another quest for the 'ever-pursued residue', although perhaps that was an early intention. The eight years that it has taken to complete the research has been time enough to come to the realisation that there will always be something more that cannot be represented in the language of the academy.

Massumi (2002) acknowledges the limitations of conventional uses of language that attempt to communicate what is already there, and suggests other ways of using language that attune to the movement of the situation and navigate it rather than trying to command or control it. He gives humour and poetry as examples. This is Lefebvre's third moment (as described in Chapter 2), Nietzsche's (1974 [1887]) gay science. Merrifield (2009), in his call for a Magical Marxism, also points to Bloch's (1986) principle of hope, and the work of Walter Benjamin (2009 [1929]):

for whom there was nothing as magical as the 'profane illumination', as thinking about a new ideal, as dreaming in an ecstatically sober state; a 'dialectical fairytale', Benjamin called it, something which disrupts 'sclerotic ideals of freedom' and pushes the poetic life to its utmost limits of possibility – which is to say, towards a *poetic politics* (Merrifield, 2009, p. 383, emphasis in the original).

To some extent, in this study, the rich language of the playworkers themselves goes some way towards filling the analytical gap and often their words are left to speak for themselves. The voice used throughout the written thesis varies: at times it offers a considered and rather distanced critique of theory, at others it presents an ethico-political stance, and at others it turns to more personal reflection. The hope is that this eclectic voice can offer more than the inadequacies and excesses of the conventions of the academy. Massumi (2002, p. 220) offers 'affective connection and abductive participation' as alternatives to critical thinking; rather than definitive judgement, this operates at an affective level requiring 'a willingness to take risks, to make mistakes and even to come across as silly' (*ibid.*). In this sense, language becomes an event itself.

Chapter 4: The production of childhood

Oh hours of childhood,
when behind each shape more than the past appeared
and what streamed out before us was not the future.
We felt our bodies growing and were at times impatient to *be* grown up, half for the sake
of those with nothing left but their grownupness.
Yet were, when playing by ourselves, enchanted
in the infinite, blissful space between world and toy
at a point which, from the earliest beginning,
had been established for a pure event.
(Rainer Maria Rilke, Fourth Duino Elegy, 1923)

4.1 Introduction

Dominant discursive formations and regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980) regarding childhood and children's play are powerful mediating artefacts in playwork's collective activity system. Playwork praxis, as 'total activity ..., action and thought, ... labour and knowledge' (Lefebvre, 2009, p. 100), emerges from an assemblage of many interrelated and dynamic aspects and moments, including situated learning (Wenger, 1998; see Chapter 6), propositional knowledge, and intuitive playfulness. Chapters 4 and 5 return to Lefebvre's triadic dialectics of social practice, knowledge and creativity/poesy (Schmid, 2008) introduced in Chapter 2, stepping into the triad to interrogate the literature from the standpoint of childhood (this chapter) and play (Chapter 5). This artefact serves to scratch away at the hegemonic reifying and essentialising effects of stark and static dualisms inherent in adult representations of childhood and play, both by acknowledging them, and also by illustrating the interrelatedness of practice, knowledge and resistance through playful moments of disalienation. This chapter's title draws on Lefebvre's (1991) seminal work on the production of space, which underpins the analysis of playwork's object in Chapters 6 and 8. Its intention is to demonstrate how constructions of childhood – the foundation stone of the social studies of childhood that emerged during the last two decades of the twentieth century – are but one aspect of the dynamic and continuous co-production of childhood that influences, and is influenced by, children's heterogeneous and situated everyday lives, their agency and their resistance through play.

The chapter opens with a summary of the paradigmatic shift hailed by the early social studies of childhood (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James and Prout, 1997) that sought to disturb the dominant constructs of childhood. It then presents critiques of this in the 'new wave' of childhood studies (Ryan, 2012), in particular the critique that the new paradigm was rooted in modernist, dualistic sociology (Prout, 2005), illustrating this with an examination of the nature/culture dualism. This is followed by an analysis of understandings of childhood and children's play in past and current social policy, including the dualisms of body/mind, victim/threat and liberation/paternalism, all manifest through the notion of children as investments. Particular focus is given here to the risk and prevention policy paradigm, since this underpinned the rationale for the Children's Fund, a major funder of the Play Centre at the time of the fieldwork. These policy paradigms represent powerful hegemonic regimes of truth that instrumentalise children's play and present contradictions for playwork praxis that, as illustrated in Chapters 8-10, are navigated through attention to Lefebvre's third moment of playfulness and disalienation – a 'craft' of playwork alongside technical practice.

A specific construction of childhood as spectacle (Katz, 2008, 2011) is then introduced, particularly looking at the child as waste. This construction both brings together and develops the ideas on constructs of childhood and policy paradigms to present a specific class-based analysis that is pertinent to the study. The chapter ends with a critique of adult-child relations as understood through the interconnected dualisms of adult/child and being/becoming, drawing on non-essentialising approaches to acknowledge the dialectical relationship between practices of social reproduction, theory and children's own lived experiences and cultures of play. In doing so, it offers a theoretical perspective for the particular relationships observed between playworkers and children that can move beyond traditional dualisms towards multivoiced, contingent, flexible and playful ways of relating.

4.2 Constructions of childhood

Cunningham (2006, p. 12) suggests that childhood is an invention created by adult imaginings 'in order to make sense of their own world. Children have to live with the consequences.' This highlights the interrelatedness of knowledge and social practice. Historians have argued over when the conception of childhood, as a discrete period between infancy and adulthood requiring separate consideration, began. Ariès' (1962) seminal work, although the subject of much criticism, opened the debate, and for many

minority world historians and sociologists (for example, Prout, 2005; Hendrick, 1997a; Jenks, 1996), the beginnings of the process of physical and conceptual separation of childhood from adulthood was situated in modernity. However, the process was not homogeneous, linear or continuous, with geography, time, gender and class being particularly significant variables. 'Modernity' is understood to be a distinct period starting in the minority world towards the end of the seventeenth century. It encompassed a range of political, social, scientific, technological and economic changes. This was the Enlightenment era, where secularism challenged religion, and science claimed everything was knowable and therefore predictable and controllable. It was the era of world trade and slavery, and the rise of capitalism, industrialisation and nation states. These changes led to transformations in the structure of society; the move from rural self-sufficiency towards urbanisation and specialised employment away from the family home changed traditional divisions of labour and relationships within families (Prout, 2005; Hendrick, 1997b). This period also saw the beginning of state interventions in the lives of children and families, culminating in the institutionalisation of childhood 'legally, socially, medically, educationally and politically' (Hendrick 1997a, p. 15), and the separation of childhood from the lives of adults (Prout, 2005; Heywood, 2001; Hendrick, 1997b).

These changes were reflected in how childhood was understood and valued, giving rise to the argument that childhood itself is a social construction (Wyness, 2006; James and Prout 1997). Key modernist constructs, which still co-exist today (particularly in social policy as shown in section 4.4), include the primitive, uncivilised, Dionysian child in need of discipline in order to tame and socialise; the natural, innocent, Apollonian child in need of protection from the corrupting influences of society; the naturally developing child; and the child as investment for the future (James and Prout, 1997; Hendrick, 1997b).

The social studies of childhood that emerged in the last two decades of the twentieth century were particularly critical of dominant construct grounded in developmental psychology on the grounds of its essentialist assumption that 'children are natural rather than social phenomena' developing through universal stages (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p. 17), and on the grounds of the lack of attention to children's agency (James and James, 2004). Several (for example, Moss, 2007; Wyness, 2006; Moss and Petrie, 2002) show how this construction pervades social policy relating to children and young people, and underpins professional work and everyday adult-child relationships, being even more pronounced in work with disabled children (Woolley, 2013; Goodley and Runswick-Cole,

2010). Moss and Petrie (2002, p. 55) suggest that the dominant discourse constructs children as 'weak, poor and needy'; whilst acknowledging that children do have needs and are dependent, they illustrate how a focus on weaknesses rather than strengths (particularly the contributions children make to social relations and everyday life) leads to social practices that disempower them. Moss (2007) illustrates how this construct joins with other aspects of modernist thinking to produce an approach to working with children that is highly technical, believing that 'interventions have a direct and causal link to outcomes beneficial to society if only the right interventions can be identified, measured and embedded into increasingly technical, standardised and regulated practice at the right time in each individual child's life' (Lester and Russell, 2008a, p. 13). This interrelatedness of hegemonic knowledge and social practices offer an analysis of two thirds of Lefebvre's (2009) triadic dialectics, but has little to say about Lefebvre's third moment, playfulness, unless in an instrumentalised and therefore potentially alienating manner.

Sociological constructs of children and childhood, as forms of knowledge production, address these issues in various ways. James, Jenks and Prout (1998) identify four: the socially constructed child (how childhood is understood and valued varies across time and place); the tribal child (children have their own culture separate from adults, and much of this acknowledges the place of play in the everyday lives of children); the minority group child (children form an oppressed group within the structures of society); and the social structural child (childhood is a permanent feature of society with identified rights and contributions).

Although not given much attention as a discrete construct of childhood, perhaps because of its alternative rather than mainstream influence, it is worth mentioning here a construct of childhood promoted by political writers and campaigners who preceded the social studies of childhood and who extended the civil liberties argument of their time to children. These include children's liberationists such as John Holt (1975), Leila Berg (1972) and A.S. Neill (1960), and also the anarchist Colin Ward (1961, 1978). These writers were more often cited by early playworkers than mainstream developmental and educational theorists (Conway, Hughes and Sturrock, 2004), and they had a strong influence on the early ethos of adventure playground workers. They recognised children's agency and diversity, and criticised the power of institutions such as education, the family and the state over children's freedoms and participation as citizens.

Ward is of particular relevance because of his interest in children's relationships with their environments and his identification of play as protest (Ward, 1961, 1978, 1988), bringing Lefebvre's third moment into the debate. He celebrated children's diversity, both in terms of the heterogeneity of individual children and also the difference between children and adults. Children's embodied and emotional engagements with their environments are very different from those of adults, both because of differences of scale and the importance of texture and touch over visual stimuli, and also because physical, social and symbolic elements are invested with different meanings. Being relatively untainted by adults' intentions for the use of space (as prescribed and proscribed through knowledge and social practice, explored in Chapter 8), children appropriate whatever is there for their play, often to the annoyance of adults (for example, the lifts on housing estates). Children at play both explore and resist adult domination of time and space; this is play as childhood protest, Lefebvre's and Nietzsche's 'Dionysian element of spontaneous social ferment ... and the sublimated expression of the will to power that manifests itself in an ongoing revalorisation and revaluation of life' (Shields, 1999, pp. 117-118). This is a very different construct of childhood from either the naturally developing child so heavily criticised by the new social studies of childhood or the empowered child of the liberationists, perhaps fitting more in the 'tribal child' category (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998), alongside descriptions found in the work of children's folklorists such as Iona and Peter Opie (1959, 1969). It is an illustration of how children's everyday lives both affect and are affected by more powerful adult imaginings, knowledge production and social practices.

Holt (1975, p. 22) differentiated what he called the 'fact' of childhood (that children are biologically immature and need varying levels of care because of this) and the 'institution' of childhood:

[B]y the institution I mean all those attitudes and feelings, and also customs and laws, that put a great gulf or barrier between the young and their elders, and ... that lock the young into eighteen years or more of subserviency and dependency, and make of them ... a mixture of expensive nuisance, fragile treasure, slave and superpet.

This opposition of 'fact' and 'institution', or nature and culture, lies at the heart of the early sociology of childhood, and has been critiqued in more recent developments. In CHAT terms, the unproblematic dualism of nature and culture that underpinned these early articulations emerged as a contradiction within the collective activity system of the social

studies of childhood, and attempts to resolve this contradiction have led to more nuanced approaches to these dichotomies.

4.3 Beyond dualisms

When it was enthusiastically pointed out ... that race or gender or nation ... were so many social constructions, inventions and representations, a window was opened, an invitation to begin the project of critical analysis and cultural reconstruction was offered. And one still feels its power even though what was nothing more than an invitation, a preamble to investigation has, by and large, been converted instead into a conclusion ... The brilliance of the pronouncement was blinding. Nobody was asking what's the next step? What do we do with this old insight? (Taussig, 1993, p. xvi)

The contribution made by the early social studies of childhood was considerable. However, as Prout (2005) asserts in his 'immanent critique' (Blunden, 2009), it was founded on unhelpful oppositional dichotomies. He suggests these originated in modernist forms of sociology that, in a post-modern era, are breaking down, although they obdurately remain in everyday, media and policy discourses of childhood (Madge, 2006). These dualisms include nature/culture; childhood/adulthood (manifest through other dualisms such as becoming/being; dependence/independence; irrationality/rationality; play/work); structure/agency; local/global; identity/difference and continuity/change (Prout, 2005).

The focus here is on the dualism of the biological and the social, the natural and the cultural, a theme echoed by many (for example, Ryan, 2012; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Lee, 2005). The adult/child dualism is considered in section 4.6 below. Prout (2005) describes how the modernist early social studies of childhood sought to reveal how universal, neutral and 'natural' truths claimed about childhood were culturally grounded. He argues that the positions taken in the face of these assertions became politically entrenched, with those on the left and in the civil liberties movements arguing for the effects of nurture and those on the right for nature. Biologist Lewontin (2000) places the investment in genetic studies firmly within the capitalist system, and is one of several biologists (including, for example, Edelman, 2006; Rose, 2005; Oyama, 2000) who argue that mind, body, genes and environment are 'both cause and effect' (Lewontin, 2000, p. 100). There is no pre-determined pathway for development, neither are environments unchanging containers: both are mutually implicated in the other.

'Inasmuch as he is a natural being, man is given,' says the *Manuscript* of 1844 [Marx]. At the starting-point of his 'production' therefore we find biological and material Nature, with all its mystery and tragedy. Transformed yet present, this Nature will constantly be appearing in the content of human life. Nature, Being that is, can be explored and expressed poetically, plastically or scientifically. If it were defined, both art and science would become redundant and their autonomy and movement abolished; such a definition would simply be a metaphysical abstraction. The modern mind is only just beginning to sense the depth of the natural 'will-to-live', with its contrasts and ambivalences: its intimate blend of aggressiveness and sympathy, its tumultuous energies and its periods of calm, its destructive furies and its joy. What do they conceal or signify, these biological energies which the Reason must organize and pacify but not destroy? (Lefebvre, 2009, p. 102)

These tensions developed from the desire to set humans apart from Nature, where science sought to control natural forces for human ends (defined as progress). Yet the separation is never complete, and, as Lefebvre (1991, 2009) shows, this desire, through capitalism, urbanisation, increasing technologies and specialisms, is a source of alienation as well as progress. Prout (2005, p. 4) argues for paying attention to non-dualistic, interdisciplinary approaches to theorising childhood that acknowledge 'the heterogeneity (or hybridity) of phenomena and ... their interconnected, networked and emergent becoming'. His suggestions include actor-network theory and ideas from complexity theory and non-linear systems. These emphasise the sociality of objects, the fluid interconnectedness of human and non-human (material and symbolic) actors, the unpredictable effects of small changes and non-linearity, all concepts that can bridge dualisms of structure and agency, continuity and change, nature and culture.

Lee and Motzkau (2011) suggest that the biosocial dualism has been a useful navigational guide for research, with questions on the meetings across this divide providing a backdrop for research into development (Piaget, 1927) and socialisation (Parsons, 1956). However, they argue that this dualism has outlived its usefulness as a navigation for research given the rise of biopolitics (Foucault, 2008) manifested in the growing biological and pharmaceutical interventions into the lives of children (for example, strategies for reducing obesity, pharmaceutical treatments for hyperkinetic disorders and 'smart' drugs, tagging, and the Mosquito sonic deterrent device).

In his challenge to Prout's (2005) arguments Ryan (2012) also shows how understandings of childhood have always inhabited a biosocial nexus, for example in the work of Rousseau (1968 [1792], 1993 [1762]) and Hall (1911). He notes the conflation of biological instincts and desired socialisation, and shows how similar assumptions underpin ideas of voice and agency promoted in contemporary social studies of childhood, that

(re)deploy biosocial power as a means of acting on the future (of childhood) ...

Biosocial power here takes the form of innate capacities which are embodied by children (agency and voice), and which are said to shape, even as they are shaped by, the social context (Ryan, 2012, p. 450, emphasis in the original).

What these critiques demonstrate is the enduring nature of this particular dualism; the argument here is that a dialectical approach acknowledges this and works with it to produce alternative sublated understandings of the complexities of how childhood and children's play come to be understood by adults and how this affects and is affected by social practices. These dualisms are still evident in social policy paradigms discussed next and also in understandings of adult-child relations, explored in the final section.

4.4 Children and social policy¹

Despite these alternative knowledge productions of childhood seen in academic research across many disciplines, a number of dominant paradigms and discourses endure in policy and practice. In his review of historians' accounts of social policy affecting English children from the 1880s through to the Thatcher period a hundred years later, Hendrick (1997a) charts the increasing role of the state in the lives of children and families, showing how policies are embedded in the social and cultural thinking of their time. He suggests three approaches to considering the history of social policy as it relates to children: the body/mind dualism, the victim/threat dualism and children as investments. These are outlined below, with a summary of his analysis of historical accounts and a brief update on how these might apply at the time of the fieldwork (the New Labour administration 1997-2010). This is followed by an additional dualistic discourse of liberationist and paternalist approaches, and the section ends with a selective history of play provision linked to these paradigms.

¹ This section adapts material from Russell and Matthews (2012) and Russell (2010c)

4.4.1 The body/mind dualism:

Many historical accounts of social policy concerning children have highlighted ‘the imposition of adult will upon children’s bodies’ (Hendrick, 1997a, p. 37). Examples are interventions in nutrition (initially malnutrition, today obesity); medical inspections and the growth of paediatric medicine; and state responses to abuse and cruelty towards children. The growth of the child study movement towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the growing interest in psychology and children’s minds in the early twentieth century, led to the establishment of child guidance centres and much postulating on the problems of the day (‘feeble-mindedness’, the causes of juvenile delinquency, ‘maladjustment’ and, after the experience of children’s evacuation during World War 2, the idea of maternal deprivation). Contemporary examples of this dualism can be seen in the reported rise in mental health problems and hyperkinetic disorders, particularly Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (Polanczyk *et al.*, 2007) and prescriptions of methylphenidate (Care Quality Commission, 2013), developments in neuroscience studies (Stein *et al.*, 2011), concerns regarding physical literacy and obesity (Janssen and LeBlanc, 2010) and the resurgence of attachment theory in work with families (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2000). These themes can often be seen in justifications for public funding for play services (Matthews *et al.*, 2011).

4.4.2 The victim/threat dualism:

On the surface this dualism could be interpreted as a split between the child in need of protection and the child in need of correction (the Apollonian/Dionysian duality); on closer inspection their conflation and interrelatedness becomes apparent. Indeed, contemporary policy documents conflate the two concepts into policies that couch surveillance, control and containment – what Katz (2008, 2011) terms ‘waste management’ strategies, discussed in section 4.5 – in the language of opportunity and social mobility (Field, 2010; Allen, 2011a, 2011b). The delinquent child is seen as a threat to society and/or the victim of circumstance, with social policies of constraint, rehabilitation or punishment frequently being couched in the language of welfare and support. Legislation in the second half of the nineteenth century to end child labour did protect children from brutal employers; at the same time it took away their wage-earning capacities and their place in the adult world. Once children were freed from the workplace, the concept of the delinquent child grew; compulsory education and the raising of the school leaving age were seen as reformatory steps towards educating delinquents into their proper place in society. More recently, the

Children Act 2004, coming in the wake of the Laming inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, had a strong focus on the child as victim, but the definition of child protection was extended to the concept of 'safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children' (Parton, 2011, p. 860), with the rise in the risk and prevention discourse aimed at intervening to prevent 'poor outcomes' (CYPU, 2001, p. 7).

France and Utting (2005) see the risk and prevention policy focus as a shift away from 'children in need' in the Children Act 1989 towards prevention, the argument being that this has both moral and economic advantages. New Labour initiatives such as *On Track*, *Sure Start* and the *Children's Fund* were all within this paradigm, as was the requirement in 2002 for local authorities to develop Preventative Strategies. It is continued by the current Government in the report by the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Anti-social Behaviour (2010), the cross-government report on *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* (HM Government, 2011), and in publications on early intervention, poverty and work with 'troubled families' (Field, 2010; Allen, 2011a, 2011b). The paradigm rests on the assumption that if risk factors (those that increase the chance of poor outcomes) can be identified and addressed through interventions, this will reduce problems such as educational underachievement, crime, substance misuse and poor mental health.

Of particular relevance is the Children's Fund, a preventative programme with an overall investment of £960m in its first eight years (Edwards *et al.*, 2006). This provided funding for two projects that were running at the Play Centre where the observational fieldwork was carried out (described in more detail in Chapter 7). The Children's Fund was targeted at children aged between eight and 13 years identified as at risk of social exclusion, and was designed to 'put in place protective factors such as consistent day care, after school provision or mentoring programmes which offer places of safety and help to build a child's sense of responsible self-efficacy' (Edwards and Apostolov, 2007, p. 74). The National Evaluation of the Children's Fund found that much of the focus was on 'individual children rather than the on the processes by which they came to be excluded' (Barnes and Morris, 2007, p. 194). Echoing the discussion on the nature/culture dualism above, Evans and Pinnock (2007) note that the individual focus privileges biological and psychosocial aspects over environmental, social and structural ones, which can stigmatise individuals who do not conform to the norm; in addition it pays insufficient attention to children's own social networks and their capacity to develop coping strategies (Edwards, 2007). These ideas are also apparent in the construction offered by Katz (2008, 2011), discussed in 4.5 below, and

are particularly pertinent to open access playwork funded in areas of deprivation. Within this paradigm also lies the discourse of resilience, again largely conceived as something that an individual needs to develop, occluding the interconnectedness of people and place and the impact of structural inequalities (Felner and DeVries, 2013) and of structural and symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) as discussed in Chapter 10.

4.4.3 Children as investments:

The modern era of British history was one of enormous social, political and economic change. The uncertainty this produced led to intense debates and concerns about the present and the future. One way of protecting and ensuring the future has been the control of childhood through developing and asserting a notion of proper childhood. As Hendrick (1997b, p. 60) notes, this

has been elaborately and carefully refined in accordance with the principles of medicine, psychology and education on the one hand and, on the other, in relation to the political goals of universal welfare and a popular commitment to the family.

The growing state interest in children's health and education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ran parallel to a political concern for the state of the nation and its ability to compete on the world stage:

In line with anxieties about poverty, the effects of slum life, foreign competition and 'national efficiency', these children were given a new social and political identity; they became ... 'Children of the Nation' (Hendrick, 1997a, p. 41).

Such a notion could be seen in the previous government's Children's Plan (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2007), whose strapline was: 'Building Brighter Futures'. It is at its most stark in the foreword to the Schools White Paper (Department for Education [DfE], 2010, p. 3):

what really matters [in education] is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future.

Children thus become a repository for hope for the future, both their own and that of the nation. The economic focus instrumentalises this hope and closes down opportunities for more liberating forms of hope that children and young people may seek for themselves

through their everyday play (Lester and Russell, 2013a; Katz, 2011). These constructions of hope are discussed in more depth in Chapter 9.

4.4.4 The liberationist/paternalist dualism

All the problems of social life present as a choice between libertarian and authoritarian solutions (Ward, 1961, p. 193).

The 1960s was a time of fundamental shifts in moral values and liberalising legislation, and the Children's Rights Movement developed 'largely under the influence of the "new permissiveness", revolutionary student politics, feminism, and other radical critiques of authority' (Hendrick, 1997a, p. 97). Franklin and Franklin (1996) show how the movement reflects the tensions between notions of participation (liberationism) and protection (paternalism). Acknowledging that children's rights have been a recorded issue in social thinking since Thomas Spence published *The Rights of Infants* in 1796, they identify three clear phases to the movement in the United Kingdom. The first was a focus on participation rights during the 1970s; the second, a shift in the early 1980s to protection rights for children, with a colonisation of the movement by adults; the third, marked by the Children Act, 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC), brought together the diverse aspirations of the libertarian and protectionist agendas. Two key articles highlight the dualism inherent in the UNCRC: article 3 states that 'In all actions concerning children ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'; article 12 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child' (UNCRC, 1989). Protectionists maintain that children are unable to protect themselves from harm, abuse, mistreatment, exploitation, subjugation, or negligence by others because they are vulnerable, incompetent, and lacking in life experiences. Liberationists argue that children have different competencies and these very protections are a denial of rights that render children unable to protect themselves. Forced by a protectionist conception of childhood into dependency, they become dependent, their contributions and competencies overlooked.

In his overview of the last 40 years of approaches to participation, Hart (2009) notes that whilst the UNCRC has led to a growth in formal consultation with children, by contrast, there has been a corresponding reduction in their ability to self-organise, to participate in everyday life in their neighbourhoods and to interact informally with adults. Participation

became a buzz word for the Labour government (1997-2010) and has been critiqued as little more than a form of consumer survey (Cockburn, 2005), or tokenistic responses to policy demands (Clark and Percy-Smith, 2006). Badham (2004) suggests that participation is not politically neutral: whilst the rhetoric is of empowerment, such empowerment is only tolerated if expressed in ways acceptable to adults.

This dualism is particularly relevant for playworkers given the sector's official assertion that 'children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons' (PPSG, 2005). Yet these Principles also state that 'All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children'. The libertarian basis for the original adventure playgrounds (Kozlovsky, 2006, 2008; Ward, 1961) formed a strong foundation for this understanding of the value of children's self-organised play; this is set against the dominant developmentalist, technical, future-focused and risk averse protectionism of policy paradigms that affect relationships between playworkers and children. Such tensions are evident in the General Comment No. 17 on Article 31 of the UNCRC (UNCRC, 2013) and highlight the difficulties inherent in policymaking for a phenomenon as troubling as play.

4.4.5 Policy paradigms and play

Alongside policies directed at children and young people, attention needs to be paid to generic and incremental changes in the delivery of public services since the Conservative government (1979-1997) began to marketise public sector services through the introduction of consumer choice, Compulsory Competitive Tendering, and the privatisation of national industries. This shift towards a neoliberal ideology provided a foundation for 'New Public Management' (NPM), with its focus on efficiency, contracted outcomes and outputs, standardised measures of performance and quality, and public accountability (Dahlberg and Moss, 2008; Banks, 2004). At the heart of the Labour government's *Every Child Matters* agenda (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2004), underpinning playwork practice during the time of the fieldwork, were five outcomes for children, each broken down further into specific performance indicators. They were that children should be healthy, stay safe, achieve and enjoy, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being. The policy paradigms described above can be seen clearly across these five outcomes; within the NPM approach, service providers (including playworkers) had to show how far they met those relevant for their service.

These policy paradigms have affected and been affected by understandings of the nature and value of childhood and children's play and also by the everyday social practices of children themselves, whose play is often perceived by adults as needing some form of control. In their analysis of key policy documents relating to children and young people during the Labour administration, Powell and Wellard (2008) show that there was no coherent understanding of play. Those policies relating directly to children and young people tended to have an instrumental view of play, where play was commandeered to help meet departmental targets and objectives or could help deliver specific outcomes such as helping children to learn (particularly in the early years), preventing obesity, developing social skills, reducing crime. What much of the contemporary research evidence on children's play shows (Lester and Russell, 2008a, 2010a) is that its value is intrinsic, and that benefits (immediate and not only deferred) accrue from self-organisation and agency, from play's spontaneity, flexibility, unpredictability, pointlessness and adaptiveness rather than any specific content, skill rehearsal or activity. This tension between play's intrinsic and instrumental value lies at the heart of the dialectic of playwork, since playwork as a public service requires funding, and in the current outcome-focussed policy paradigms, playworkers need to find a way of articulating instrumental (exchange) value whilst still supporting play's intrinsic (use) value.

Public provision for children's play has always been driven by whatever 'problem' of childhood was exercising the government and society at that time (Cranwell, 2003). Since the 1870 Elementary Education Act paved the way for compulsory school attendance, the institutionalisation of childhood has expanded, and play provision has been a part of that process. Cranwell's (2000, 2003, 2007) analysis of the history of play provision shows how policy has corralled play in the name of physical and moral health, school attendance, social education, crime prevention and so on – similar themes to today. In the immediate post-war period, play provision tended to be through fixed equipment playgrounds in parks, sometimes with activity sessions, or through voluntary groups such as scouts and church-based youth groups, or through play centres running after school sessions in school, these activities being aimed at working class children as 'a means of supplying the vitamins to the child's inadequate recreational diet' (Mays, 1957, cited in Cranwell, 2007, p. 64).

Alongside this was the advent of the adventure playground, first introduced into England in the immediate post-war period by Lady Allen of Hurtwood after her visit to the junk playground in Emdrup, Denmark. This innovation is fundamental to this study, because the

contemporary ethos for playwork derives from the adventure playground movement, if somewhat altered by shifts in political ideology, policy and constructs of childhood and play. These playgrounds sprung up in the spaces left by wartime bombs and were based on the idea of providing waste materials and tools, and the permissive supervision of a playleader, to create spaces where children could build dens, light fires and engage in other forms of outdoor play. Mostly developed and run by voluntary organisations, they were welcomed by the authorities as an effective response to a rise in delinquency amongst working class boys (Cranwell, 2007), and by the 1960s local authorities had become involved in provision. In his analysis of the history of adventure playgrounds, Kozlovsky (2008, p. 172) argues that:

Enlightened societies take up the obligation to provide children with the means of play, yet children do not possess play as their right, as it is subjected, just like education, to the social and political designs of others.

Although permissiveness and democracy, even anarchy, were at the heart of the adventure playground endeavour, Kozlovsky suggests this was aimed ultimately at meeting policy's instrumental goals. Out of anarchy and freedom would come an understanding of democracy and citizenship.

The involvement of local authorities, either in grant-aiding or directly managing playgrounds, led to the introduction of conditions and requirements. Much of this was to do with safety, with the effect of curtailing the freedom the original concept had afforded children. In parallel, playgrounds themselves grew, in size and number, but also in the complexity and adult-led design of the structures and buildings (Shier, 1984). They began to acquire huts, and this presented a new range of challenges for playworkers (Benjamin, 1974). The advent of safety restrictions, through the Health & Safety at Work Act (1975) made it difficult to remain true to the original ethos, with many adventure playgrounds being closed or modified, purchasing play structures from catalogues rather than building them, and running programmes of indoor activities. The 1989 Children Act heralded major changes for playwork. The inspection and registration of services for young children were extended from services for children under five to children under eight years, thereby requiring playwork settings to register. Inspections were undertaken by those in the early years and education sector, bringing a powerful developmental and educational ethos, amplified by the growth in out-of-school childcare (often on school premises) during the 1990s and beyond.

During the New Labour Government (1997 to 2010), there was a plethora of policies and initiatives aimed at children, young people and families, most notably the *Every Child Matters* agenda (DfES, 2004), the Children Act 2004 (establishing a Children's Commissioner), and the Childcare Act 2006 (McNeish and Gill, 2006). The Comprehensive Spending Review of services for children, young people and families led to the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007) and to the first English Play Strategy, launched the following year (DCSF, 2008a). The strategy included an ambitious, target-driven programme in the short term for new and refurbished play areas and a longer term aim of play-friendly communities. The change of government following the 2010 election, however, meant that the Play Strategy was scrapped, and no further progress was made on the longer term spatial aims.

Running alongside this was a range of largely punitive measures to tackle youth crime, including Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Youth Offending Teams, Parenting Orders and the Respect Agenda (Armstrong, 2006; Goldson, 2002). Muncie (2006) shows how the risk and prevention paradigm co-existed with both authoritarian strategies and concepts of social inclusion, partnership and moral discourse. What emerges for practitioners in the face of this hybridity is 'continual negotiations between opposing, yet overlapping, discursive practices' (Muncie, 2006, p. 770). This returns the discussion to the victim/threat dualism, which, together with the investment paradigm, is evident in the final construction of childhood considered.

4.5 Childhood as spectacle, childhood as waste

The opening section of this chapter considered the contributions of sociologists and the new paradigm for understanding childhood (Prout, 2005). Alongside this, other disciplines were also bringing a more critical gaze to Piagetian dominance, including critical psychology (Morss, 1996), cultural psychology (Rogoff, 2005; Cole, 1996) and play scholars (Sutton-Smith, 1997). A significant contribution came from the developing discipline of children's geographies (early examples include Aitken, 2001; Holloway and Valentine, 2000a, 2000b; McKendrick, 2000), and this has informed much of the analysis of fieldwork, particularly the attention paid to children's relationship with space and place, socio-spatial inequalities and the politics of space.

This section considers a specific construct of childhood from a geo-political perspective that speaks well to both CHAT and the perspective taken in Chapter 8: the work of Marxist geographer Cindi Katz (2008, 2011) on childhood as spectacle. The concept of spectacle is borrowed from French Situationist Guy Debord (1967, p. 12), who argued that direct

experience in the modern world had been reduced to mere representation, and life 'presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles'. Childhood, for Katz, has become a site of accumulation and commodification. Although she writes of childhood in the United States of America (USA), the ontological insecurity she describes applies also to the UK (Bauman, 2000; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994), where the precariousness of social life manifests as anxiety about the future across three domains: the political economic future (the world of work, production and consumption), the geopolitical future (the place of the USA/Europe/UK on the world stage) and the environmental future (climate change, pollution).

As discussed earlier and developed in Chapter 9, childhood is a repository for hopes and fears about the future, and the socially constructed nature of childhood renders it 'readily available for mobilization around moral panics and the definition of social ills' (Katz, 2008, p. 7). Such insecurity manifests itself in attempts to control and make perfect aspects of private life, including children and childhood. The quest for perfect childhoods can be seen in practices such as hothousing, competition for entry to the best schools and universities, extra tuition, hypervigilance and myriad parenting guides. Adults invest time, emotion and money into making their children's childhoods the best they can be, equipping them for an uncertain future, keeping them as safe as possible through a range of controls and constraints. In this way, childhood becomes a commodified image of the real experience of childhood, it becomes spectacle, and the practice of social reproduction becomes a site of accumulation. The image of the perfect child exceeds the reality of everyday experience and places a focus on having rather than on being; it is a site of accumulation and commodification. The reduction of social relations to representation and image makes perfection both desired and unattainable, both individualising and providing a distraction from collective social concerns.

Within the construct of child as spectacle, Katz (2011, p. 50) proposes three interrelated and 'analytically inseparable' configurations: the child as accumulation strategy, as ornament, and as waste. As accumulation strategy, the child becomes a site of economic, psychic and emotional investment. This is where the commodification is clearest, in the niche-marketing of hothousing and overscheduling of children. Added to this is the increase in diagnoses of hyperkinetic, cognitive and affective disorders reflecting anxieties of imperfection and feeding the pharmaceuticalisation of everyday life.

The child as ornament can, in one sense, be seen as the materialisation of childhood as spectacle. This is the child as bauble and fashion accessory, the doll to be clothed in apparel from a burgeoning children's fashion industry. In addition, the ornament is a form of essentialising of childhood innocence so that anxieties over the loss of childhood innocence can be invoked to fuel the desire for vigilance and control. An extension of Katz's description might be applied to the current 'new romantic' wave of campaigns attempting to reconnect children with nature, as exemplified through Louv's (2005) work entitled '*Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from nature deficit disorder*', a title that embodies discursive formations of redemption, innocence, natural childhood and medicalisation but ultimately disempowers children and promotes yet more control of their lives in the form of programmes and projects (Russell, 2012b). The links between this movement and the child as accumulation strategy can be seen in a blog post from Louv entitled 'Want your children to get into Harvard? Tell 'em to go outside!' (Louv, 2011).

The third configuration of the child as waste has particular relevance to this study. The fear of a wasted youth feeds the niche marketing that underpins the first two configurations. Those children and families who do not conform to or cannot achieve the normative ideal fulfil this function. Many of the children in this study might fit into this configuration, and were subject to myriad 'waste management' interventions through welfare, education, health and justice systems that Katz (2008, 2011) describes, and even, perhaps, through playwork itself. The Children's Fund described above is an example of such intervention. As highlighted in Chapter 1, many open access playwork settings are sited in areas of economic and social deprivation, and as Ridge (2009, p. 2) notes:

Poverty permeates every facet of children's lives from economic and material disadvantages, through social and relational constraints and exclusions, to the personal and more hidden aspects of poverty associated with shame, sadness and the fear of difference and stigma.

One manifestation of child as waste that Katz (2011, p. 51) describes is what she calls the 'school to prison pipeline'. Again, her focus is on the US but parallels can be drawn with the UK, often theorised through the lens of class stratification (Reay, 2004, 2005, 2007). The marketised rhetoric of parent choice in education (re-emphasised in the 2006 Schools White Paper and amplified in the 2010 Schools White Paper) has led to a spatialisation of exclusion and exclusivity. As middle class parents exercise the choice to remove their children from what are judged poorly performing inner city schools, the schools have

become imagined and represented through daily narratives as places of waste. Standardisation, testing regimes and league tables, all technologies of 'school effectiveness', measure against an idealised norm, the schools' performance judged as only as good as its pupils' academic achievements, with significant gaps along class lines (Ball, 2010). Family investment in children's education beyond the school day (through educational toys and technology, expert advice and private tuition) underlies these class-based performance gaps. This is Katz's accumulation configuration in action, as insurance against 'wasted' years of education. It is reflected in poor performance results for schools whose children have not had this investment and whose families have little choice about where to send them, creating a downward spiral exacerbated by punitive policy responses (Lupton, 2005).

Educational disaffection, failure and exclusion are identified as risk factors for future criminality (YJB, 2005), and school responses to truancy, minor infractions and major disruptions tend to be based on an individualised approach, labelling particular children as problems (Kemshall *et al.*, 2006). The risk paradigm in social policy, discussed in section 4.4.2, predicts future criminality and designs interventions aimed at prevention. Such interventions may be understood as technologies of waste management. Armstrong (2006) notes how despite the overall fall in crimes committed by young people, a media-led moral panic about young people being out of control has been accompanied by an increase in the use of custodial sentences. Alongside this are measures designed to render children and young people out of place in the public domain through the construct of antisocial behaviour, which can range from misdemeanours and incivility to more serious crime. These measures include curfews, dispersal orders, antisocial behaviour orders and the ultrasonic dispersal device known as the *Mosquito* (Crawford, 2009; Waiton, 2001).

Waste management ... is a big business, of course. It is a key site of social investment through the prison system, military, and other operations of organized violence; through killing labor practices; and through more routine management strategies such as the everyday corrosive violence of neglect, disease, debt peonage, and poverty. These material social forms and practices are means of channeling and containing excessed populations whose labor may be of little use in the present, but might be profitably tapped at another time or place. These bodies must not only be contained, but their visible containment serves to discipline those who are not waste (Katz, 2011, p. 55).

These show the interpenetration of productions of childhood through knowledge and social practice; however, they pay little critical attention to children's own playful social practices as Nietzschean 'everyday poetry' that speaks dialectically to the power of knowledge production and adult social practices to complete the triad of the production of childhood. Katz (2011) sees some opportunity for liberatory moments in children's play, citing the exploited children she saw in Sudan who, in their play, re-enacted their exploitative work experiences using the debris to hand, in a form of mimesis that both replicated and transcended their everyday lives. In play, these lives were built anew in small utopian shifts that reworked the conditions of their labour so that no one suffered, offering, for the time of playing, moments of hopefulness.

4.6 Adult-child relations, power and othering

[The] study of children's lives ... is essentially the study of child-adult relations
(Mayall, 2002, p. 21).

Knowledge produces particular constructions of childhood, some of which are reproduced and amplified in policy and the media and become discursive formations. Being adult productions, they are infused with adult desires, assumptions and moral panics about the nature and value of childhood and their role in social reproduction. Children, too, are affected by and affect these discursive formations, which are played out in social practices of child-child and adult-child relations. This section returns to the adult/child dichotomy to explore adult-child relations alongside the linked dualism of being and becoming. It uses this as the basis for exploring conceptualisations of adult-child relations that can transcend these dualisms in ways that acknowledge both children's own agency and experiences and also their interdependent relations with adults.

The early writings of the sociologists of childhood, as has been shown, were critical of the future focus of developmental psychology, saying that it obscures children's lives in the here and now and constructs them merely as human becomings (for example, Mayall, 2003), and adult-child relations as hierarchical, with competent adults providing dependent children with the skills and knowledge to become adults. Yet, as has also been shown, this simplistic dualism reduces both adults and children to one or the other.

The being/becoming division ... did at least allow for some very limited
recognition of the diversity of human life. Like many other dichotomies, such as

male/female, gay/straight and black/white, however, it allowed for only two ways of being human and asserted one as standard and the other as deviant (Lee, 2001, p. xiv).

Essentialising childhood as a period of incompetence ignores any specific skills that children may have, and equally problematically bestows full competence on all adults, assuming they have concluded their developmental journey (Uprichard, 2007; Prout, 2005). Lee (2001) shows how the impermanent nature of life, with shifting employment, relationships and unknown futures means that adults too are in a state of becoming. The competences that today's adults have will not necessarily be the ones that today's children will need in their adult lives, since times change. If adult rationality and skills are seen as a benchmark for competence, this too can obscure competences that children have in navigating and negotiating the particular landscapes of childhood: most children are better at being children than adults are. At the same time, to see children only as beings does not pay attention to their dependence on adults for care and on their 'remembered past and anticipated future' (Prout, 2005, p. 66).

Conceiving adult/child as relational rather than dualistic offers more opportunity to acknowledge diversity, hybridity and the fluid and interrelated nature of being and becoming. Two conceptualisations of adult-child relations are offered here by way of exploration: that of 'otherness' (Jones, 2008; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005) and Johansson's (2011) Deleuzian adaptation of relations as an event.

Otherness ... does not just mean simple separation and unknowability. It is more [a] subtle idea of the knowable and unknowable, the familiar and the strange, the close and the distance, being co-present in adult-child relations (Jones, 2008, p. 197).

Jones (2008) identifies two interrelated conceptualisations of 'other'. The first is the notion of alterity, the unbridgeable space between the self and the other; the second is an extension of othering that becomes imbued with power relations, where assumptions are made from the perspective of the self about the nature and worth of the other. The first understanding has much to offer playworkers, the second can be seen as colonising or totalising. Levinas (1969) asserted that the modernist desire to know everything results in a kind of knowledge that is understood through existing worldviews; in this way something unknown is turned into something known from the viewpoint of the perceiver. This could be the basis of the perception of children as adults-in-the-making rather than different

beings: in trying to understand children as incomplete adults, they are denied their otherness and turned into the same. An ethical encounter, according to Levinas, requires accepting the alterity of the Other and resisting trying to understand them through our own totalising concepts, categories and classifications (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005). This means being comfortable with uncertainty and not knowing in a relationship of responsiveness. These ideas are explored in Chapter 11.

Johansson (2011) draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1984) to propose that concepts such as 'adult' and 'child' can be seen as events rather than fixed entities with essential characteristics such as competence, maturity and so on. Rather than being pre-existing, characteristics are produced from assemblages (for example, bodies, material and symbolic artefacts, institutions, discourses) that come together to produce entities. In this construction, nothing is fixed and all elements are in a state of continual becoming, either 'becoming-the-same', where the existing order is maintained, or 'becoming-other', a line of flight or deterritorialisation, escaping categories. Becoming, rather than the opposite of being, becomes a general condition, and both childhood and adulthood become concepts that are produced from different assemblages. This construction creates space for Lefebvre's third moment of poesy to enter the discussion again, and has much to offer conceptualisations of playworker-child relations. However:

It is not random chance what happens in encounters between adults and children in areas and activities where adults and children meet. Every element brings its history along with it, consisting of materiality, meanings, values and presuppositions of the world ... Childhood and adulthood are not constructed from the bottom each time, instead the constructions should be understood as translations or repetitions of collectively shared conceptions, experiences and conditions (Johansson, 2011, p. 105).

Given this, Johansson identifies four constructions of adulthood that were produced from different events in her research with children: *the adult-in-charge*, a figure of authority who knows what to do; *included in commonality*, where the adult is invited to share children's worlds and experiences; *the incompetent child*, where the adult, incompetent in being a child, has to be shown by children how to play a game or participate in 'childish' things; and *adult-as-other*, where it is the children who do the 'othering', positioning themselves as innocent victims of unfair adult authority. In these events, adults can perform to these child-imposed constructs to become-the-same, or they can disturb them to become-other. Adulthoods that emerge from these events, whilst being affected by and affecting the

assemblages that produce them, offer an alternative to static, positional relations that situate characteristics within the adult or the child, as, for example, with the liberationist/paternalist dualism discussed earlier.

In her essay entitled 'Theory as Liberatory Practice', bell hooks (1994, p. 59) cites Terry Eagleton (*The Significance of Theory*):

Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine social practices as 'natural', and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things differently.

Her argument is that theory itself is a form of social practice, replete with power inequalities, and so the voiceless should support each other in engaging with intellectual theory and giving voice to their ideas. For her, this is to name the pain of Black women. For children, who 'are perhaps the most perplexing [Other] because they are intimately part of our lives and they are, in large part, constituted by what we are and what we do' (Aitken and Herman, 1997, p. 63), this is particularly difficult, as their voices speak a different language from that of the academy. Perhaps what is required is that adults listen to children's voice as expressed in their lived moments of play, for this is the space of resistance and liberation.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered how adults have sought to know and understand childhood, and the relationship between this knowledge and social practices emanating from social policy. Approaches to theorising adult-child relations are introduced that offer strategies to avoid the colonisation of childhood by adults that operates through regimes of truth and totalising policy projects. There will, and should be, aspects of children's lives that remain unknowable for adults. In an adaptation of Lefebvre's dialectical triad, the argument has been made that childhood is produced through the interdependent and dialectical elements of knowledge, social practice and play. To date, most attention has been directed, both within playwork literature and playwork practice to the first two dialectical moments that combine to produce and reproduce regimes of truth, the idea that this is the way

things are. Much less attention has been given to the third moment of playful resistance, and the argument presented here is that this offers a useful counter to the hegemony of dominant discursive formations for all those who work with children, but particularly for playworkers for whom play should be their main focus. The relationship between these three moments is dialectical, and care should also be taken not to instrumentalise moments of play and poesy, thereby commodifying and reducing them. The discussion chapters aim to foreground these third moments in their relation to the first two in order to offer a different way of understanding childhood, play and playwork.

An illustration of this triad is offered from my granddaughter that shows how she both performs and resists hegemonic developmentalism. Like many three-year-olds, she is sometimes too enthusiastic when playing rough and tumble, scratching and biting, seemingly enjoying the sense of power derived from her co-player's response. When adults tell her that she should understand that scratching and biting hurt, and these are not nice things to do to other people, her ingenious response is, 'Maybe when I'm a bit bigger I'll understand'.

Chapter 5: The paradoxes of play

It is customary at the outset of an inquiry into play to say something about 'taking play seriously' ... Why not discuss play playfully? Playfulness is before all an *attitude*, an orientation to the world, premised by the notion that life is too important to be taken seriously (Combes, 2000, p. 1)

5.1 Introduction

The opening quotation above, and that from Caillois below, illustrate the paradoxes of play. Wrestling with theories about the nature and value of play constitutes, for me, playing with ideas about play, even as it is also serious and essentially work. Instantly, the dualisms of playful/serious and play/work are disturbed. Does one have greater value than the other? Not according to Lefebvre's (2009) triadic dialectics, where social practice, knowledge and poesy (or play) co-exist dynamically. This chapter introduces the contested (and adult) activity of knowledge production on the nature and value of children's play, specifically looking at key paradoxes within the research. It is not offered as a comprehensive or systematic review of the literature on play. Rather, its purpose is to highlight the contradictions to be found within the adult lenses that are brought to bear on play research and play theory, since these contradictions lie at the heart of the dialectics of playwork. Fundamentally, these are contradictions of value, since

What practically all theorists of this [twentieth] century have had in common has been the desire to show that play is useful in some way or other (Sutton-Smith, 1999, p. 240).

This desire is even stronger when it comes to studying and valorising children's play, given dominant understandings of the nature and value of childhood discussed in the previous chapter. This instrumentalisation of play through powerful knowledge production and attendant influences on social practice has the effect of diminishing – even denouncing – play's purposelessness, nonsense and irrationality unless it can, paradoxically, be shown to be of instrumental value.

The dialectic between play's usefulness and its pointlessness is perhaps best illustrated through the paradox of play's rationality and irrationality in theory and practice, and this

forms the opening section of the chapter. From this flow other paradoxes, namely play's freedoms and constraints; the relationship between the real and the not-real, and between play and not-play; and play's temporality in terms of past, present and future. Having considered these paradoxes, the conclusion returns to the fundamental contradiction underpinning playwork, that between play's intrinsic and instrumental value and playwork's parallel (but different) dialectic of use and exchange value, to argue for not taking play seriously as it is too important for that.

5.2 The many lenses of play scholarship

Play is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often of money (Caillois, 2001, pp. 5-6).

Caillois makes this statement at the start of a book that devotes itself to the study of play's cultural aspects. On one level, of course, he is right: play makes little or no direct contribution to the instrumental aspects of survival. Ethologists note that play only takes place in what they term a 'relaxed field' (Burghardt, 2005; Fagen, 1975), namely when the basic needs of survival and security have been met. There would need to be some surplus of resources (Burghardt, 2005) for them to be spent (or, in some discourses, wasted) on such a seemingly non-productive behaviour as playing.

Herein lies one of the many contradictions within play scholarship. Such a sentiment sits uneasily with a parallel discourse that sees play, particularly for children, as essential to their health, well-being and development. There are those who dispute the 'relaxed field' criterion for play. Rennie (2003) cites Lorenz's (1961) study of jackdaws flying out into a storm as evidence that play is not disrupted or abandoned in the face of threat, hunger or other insecurity. Eisen (1990) records the playing of children within concentration camps of the Holocaust. Although these two conceptualisations of play (that is, its seeming lack of contribution to immediate survival and its asserted importance in health, well-being and development) need not be in opposition, they underlie to a great extent the playwork sector's difficulty in gaining recognition for their work within a social policy context. The sector seeks to show how useful play is – and by extension, public provision for play, although these are not the same thing – for children, communities and society as a whole (for example, Play England, 2009, 2010a; Cole-Hamilton and Gill, 2002; National Playing

Fields Association [NPFA] *et al.*, 2000). It has been argued that some play scholarship romanticises play in a desire to show its benefits, whereas there is much in some forms of playing that is cruel, harmful or pathological (Henricks, 2006; Burghardt, 2005; Sutton-Smith, 1997).

Ever since play was considered a worthy topic for academics to research, its nature, forms and function have been debated and disputed (Burghardt, 2005; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Moyles, 1989). Three grounds for the difficulty in arriving at an agreed definition of play are offered here. The first lies in its heterogeneity: playful behaviours take many forms and each form may have a different genesis and characteristics and serve different functions (Bateson, 2005; Burghardt, 2005; Sutton-Smith, 1997). Such is the diversity of play forms that some have suggested it is a 'linguistic waste-paper basket for behaviour which looks voluntary, but seems to have no obvious biological or social use' (Millar, 1968, p. 11) or a 'trash-can concept for a motley set of behavioural phenomena that share superficial characteristics' (Burghardt, 2005, p. 11).

A second complication stems from the 'narrow lens' (Henricks, 2006, p. 7) through which each academic discipline studies play. Each discipline has its own traditions, methods, paradigms and epistemologies that can be likened to the oft-quoted tale of the blind men feeling separate parts of the elephant and pronouncing on the nature of elephants from their small and limited perspectives (Else, 1999). Sutton-Smith (1997) summarises these discipline-specific perspectives on play as seven rhetorics, showing how each discipline limits itself to its own arena (be it the classroom, school playground, laboratory or other setting), advances through largely uncontested paradigms and pronounces its own truth. Three of his rhetorics are ancient: play as power, identity or fate, corresponding to the ancient Greek categories of *agon* (games of contest); *mimesis* (collective rituals and carnivals); and *chaos* (games of chance). Three are modern: play as progress (learning and development); imagination (art, scientific discovery, culture); and selfhood (freedom and personal happiness). The seventh rhetoric, spanning both ancient and modern, is frivolity: play as subversion, tomfoolery, and wasting time. The ancient rhetorics, particularly those of play as identity and play as power are largely absent from many contemporary accounts of children's play (although they find a place in the discourse of anti-social behaviour), since these are the play forms that disturb or offend adults (Russell, 2006). The third ancient rhetoric, that of play as fate has gained recognition in recent years in the debate on risk in play (Ball, Gill and Spiegel, 2008). The dialectic between ancient and modern

rhetorics of play is discussed again below using Spariosu's (1989) ideas of western conceptualisations of both play and power as swaying between two poles of 'pre-rational' (ancient – and, arguably, postmodern) and 'rational' (modern).

Henricks (2006) identifies five academic disciplines that have to date dominated the study of play: education, psychology, folklore, ethology and anthropology. To these I would add the more recent broad field known as brain sciences as well as the developing fields of sociologies and geographies of childhood, although, as Henricks identifies, there is little sociological treatment of play itself. In addition, philosophy has had something to say about play (Ryall, Russell and MacLean, 2013), and moral philosophy is a pertinent subject for playworkers. However, it is the disciplines of education and developmental psychology that predominate, seeking to show how play helps children develop and learn. This is what Smith (1988; 2005) calls the 'play ethos', Sutton-Smith (1997) the 'progress rhetoric', or what is also referred to as 'developmentalism' (Wyness, 2006; Mayall, 2003), as discussed in Chapter 4.

The relationship between play, learning and development is unclear, and, according to Sutton-Smith (1997, 2003) is based more on analogy, metaphor and self-referential presupposition than evidence. Smith (2005) suggests that children's play has been 'co-opted' in modern, industrialised societies into formal schooling as a way of improving cognitive and social skills. He criticises the assumed link between play and development, saying that it distorts findings from empirical research and has influenced the play research agenda. He also suggests that adult support for pretend play within early years settings may have contributed to an increase in this type of play from earlier, simpler societies thereby contributing to a cultural evolution in play behaviours, with outcomes yet to be understood. Hakarrainen (1999) points out that if play is seen as preparation for adulthood then the content of play is elevated above the process. Once this is the case, play may as well be the same thing as imitation, two phenomena Piaget (1962) is at pains to separate. Fagen (1975) asks that if the purpose of play is to learn specific survival skills, why not just learn them? What is it that makes play, a pastime that Caillois (1961) describe as wasteful, so special? Fagen suggests that the characteristic of play as exploration distinguishes it from straight imitation; Burghardt (2005), on the other hand, separates play and exploration as discrete phenomena. If development is defined as a 'heterogeneous and complex mix of interacting entities and influences that produces the life cycle of an organism' (Oyama, 2000, p. 1), then any and every experience can be said to be

contributing to development and learning throughout the whole of life, not just the period of juvenility. This means that play does have a role in development, but claims for this relationship therefore need to pay attention to its uniqueness both as a disposition and as behaviour. However, this cannot be done through any definitive and fixed delimiting or bracketing of play from other modes of being in the world:

Modern accounts fix specific meanings to play, pinned like a butterfly for observation and categorisation. By doing so it isolates children's play from the heterogeneous materials, flows and forces which surround them (Lester, 2013, p. 135).

Most attempts at defining play approach the problem through listing characteristics or criteria (Burghardt, 2005; Garvey, 1977; Caillois, 1961; Huizinga, 1955); through a comparison with what is not play (Henricks, 2006; Fagen, 1975; Piaget, 1962); and/or through emphasising play as a process, an orientation or an approach rather than a specific activity (Henricks, 2006; Denzin, 1982; Bruner, 1977; Piaget, 1962). There are similarities among play's characteristics within the various definitions, yet each characteristic can be challenged if not contradicted by another characteristic. Often, it is possible to apply individual characteristics or criteria to other, non-ludic behaviours: for example, the characteristic of positive affect is not exclusive to play and can indeed be applied at least occasionally to non-ludic behaviours such as work, imitation, learning, exploration, carnival and so on. It is perhaps for this reason that those attempting a list of criteria usually suggest that they need to be taken as a whole rather than individually (Burghardt, 2005; Garvey, 1977).

This leads on to the problem of contradictions between characteristics and highlights play's paradoxical, dialectical nature, the third complication bedevilling any accepted grand theory. Play itself is full of contradictions. Sutton-Smith (1997, p. 1) summarises this:

[C]lassical scholar Mihai Spariosu (1989) calls play 'amphibolous', which means it goes in two directions at once and is not clear. Victor Turner (1969), the anthropologist, calls play 'liminal' or 'liminoid', meaning that it occupies a threshold between reality and unreality ... Geoffrey Bateson (1955), biologist, suggests that play is a paradox because it both is and is not what it appears to be.

The remainder of this chapter uses the articulated and implicit contradictions within play as a framework for discussion, seeking to address these paradoxes dialectically.

5.3 Contradiction One: rational or irrational?

Sprioso (1989) suggests that both play and power need to be understood within the context of a western mentality that sways between two poles: a pre-rational and a rational pole. Although, as its name suggests, the pre-rational predates the rational, it has by no means been entirely superseded by it and indeed there continues to be a dialectical tension between these poles. Pre-rational power is physical, immediate and maintained by violence; rational power is more mediated and shared, once removed and regulated more by rules than by violence. In this sense, power becomes more of an idea rather than something concrete; however, the continued existence of war and conflict confirms that pre-rational power is still alive and, literally, kicking. The ancient 'rhetorics' of play, described variously by Sprioso (1989), Sutton-Smith (1997) and Caillois (1961), highlight the dialectical relationship between power and play. In their original form they were pre-rational, but they have been rationalised in their modern equivalents:

- *Agon*: for the ancient Greeks, play belonged to the gods, and people were their play things, with *agon* being the war games of the gods. In its rationalised form, this kind of play is seen in competitive games and sport.
- *Chaos/alea*: the play of the gods was unpredictable, subject to their whims rather than any predictable laws of science or justice. This chaotic pre-rational play, when transformed into rational play, becomes playing with chance: risk taking, gambling, adrenalin sports, for example.
- *Mimesis*: this form is what we now know, in rational play discourse, as performance, representations of life through various forms of art or play. Applied to children's play, this would include a number of forms of pretend play such as role play, sociodramatic and dramatic play, fantasy play, symbolic play. Life as we know it, as well as life as we don't know it and imagine, fear or wish it, can be played out in this theatre. Sprioso suggests that pre-rational mimesis was less of a representation of life and more of an imitative performance intended to 'presence' something, in the sense of invoking or calling forth. This calling forth is generally to do with emotions: through ritualistic rhythms, music and other performance techniques, the audience identifies with the player and can experience the

emotions being invoked. This idea still exists today in the arts, from the catharsis of tragedy through to the emotions aroused in horror films or comedies.

To these play forms, Spariosu identifies a fourth, that of freedom. In pre-rational forms of play, this is about the power of *agon* and *alea*; in its rational forms it is about the framing of situations, such as carnivals and other cultural rituals, where social conventions are temporarily relaxed. Caillois (1961) also has a fourth play form, that of *ilinx*, or 'dizzy play', where players deliberately create disequilibrium for the sensations it provokes.

Modern play scholarship developed from 'classical' theories emanating from the Enlightenment that were influenced by theories of evolution and progress, and these sought to emphasise rational explanations for play. Much of rational play theorising recognises that play includes elements of the irrational and therefore attempts to address this. For example, Schiller (1795) suggested that what he called the 'play drive' can mediate between natural, physical drives and logic and thought, between animal sensuous experiences and rational, moral behaviour, to create aesthetic potential. However, in his thinking, this was only the case with certain kinds of play and imagination (what he called 'transcendental' play and not 'material' play). There are echoes here of a class-based analysis that privileges 'high' culture and seeks to control forms of play perceived as base (Laxton, 2011), picking up again Katz's (2008, 2011) ideas of waste management discussed in Chapter 4.

When the certainties of the modern era began to dissolve, irrational theories of play saw a resurgence. Spariosu (1989) and Henricks (2001) situate the beginnings of this with Nietzsche's return to understanding the world as chaotic and unpredictable, the world of Dionysus rather than the Apollonian world of progress and order. For him, 'reality ... must be understood as a continual process of becoming ... people themselves must play boldly with no assurances for what they do' (Henricks, 2001, p. 55). Nietzsche paved the way for the postmodernists' return to irrationality as a hallmark of play. Fink (2012 [1960], p. 12) saw play as a metaphor for a world that can contain both Dionysian and Apollonian elements. The idea of play as an openness to the unpredictability and possibilities of the play of the world is also what underpins many of the French poststructuralists such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and Deleuze (Henricks, 2001). None of these writers looked specifically at the play of children, however, and in this regard, the dominant theorising remains firmly within modernist rationalisations.

Henricks (2006) draws on Weber to analyse the modern rationalisation of play. Play can be understood in a dialectical relationship between order and disorder. Irrational approaches to play involve moving from order to disorder (through the use of ritual, music, rhythm and so on, as in mimetic play described above). By contrast, much 'modern' theorising on play sees it as an individual's attempt to move from disorder to order. Henricks illustrates this through Piagetian concepts of assimilation and accommodation which, when in balance, lead to intelligent adaptation. Certain more rational forms of play are favoured and have become commodified through a burgeoning leisure industry. Yet the tensions remain: for children, whilst play can be seen operating in adult-sanctioned ways abiding by the rules of the game, it also exists in more disorderly, even rebellious forms. Sometimes, this dialectic can be seen in the discussions within the playwork sector on 'playing nicely' alongside recognising the need to test boundaries (NPFA *et al.*, 2000). The assumption here, for those seeking to promote play as a route to social harmony, is that the right form of social behaviour will emerge from these irrational and anarchic experiments, as seen in Kozlovsky's (2008) analysis of the instrumental purposes of adventure playgrounds (Chapter 4). The treatment of this more chaotic form of play varies between disciplines: at the risk of making sweeping generalisations, the psychologists would frame it as a part of the balancing process necessary for emotional health, flexibility and resilience (Sturrock, 2003; Jung, 1991 [1934]; Freud, 1962), echoed in more recent neurological and ethological studies (Spinka, Newberry and Bekoff, 2001) as the deliberate creation of uncertainty as training for the unexpected; the sociologists frame it in terms of agency (Corsaro, 2003, 2005), conflict/resistance (Marx, in Henricks, 2006) or anomie (Durkheim, in Henricks, 2006). Prout (2005, p. 113) describes the tensions for children between the safe but limiting security of adult rational order and the uncertainty and irrationality of playing:

Children strive to become what they desire to be, creating what Deleuze terms a 'line (or plane) of immanence'. The creation of this line involves a dual activity. Children plot a trajectory that negotiates the more rigid, settled structures and expectations that surround them, what Deleuze calls 'line (or plane) or organisation'. This includes such things as the family and the school, which are (relatively) segmented into separate institutions, or territories, each with their own rules or norms of behaviour ... These [rules] strive to shape children, to fix them into 'normal' patterns – thus limiting their desire and creativity but, simultaneously, creating stability and thus making the world appear more certain and less fearful. In the process children are incorporated into the plane

of organisation (which imposes its expectations of normality on them) but they also plot 'flights' away from it.

The dialectic between play's irrationality and its utility has long been recognised. Henricks (2006, p. 208) shows this was present in Huizinga's (1955) thinking, in that he 'understood that harnessing play to other social imperatives may well turn play into something else'. Such rationalisation, it may be argued, sits in a dialectical relationship to the second contradiction: the notion that playing is an act of freedom.

5.4 Contradiction Two: free, fettered or contained?

Can lightning be captured in a jar? Fundamentally, play is little more than an externalized whim – a rebelliousness of consciousness against the forms and forces of the world. Players take it upon themselves to tease or taunt reality. That altered relationship produces a flood of sensations. Players stay connected to the extent that these sensations continue to amuse or satisfy. Suddenly, satisfactions decline, interests shift, and the play moment is gone (Henricks, 2006, p. 208).

The Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005) define play as

a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

Such characteristics, or equivalents, can be found in much of the literature on play, a few examples being Huizinga (1955) and Caillois (1961) from a socio-cultural perspective; Garvey (1977) from the perspective of developmental psychology; Burghardt (2005) from ethology. A number of challenges arise directly from these espoused characteristics of play.

In scrutinising play's voluntary nature, an overall starting point may be to question at what point in playing voluntarism applies. Is it in the choice (understood as free will) to play in the first place, or does it apply to the mode, type or progression of playing, or to the choice of playmate? If the first, then this raises questions about whether play can be considered a drive, instinctual or innate; if any of these contested labels can be applied to children's motivation to play, it could be said that it is not voluntary in that sense. Observation tells us

that given the right conditions, all children will play; there does appear to be some universal disposition to play ‘anywhere and with everything’ (Colin Ward, 1978, p. 86). Exploration of this dialectic echoes the paradox discussed previously between rational and irrational forms and understandings of play, particularly in terms of how the Cartesian relationship between bodily drives and higher cognitive notions of freedom of choice might co-exist.

Rose (2005) opens his critique of contemporary biological determinism with two quotations, one from Jean-Paul Sartre and the other from Richard Dawkins, which assert diametrically opposed views on freedom and determinism respectively. Sartre (1948) claims there is no such thing as human nature and so man [sic] is free; Dawkins (1989, p. vii) states equally categorically that humans are ‘blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes’. At the Dawkins extreme, children would be at the mercy of their inherited drive to play, having no choice. Bateson and Martin (1999, para. 3) imply the existence of an innate drive to play when they state ‘Darwinian evolution has equipped animals with a set of behavioural characteristics – collectively labelled ‘play’ – that enables them to [develop]. Humans are ‘designed’ to play when young.’ Sturrock (1995) makes a similar claim, citing Schiller’s notion of the ‘play impulse’, Huizinga’s likening of play to a ‘social impulse’ and Jung’s concept of the ‘play instinct’ to suggest that play is a drive rather than a behaviour, playfully drawing on Freudian ideas of drives buried deep in the unconscious id to mint the term ‘ludido’. Sutton-Smith (1999, p. 239) gives a more measured nod in the direction of play having ‘something to do with evolution’, and Burghardt (2005, p. 10), whilst acknowledging the universality of play amongst mammals (and even other animals) suggests that the term ‘instinct’ is usually avoided in contemporary ethology.

Such avoidance is due in part to the recognition that it is not a matter of a simple dualism of free will or biological determinism. Lifespan development is a process of constant dynamic interaction, from conception to senescence, between genes, brain, body and environment in which individuals are active agents, what has been termed ‘an embodied mind, embedded in the world’ (Edelman 2006; Thompson and Varela, 2001, cited in Lester and Russell, 2008a). Returning to play, Cubitt (2009, para. 1) dissolves the nature/culture dualism at the same time as problematising freedoms within a neoliberal economy that exploits play both as a management tool and as a commodity in the games industry:

The ludic may well be instinctual, but only in the same way that hunger and sex are instinctual. Humans, mammals, are born with an interest in play, but that interest is as thoroughly socialised, as thoroughly historical, and as thoroughly open to exploitation as the other primal forces acting on the human psyche. Play can no longer be thought of as an instinctual revolt against domination, a kind of instrumental irrationality. Instead, like hunger or sex, it has become an integral element in the imbrication of the somatic into the social.

A more pragmatic challenge to the principle of children's play being freely chosen lies squarely with everyday common sense. As Sutton-Smith (1997) points out, if children play in groups then there is necessarily the need for compromise and negotiation. The language of 'choice' implies a rational weighing up of options, something that does not fit well with play's emergent, opportunistic and self-organising characteristics. Research into children's play choices (King and Howard, 2012) shows a preference for object play, but this may have been because questions about choice led to thinking about play as an activity.

A third way in which freedom can be curtailed is through socio-cultural and environmental constraints, through the interdependent availability of resources for play and 'licence' to play. There is much concern expressed regarding changes in children's play patterns, where, generally speaking, 'playing out' has declined, although it should be noted that this is not uniform across social divisions such as geography, class, ethnicity and gender (Shaw *et al.*, 2013; Page *et al.*, 2010; Mikkelsen and Christensen, 2009; Lester and Russell, 2008a). In particular, the street is still an important place for disadvantaged children; even though their neighbourhoods may be degraded and dangerous, children find collective ways to navigate these risks (Ridge, 2009; Sutton, 2008). The rise in the institutionalisation of childhood can be seen as a response to a number of anxieties about children playing out unaccompanied by adults, grounded in a range of real and imagined fears both for and of children (Gill, 2007).

Fourthly, particularly where there is more than one player, freedom is contained within play 'frames' that help to establish how players go about playing (Sturrock and Else, 1998; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Goffman, 1975; Bateson, 1955). These frames may have a physical boundary (for example, a stage, or the limits of a football pitch); they always have a co-produced symbolic one. The frame functions to separate that which takes place within (play) from that which exists without (the outside world, reality perhaps – but see section 5.4). Players co-operate to hold the frame in place through a sophisticated combination of rules, rituals, communication and meta-communication that allows them to understand

that what is taking place is play. Without these, the play falls apart. Role-playing requires that the players accept the roles played, and although these may be negotiated or contested, there is all the same an acknowledgement that roles will be played. In rough and tumble play, play faces, pulled punches and self-handicapping are all signals that send the message that this is social play and not aggression (Panksepp, 2007; Smith, Smees and Pellegrini, 2004). Thus it can be suggested that the freedom of play is possible because of its containment within frames:

The implicit or explicit limits that bind play in space and time make it safe for the player to surrender to the playful urge, take chances, try on new roles, and attempt tasks that, under normal circumstances, might be avoided as too difficult or unpleasant. It is a place where the novelty and risk of a new situation or experience only add to the intensity and pleasure of play. The player is able to be in control of being out of control and so enjoy a sense both of risk and of mastery simultaneously (Gordon and Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007, p. 216).

Henricks (2006) describes Durkheim's thinking on freedom as not necessarily something positive or to be sought after, as it can create a sense of discomfort and instability. This dialectic is recognised in Sutton-Smith's (1999, 2003) theorising on play and emotions. Within their play, players create a parallel world, where the realities of the external world are temporarily suspended whilst also being mimicked or mocked. This frame creates an 'imagined but equilibrated reality within which disequilibrium exigencies can be paradoxically simulated' (Sutton-Smith, 1999, p. 253). The novel, the scary and the unpredictable can be simulated safely within the play frame, producing feelings of excitement and optimism. Sutton-Smith (2003) suggests that play evolved as a way of mediating the tensions between ancient reflexive emotions – listed by Damasio (2000) as happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anger and surprise – and the more recent (in evolutionary terms) social emotions. The play frame allows the primary emotions to be experienced by using the secondary emotions to create the rules, rituals and play signals that allow us to recognise the behaviour as playing and therefore not 'real'. Social living requires that limits be imposed on the expressions of raw primary emotions and animal desires. If children want to play with others, then certain boundaries, rules and frames need to be co-created with an element of curtailment (or perhaps containment) of freedom.

Perhaps because of their paradoxical nature, frames are not failsafe containers of playing. Sutton-Smith (2003) talks of 'seepage', when the pretence does not hold; Corsaro (1985, cited in Sutton-Smith, 2003) shows how very young children have difficulty maintaining the

pretence of play, how their play frames fall apart easily. Russell (2006) discusses how some older children have difficulty establishing and maintaining play frames and raw emotions spill over and rupture the frame. The tension emerges in part from play's unpredictability. Playing involves the deliberate creation of uncertainty (Spinka, Newberry and Bekoff, 2001), therefore some control has to be given up. Henricks (2006, p. 202) states 'play is less a quest for complete control than a distinctive dialectical relationship, a pattern of call-and-response between people and objects'. It is never certain which way the ball will bounce, or what reaction a co-player will have. This unpredictability is the basis for much of the pleasure to be gained from playing, and also much of the difficulty playworkers have with the vexed question of intervention.

5.5 Contradiction Three: real but not real; play and not-play

This is a fundamental paradox that has exercised play scholars over time. Garvey (1977, p. 10) states that 'play has certain systematic relation to what is not play'; Hakkarainen (1999, p. 232) that 'an essential feature of play is its place on the border of two worlds: the narrative world of play and the real world.' Ethologists (for example, Burghardt, 2005; Fagen, 1975) note that although animals exhibit movements and actions that appear similar to functions such as hunting or fighting, these are one step removed, through being incomplete, exaggerated or modified in some other way. More instrumental analyses of the relationship between reality and fantasy can be found in the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition that suggests a cathartic role for playing through aspects of the real world in order to feel a sense of control. Using an Activity Theory analysis, Buchbinder (2008) shows how children laminate (Goffman, 1975) frames of the real (their parents having cancer) into the play frame.

Although play may be 'not real' (in that it is not what it connotes), children appropriate aspects of their everyday lives into their play and distort or refract (Stevens, 2007) them in some way, to render them either less scary or less boring (Sutton-Smith, 1997), highlighting the dialectic between mimesis and alterity (Taussig, 1993) and the transformative potential of playing. In his usual irreverent manner, Sutton-Smith (2005, p. 5) mocks the evolutionists' claim that play develops adaptiveness ('the supremely important reality within evolutionary theory'):

The paradox is that play which is supposed to assist orthodox adaptation into that partly indifferent world ... can also become instead a replacement for it, and as such becomes for many a superior form of alternative adaptation. Play need have nothing to do with typical survival oriented adaptation, and yet because it provides such a good time to its participants, it leaves them often happier about their usual life circumstances. So play may be said to have become adaptive by ignoring the usual norms for adaptation.

If play and reality are dialectically related, such a tension can also be seen in the play/not-play dichotomy. One device to try and arrive at a definition that describes what is only and always playing is to separate it from that which it is not, that is, 'not-play'. As has been seen, Piaget (1962) differentiates play (pure assimilation) and imitation (pure accommodation); Henricks play and work, ritual and communitas; Burghardt (2005) play and experimentation. All three acknowledge that there are close inter-relationships between these different phenomena and that boundaries have a habit of being porous. James, Jenks and Prout (1998) suggest that the term 'play', and its consignment to the frivolous through its understanding as the opposite of work, does not account for the 'real' that runs alongside the 'as if' in playing. Both Thorne (1993) and Connolly (1998) show how gendered identities are produced and reproduced through play, as in the case of the hegemonic masculinity performed by five-year-old Stephen who boasts of being able to 'sex' a hundred girls and recounts 'doing' them one by one and piling them up afterwards (Connolly, 1998). Real status can be earned through these fantastical episodes, together with a reproduction of gender identities and the objectification of women. Is this play, not-play or both? It is, perhaps, what Spariosu (1989) terms 'amphibolous'. James, Jenks and Prout (1998, p. 93) conclude:

That performative styles such as these, which illustrate strategic processes of cultural appropriation and transformation by children, are often simply termed 'play' underscores the suggestion that integral to the identity status of 'child' in Western cultures is the devaluation and disempowerment of children as competent social actors.

The idea of 'framing' play as separate from everyday life creates another related dialectic on the play/not-play continuum, that between play as a discrete activity and play as a disposition. As shown in Lester and Russell (2008a; 2010a, 2013a), play can be conceptualised as a disposition that surfaces whenever conditions allow, perhaps fleetingly, perhaps for longer frames. In her study of children in a village in Sudan, Katz (2004, 2011)

describes how play was interwoven into the children's daily work, erupting in the cracks between adult orderings of time and space, just as it does for minority world children in the institutions of childhood such as school. Although the point about play as a disposition has been made by many scholars (for example, Sutton-Smith, 1997; Bruner, 1977; Huizinga, 1955), there is still the tendency for adults to conceptualise play as a separate time- and space-bound activity.

The final point to make regarding the play/not-play dichotomy can be drawn from the philosophical concept of vagueness. Despite Burghardt's (2005) plea for the importance of agreeing a definition for play, there is also (dialectically) value in accepting its vagueness as a notion, as shown by Lester (2013). Sorites' paradox helps to illustrate this concept by asking questions such as 'how many grains of wheat make a pile?' Clearly, a pile is more than one, two or three grains of wheat, but beyond that the idea of a 'pile' becomes unclear. The search for definitive, fixed and rational statements implies that concepts can be defined in this way. Yet what we know about play says more about us as adults than it does about children's own subjective experiences of playing (Lester and Russell, 2010a); in this sense it needs to be acknowledged that theories of play are merely adult rational representations and not 'the real thing', paradoxically of course.

5.6 Contradiction Four: past, present and future

The dialectic illustrated by Sutton-Smith (2005, p. 5) concerning play and evolutionary adaptation points to further tensions in adults' attempts to theorise children's play in terms of its intrinsic value and evolutionary or developmental purpose. Theories of phylogeny and ontogeny look backwards to the past and forwards to the future dialectically. Hall's (1904) recapitulation theory suggested that children's play forms were primitive and atavistic, remnants of crucial skills needed by our evolutionary ancestors. This theory has seen a revival in Hughes (2001, 2002, 2006, 2012), who assigns it the status of a discrete play type. He suggests that playing through the stages of human evolution is necessary for both ontogeny and phylogeny; in other words, recapitulative play is necessary for children's development into the future adults they will become and for the future of the species. Sutton-Smith (2002, p. 17) suggests that recapitulation can be found in all types of play in the form of the dialectic between ancient reflexive primary emotions and more recent secondary social emotions:

Despite all our civilized progress, our play forms are still fundamentally what they have always been for mammals: contests (rivalry), celebrations (belonging), explorations (novelty), performances (display), and, for humans, playfulness (humor) and imaginings (mind play). They all continue, whether the old or the new forms, to recapitulate the novel balance between the primary and secondary emotions, which were a part of the mammal evolutionary passage.

Burghardt (2005, p. 121) also looks backwards and forwards in his suggestion that play is 'both a product and a cause of evolutionary change; that is, playful activities may be a source of enhanced behavioural and mental functioning as well as a by-product or remnant of prior evolutionary events'.

Play's intrinsic value can be seen to lie in its autotelic nature; the progress rhetoric (Sutton-Smith, 1997), however, creates a contradiction given the teleological underpinnings of developmentalism. The dominant professional and popular understanding of play is that its value lies in what it provides for the future; in other words, it has deferred benefits. Burghardt (2005) also states that the historical claims for play as providing deferred benefits for the young of the species are not matched by research evidence and he suggests that perhaps the focus on studying play should centre on its immediate benefits. It is the assumed direct and causal relationship between particular forms of playing and the learning of related skills that has led to the rationalisation of play described above, and to adults' interference in children's play in order to guide it towards learning the right kinds of skills.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered contradictions within and between approaches to theorising play, particularly children's play. A fundamental paradox is that between its usefulness and uselessness as played out in the contradictions between the rational and the irrational, the real and 'as if', play's freedoms and constraints, and the tension between immediate and deferred benefits claimed for play. Lester and Russell (2013a, p. 47) summarise these:

Although behaviour that looks like imitation and experimentation sometimes occurs, it is the very playfulness, the non-literal, 'as if' nature of playing that sets it apart from these behaviours. In many forms of play, the limits of the real world no longer apply; children plot flights away from the plane of organisation to create a space in which their desires can find expression, or a plane of

immanence (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) or 'lived space' (Lefebvre, 1991).

Playing creates positive affect and with it a sense that life is worth living for the time of playing – a utopian moment of hope in the here and now rather than an adult-imagined and distant future. Play simply enlivens everyday time/space and through this creates a sense that life can go on.

This description brings to the fore the third, Nietzschean moment in Lefebvre's (2009) dialectical triad, returning the discussion to the opening quotation that exhorts scholars not to take play too seriously (Coombs, 2000). Nevertheless, the chapter has largely focused on the contradictions within knowledge production concerning the nature and value of play, placing this alongside social practices in policy implementations described in Chapter 4 (Lefebvre's other two dialectical moments), as these are the focus in much of the extant academic and policy literature. The argument to be made here is that sensitive attention to the third moment and its dialectical relationship to the other two offers a dual bridge between play's intrinsic and instrumental value and playwork's use and exchange value.

Weber's, Huizinga's and Henrick's ideas regarding the rationalisation of play and its appropriation into social obligations can be seen in the dialectic between understandings of play in UK social policy and the notion, enshrined in the Principles of Playwork (PPSG, 2005) that play is intrinsically motivated. The social constructions of childhood as a period of apprenticeship where children need both protection and correction (Wyness, 2006; James and Prout, 1998), as discussed in Chapter 4, is deeply embedded in adult 'common sense' understandings of the nature and purpose of childhood, and can be seen in the ways that playworkers talk about the children with whom they work. These constructs also underpin social policy relating to children. It therefore becomes inevitable that public investment in providing play facilities for children will begin from a rationalisation and reification of play and an implicit assumption of its instrumental, exchange value (Lester and Russell, 2008a, 2013a). Play becomes a thing to be delivered through professional intervention, valued for its perceived potential for assisting in the totalising policy project of ensuring children's development towards their future citizenship (Lester and Russell, 2013a, Bauman, 2003). These ideas are considered in the next chapter, which presents a theoretical model of playwork as a collective activity system.

Chapter 6: Playwork as an activity system: theoretical perspectives

Contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems. The primary contradiction of activities in capitalism is that between the use value and exchange value ... This primary contradiction pervades all elements of our activity systems (Engeström, 2001, p. 137).

6.1 Introduction

This chapter develops the description of the CHAT collective activity system given in Chapter 2 and lays the theoretical foundations for an analysis of playwork as a collective activity system from the fieldwork data. It draws on the literature (particularly playwork) as well as my longstanding involvement with the sector. The model allows for an analysis of playwork that considers how the points of the triangle in Figure 3 below (subject, object, mediating artefacts, rules, community and division of labour) and the processes (production, consumption, exchange and distribution) might be imagined, and through this process to highlight the contradictions within playwork as a collective activity system.

There is a tension, however, between taking the collective activity system as a unit of analysis and breaking it down into its constituent parts. Langemeyer and Roth (2006) suggest that Engeström's triangular model atomises the whole activity system and risks reifying the points as elements rather than parts of a whole unit as the basis for analysis. They suggest that the model might lead researchers to look for constituents rather than relationships and interdependencies, and they warn against seeing the constituents as self-reliant elements.

Reduction is a scientific procedure designed to deal with the complexity and chaos of brute observation. This kind of simplification is necessary at first, but must be quickly followed by the gradual restoration of what has thus been temporarily set aside for the sake of analysis. Otherwise a methodological necessity may become a servitude, and the legitimate operation of reduction may be transformed into the abuse of *reductionism* (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 106).

Despite the risk of atomisation and reductionism, therefore, the following section begins by considering some of the constituent parts separately in order to problematise them and to consider how they might be applied to a playwork as an activity system; as the analysis progresses, however, the interdependencies emerge. This process highlights the interpenetration of the concepts for the whole unit of the activity system, meaning that although the discussion on mediating artefacts, object, subject and production are highlighted, nevertheless all other points and processes are imbricated within this discussion.

The chapter opens with a consideration of how playwork's mediating artefacts have developed and then considers contemporary discourse as manifest in models of playwork. It moves on to an analysis of the development of playwork's object to arrive at the current articulation in the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005), namely 'to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play'. This leads to a discussion on the production of space and its related processes in the playwork activity system before considering the playworker as subject. A brief analysis of rules, community and division of labour is then given before the final section, which identifies thematic contradictions arising from this analysis. These are the inherent contradiction between playwork's use and exchange value, and that between libertarian and paternalistic approaches as illustrated in the debates about intervention and adulteration across issues of challenging behaviour, diversity and risk. These are offered as illustrative of playwork's contradictions and can be seen woven through the fieldwork data and analysis.

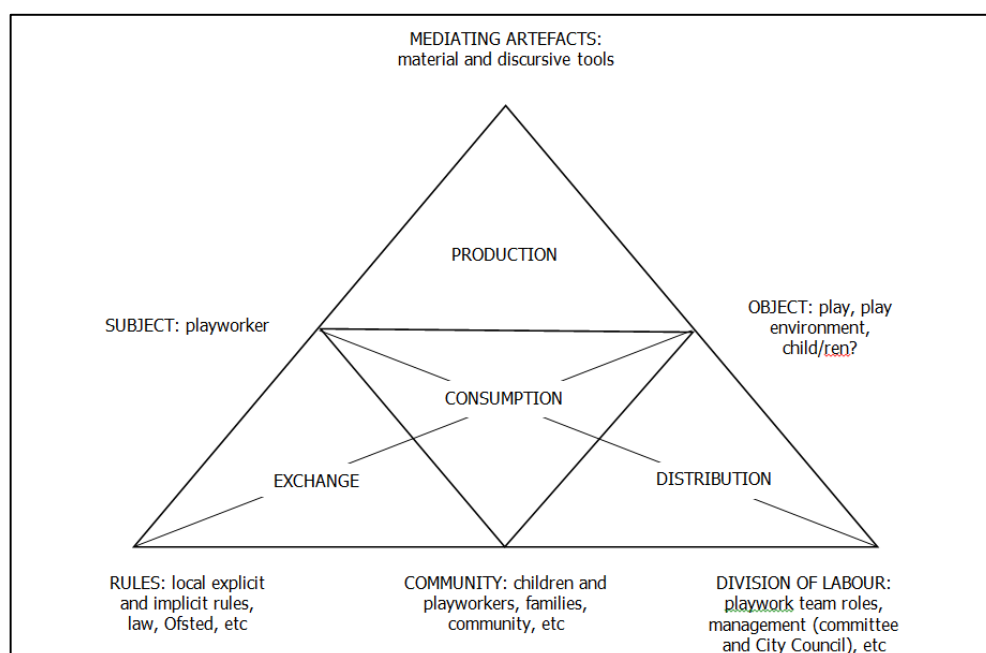


Figure 3: possible representation of the playwork activity system

6.2 Mediating artefacts

Ideas do not travel in a void, but ride piggy-back on the connections among events (Czarniawska, 2006, p. 1662).

The ideas that have influenced playwork have developed incrementally, but not in any straightforward linear fashion. An analysis of the history of playwork's mediating artefacts shows how ideas fall away and reappear, how the macro-level socio-political context shapes and is shaped by the language used, and how the language used is also affected by attempts to resolve contradictions within the activity system. Weick (1995) suggests that people make sense of experiences using language, but language is dynamic, fluid and changing, and it cannot be expected to describe unproblematically the complex and troublesome ideas of life:

All of these words that matter invariably come up short. They impose discrete labels on subject matter that is continuous. There is always slippage between words and what they refer to. Words approximate the territory; they never map it perfectly. That's why sensemaking never stops (Weick, 1995, p. 107).

These ideas echo what was said in Chapter 3; what is offered here is a necessarily unfinished attempt at sensemaking.

6.2.1 Playwork's history revisited

It is in an analysis of playwork's mediating artefacts that the importance of historicity becomes evident. Playwork practice has been mediated by artefacts that have changed over time as the activity system has developed through its responses to the contradictions it has faced, and an analysis of this change offers insights into the other aspects of playwork as an activity system. A key change that has taken place in adventure playground work since its introduction into the UK after World War II can be seen in the technical tools used. Play resources and materials have changed over time with the commodification of play through an ever-increasing toy and play materials market (the global toy market stood at just over \$80 billion in 2009, \$23.5 billion in Europe, according to NPD Group, 2010), and this expansion has included considerable developments in the use of technology for children's play. Another significant change related to the technical tools-of-the-trade has

been the decline of the centrality of the self-built play structures and dens that were a hallmark of the early adventure playgrounds, where hand and power tools were defining mediating artefacts. Today, although some playgrounds remain true to this original ethos and there are proactive attempts to reintroduce it, it is no longer the norm that children have free access to tools for den-building. Similarly, children's role in the larger communal play structures is restricted to design (or selection from catalogues) with the structures then being built by commercial companies (Norman, 2005).

These changes in the defining technical tools of playwork have taken place alongside changes in the symbolic tools used. Of particular relevance to this study are the discourses of childhood and play that illustrate trends in understanding in social policy and by the general public, and also in understandings of the relationship between children, families and the state. As shown in Chapter 4, those who have documented the history of play provision reveal discourses of play and childhood current both at the moments in history that they document and also at the time of writing. They show that ever since it became a matter for public policy there has been a link between concerns about children and young people and the rationale for spending public money on providing places where they can play (Woolley, 2008; Cranwell, 2003, 2007; Hart, 2002).

Contemporary advocates for children's play provision often use the argument that it compensates for the loss of opportunities to 'play out' unsupervised or for other deficiencies in children's environments (Brown and Patte, 2013; Hughes, 2012; Sturrock, Russell and Else 2004; Children's Play Council, 2006; Cole-Hamilton and Gill, 2002). Together with an adult concern that children have forgotten how to play, the idea that modern life somehow prevents children from playing is not new. The Opies recorded in 1959 a strong view that first cinema and then television had led to a dying out of traditional games. Over four decades ago Lady Allen of Hurtwood (1968, p. 11) stated, 'the fact has to be faced that modern civilisation interferes with a hard and heavy hand in the spontaneous play of children'; similarly Stallibrass (1974, p. 255) asserted the need for public provision for play on the grounds that children were less free to roam than they had been, mostly because of 'ubiquitous high-speed motor traffic'. In 1985, Play Board (the Association for Children's Play and Recreation, the then national body for children's play) stated:

The sad thing is that, during the last thirty years, while we have been acquiring more knowledge and understanding of children's development, our society, and the environment in which we live, has also been changing, often in ways which

have not been to the benefit of children. We have built ourselves a hazardous, alien, materialistic and uninteresting environment for our children to grow up in, and we expect them to be unaffected by it. We are surprised when they show signs of looking for challenge and stimulation in ways unacceptable to us; we are surprised to see them become disaffected, sullen, unco-operative and aggressive; we were surprised by the riots of 1981 (Play Board, 1985, p. 2).

These are familiar contemporary arguments, and it may be a little startling to see they have been made repeatedly for at least 50 years. By 1996, Hughes (1996a) was framing play provision and playwork as compensatory activities; Sturrock and Else (1998, p. 2) claimed that 'children's ludic ecology is being curtailed or contaminated'; and more recently, Brown and Patte (2013) identify how the culture of fear, lack of access to space to play, reduction of play time in school and increase in screen-based play have combined to reduce children's opportunity for self-organised play with deleterious effects. Over the last decade, this notion has been used increasingly as justification for policy involvement in children's play, whereas in earlier times, playing out was seen as something that needed to be controlled in order to prevent delinquency. The dialectical relationship between autonomy and control in the discourse of children and play explored here highlight the contradictions with which playworkers grapple daily.

As noted in Chapter 4, two key pieces of UK legislation (as both rules and mediating artefacts) played a particularly significant role in changing playwork discourse. Chilton (2003, p. 117) sees the Health and Safety at Work Act (1975) as 'the biggest negative impact on the initially child-centred approach to adventure play'. Local authorities used the Act to curtail riskier elements (structure and den-building, fires and so on) and often to close down adventure playgrounds. The issue of risk in children's play is currently one of playwork's 'hot potatoes' (discussed in section 6.7) that highlight the dialectics of playwork itself. The second significant piece of legislation was the Children Act 1989. During the 1960s to 1980s, playwork was closely allied to youth and community work (Cranwell, 2000). The 1989 Children Act, however, extended the requirement to register services from those catering for children under five to those catering for children under eight years of age. This meant two things: firstly, playwork settings became subject to registration and inspection, and secondly, this registration and inspection was carried out by those who had been working in the early years care and education sector and who brought with them their particular ethos and understanding of childhood and play. This influence was reinforced by the introduction of the Out-of-School Care Initiative of the 1990s (Petrie, 1994) and the

subsequent childcare strategies of the Labour government, which firmly placed out-of-school care within the broader education system through the link with schools and, additionally, promoted the business model for delivery through links with the then Technical and Enterprise Councils (Russell and Matthews, 2012). This drew playwork away from work with young people towards a focus on younger children and a more educational and developmental approach (Chilton, 2003), as well as introducing the discourse of business models and NPM (as discussed in Chapter 4).

These changes in popular and policy understandings of the purpose of play provision developed slowly over the last 30 years through the process of ‘discoursing’ (Wells, 2007). Understandings of the purpose of the collective activity system are constantly under construction through the ways in which the system articulates its practices, both officially and informally. Official articulations of playwork are developed and published through playwork’s institutions; as such they can also be understood as the rules of the activity. SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council covering playwork, is responsible for developing and periodically reviewing the National Occupational Standards (NOS) that underpin qualifications. There has been a long running debate about whether the NOS adequately describe playwork; this may be as much to do with the competence-based structure of the NOS and the S/NVQ (Scottish/National Vocational Qualifications) award as it is to do with the model of playwork espoused (Russell, 2003). Each revision has attempted to incorporate current thinking; however, statements of what playworkers need to do, based on a functional analysis of the role, fall short of recognising the complexities and flexibility needed. Such statements either pronounce a fixed response or are qualified by terms such as ‘appropriate’, ‘sensitive’ or ‘balance’, with little opportunity for debate. Lester (2007b, p. 17) concludes:

[T]he role of the playworker contains passion, hope, doubts, uncertainty, scary moments, isolation and colleagueship, ambiguity, surprise, and so on. This reality of practice is far removed from the Playwork ‘standards’ ... that promote certainty, universal approaches and linear cause and effect systems. Becoming a playworker ... is about an emerging understanding and criticality and not simply an incremental acquisition of skills and competencies.

Nonetheless, the NOS provide useful insights into how the field has struggled to articulate what it is and does. The first set of Level 2 standards published by SPRITO (the forerunner of SkillsActive) in 1992 had a strong developmentalist discourse, illustrated in the core unit (D29): ‘Facilitate a play opportunity to enhance the development of children’, with range

statements covering play opportunities that offered developmental experiences across five areas: social interaction, physical activity, intellectual stimulation, creative achievement and emotional stability. This developmental focus assumed that specific planned activities would result in specific areas of development. It remained in the first revision (SPRITO, 1997), where the comparable unit (PA3) was 'Contribute to children's development through play'. In this version, the range statements covered three kinds of play (free play, structured play and physical play), the underpinning knowledge made reference to the five areas of development (social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional) known as the SPICE acronym. This acronym had played a major role in playwork literature and discourse (for example, Davy, 1995), and by the turn of the century was being critiqued (Brown, 2003b; Sturrock, 1997). By the second revision (SPRITO, 2002), this had become unit PW2 'Support children and young people's play', with a move from a developmentalist focus towards a spatial one, where the role was one of creating environments for children's play. Here the kinds of play were: physical play, environmental play, creative play, cultural play and imaginative play, and the underpinning knowledge required an understanding of the role of play in children's development. The current standards (SkillsActive, 2010a) show a further shift towards a spatial perspective in unit PW34 'Work with children and young people to create play spaces and support freely chosen, self-directed play' and the different kinds of play have changed to different kinds of spaces (physical, affective, transient and permanent).

The NOS have always been accompanied by statements of value and principle, initially the *Values and Assumptions of Playwork* (SPRITO, 1992a) and now the *Playwork Principles* (PPSG, 2005). A detailed analysis of these is given in Chapter 11.

6.2.2 Models of playwork

The playwork NOS represent the official statements of how playwork should be practised, making them both mediating artefacts and rules. They incorporate some theories from playwork's own literature, but largely in an uncritical and functional manner that does not acknowledge the differences and potential contradictions between the various approaches to playwork theorising. Russell (2010b, p. 107) highlights the shortcomings of a single prescription for 'doing playwork':

Whilst it is useful, perhaps even essential, to have a shared value-base ..., it is also important to appreciate the diversity that comes from each individual playworker's

approach to the task ... This richness is to be welcomed not ironed out flat into one single list of technical planning, responses and interventions.

This section gives a brief overview of four models of playwork to be found in the literature and which have influenced playwork practice to varying degrees. Their development and adoption, as with the NOS, also highlights both the divisions of labour within the collective activity system (in terms of the status and roles of theorists and qualification designers) and also of playwork as a community of practice.

Evolutionary Playwork: Hughes (2001, 2006, 2012) draws on theorising from evolutionary psychology, ethology and neuroscience to make a case for the biological and evolutionary imperative for children to play. Enumerating 16 specific play types, he suggests that children need to be able to access all equally for both ontogenetic and phylogenetic success. Evolutionary playwork's primary purpose is to compensate for ways in which adults constrain opportunities for children to play, leading to play bias or play deprivation. These ideas are developed into a 'neuroludic-evolutionary theory' (Hughes, 2006, p. xiv):

When I use the term *neuroludic-evolutionary theory*, what I am suggesting is that play is a more formative product of, and influence on, the evolutionary process than is generally recognised; that there is an evolutionary predisposition of elements of brain activity and neural growth that are dependent not only upon children playing but upon children engaging equally in each play type.

A number of challenges can be levelled at this thesis, and two are briefly presented. Hughes (1996b, p. 5) proffers a construct of the child as 'a lone organism' whose 'characteristics predate culture and history' and this forms the basis for his theorising. Such biological determinism takes little account of the social and cultural dimensions of children's environments (other than to identify collective adult social behaviour as a cause of play bias and deprivation). Hughes puts much store by recapitulation theory (Hall, 1904), adding recapitulative play as a discrete play type in the second edition of his taxonomy (Hughes, 2002). Later (Hughes, 2006), he proposes 'epigenetic recapitulation' as an explanation for why children play through stages of past human evolution. Epigenetic 'memory' derives from historic gene-environment interactions that have been successfully adaptive and passed on, and Hughes acknowledges this process is incremental and continual. Given this, it may also be presumed that contemporary children's interactions with their social and physical environments are also adaptive. If playing is a drive that allows both (a) adaptation to immediate physical and social environments and (b) niche

construction (actions to adapt the environment to meet the organism's immediate needs) (Bjorklund, 2006), then this drive could perhaps be trusted to provide the same mechanisms in contemporary environments.

This biological determinism is also applied universally to all children:

Irrespective of a child's culture, their geographic location, their gender or any disability they might have, the playtypes routines in which that child engages show certain general characteristics... each playtype has a specific function (perhaps in constructing a particular neural area) irrespective of who is engaging in it (Hughes, 2006, p. 34-35).

Although these claims are presented tentatively, they do not take into account variations of play forms across the differences he lists. For example, Pellis and Pellis (2009) suggest that boys have more need to engage in rough and tumble play as a 'tool for refining social competence', because hormonal influences (likely not to be contingent on experiences) on pre-frontal cortex development mean that girls' brains are already more socially competent. Similarly, cross-cultural studies of children's play forms and patterns show variations depending on cultural context. Research by Gosso, Morais and Otta (2007) shows how urban children from higher socio-economic groups engage in more pretend play than do those from rural and lower socio-economic groups. These differences might present a challenge to Hughes' claim that all children need to access all play types equally.

Therapeutic Playwork: Sturrock and Else's (1998, 2005) model of therapeutic playwork is based on ideas from depth and transpersonal psychology, particularly Jung. They suggest that children are driven to express deeply symbolic and archetypal material in their play and that these play expressions resonate with playworkers and elicit emotional responses from them. Just as Hughes suggests that playworkers should pay more attention to the biological imperatives of play than to the dictates of social control, so Sturrock and Else suggest that we should acknowledge the latent symbolic meaning of children's play expressions and avoid imposing literal interpretations in order to use play as a socialisation tool. The model suggests a curative potential for both play and playwork. Psychoanalytic theory traces the development of neuroses and psychosis back to childhood; supporting children to express latent, symbolic material may help prevent neuroses and psychosis at the very point of their potential creation. Playworkers themselves may be drawn to the work because they have 'unplayed out material' (Sturrock and Else, 1998, p. 25); any privileging of this in their contact with children at play may lead to 'adulteration' of children's play.

Sturrock and Else echo Hughes' concerns regarding contemporary constraints on children's play, saying that children's 'ludic ecologies' have become polluted. Given this, it is incumbent upon playworkers to support children in expressing latent material. They suggest four levels of intervention aimed at 'containment' (understood as protection and maintenance of children's play frames) when they are threatened prematurely. These range from play maintenance, where the playworkers' role is to protect the frame without any direct involvement in it, to complex intervention where the playworker becomes intricately involved in the symbolic material in the frame. The potential for adulteration is greatest at this level and playworkers need to remain vigilant that their own unplayed out material does not become privileged at the expense of the child's.

Compound flexibility: Brown (2003b) places playwork within the child development paradigm, suggesting that playworkers should aim to provide an environment that is as flexible as possible and that supports a virtuous spiral of compound flexibility. A flexible environment allows for experimentation and play, leading to flexibility in children's responses to the environment, thereby creating a developmental spiral. The 'play value' of any setting can be evaluated across 11 headings: freedom, flexibility, socialisation and social interaction, physical activity, intellectual stimulation, creativity and problem solving, emotional equilibrium, self-discovery, ethical stance, adult-child relationships and general appeal. Brown (2003b, p. 80) states that 'the first rule of playwork is to work to the child's agenda' and suggests that playworkers' interventions in play are justified only if they are at the request of the children.

Brawgs Continuum (Russell, 2008b; Sturrock, Russell and Else, 2004): This model has had less influence on the sector, but is useful because it attempts to bridge the dialectical tensions highlighted between on the one hand reading 'non-intervention' literally (that is, that playworkers should just leave children to get on with it) and on the other the pressures on playworkers to direct and control children's playing either towards socially desired outcomes or away from ways of playing that elicit discomfort or concern in the playworkers themselves. The model, developed collaboratively, is influenced by thinking both from psycholudics (Sturrock and Else, 2005) and complexity theory (Battaram, 2008). Its name (Brawgs) is an anagram of the initials of the three main contributors. It posits a dynamic continuum of internal (emotion, affect, motivation) and external (behavioural) responses to children's play. It assumes that

playworkers will operate at different points along the continuum depending on a number of variables including context, personal beliefs and values, their relationship with individual children, their perception of the expectations of others, etc. ... [and that] playworkers should aim for the middle of the continuum as often as possible, recognising there will be times when they veer towards either end (Russell, 2006, p. 37).

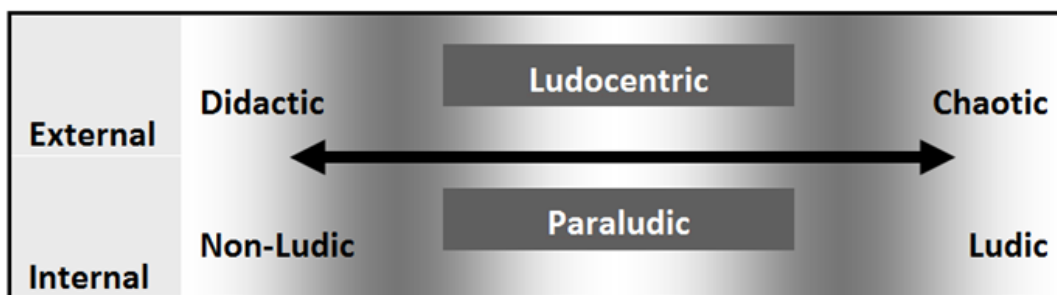


Figure 4: Brawgs Continuum (Russell, 2008b)

Extreme positions in the external dimension are didactic, where the playworker directs and controls playing in order to help children learn, and chaotic, where the level of non-intervention is such that the space is not adequately resourced and responses to children's play are erratic and temperamental. In between these two extremes is a ludocentric approach that aims to support children's self-organised playing. Extreme positions in the internal dimension are non-ludic, where the desire to control, teach and protect children dominates, and ludic, where playworkers privilege their own emotional desires and unplayed out material. In between is a *paraludic* emotional state, where playworkers recognise the symbolic (rather than literal) material being expressed by children, are aware of their own unplayed out material and can therefore support this expression without adulteration.

As these models all show, a key dialectic debated within playwork theorising is that between intervention and 'adulteration' (Sturrock and Else, 1998). Playwork itself is an intervention in children's lives and some (for example, Sturrock and Else, 1998) identify intervention exclusively as strategies for maintaining both the individual play frames of children and also the integrity of the play space and all that it potentially offers (space, time and licence to play; exhilaration, anger and fear; boredom and excitement; friendships and falling out; laughter and tears). Others (for example Hughes, 2001) also discuss the situations where it may be necessary to intervene at a more rational, non-ludic and adult

level to prevent harm. By contrast, adulteration is seen as the use and abuse of adult power in order to control children's playing, either in order to socialise children or to privilege playworkers' own needs. The dialectic between this and rationales for and forms of intervention can be analysed across all elements of the activity system and also in the interrelatedness of each element. The issues are indeed complex and are explored further in the discussion Chapters 8-11. The discussion here turns now to an exploration of playwork's object.

6.3 Object

Objects are concerns, they are generators and foci of attention, motivation, effort and meaning. Through their activities people constantly change and create new objects. The new objects are often not intentional products of a single activity but unintended consequences of multiple activities (Engeström, 2008, p. 3).

A number of articulations of playwork's object exist, ranging from the Playwork Principles to local playwork settings' mission statements (these can also be understood as mediating artefacts as they are couched in particular language forms and discourses). Statements also depend on how the nature and value of childhood and play are understood, both historically and currently, and also in its relationship to other networked activity systems. In addition, objects shift and change both over time and across the triangular model (Engeström, 2005).

In problematising the motivation of object-oriented activity as being to fulfil a need, Blunden (2009) suggests there may be different needs and different objects for each individual and for the collective activity system. This is partly addressed by Engeström's generations of activity theory, since he suggests that the top triad of subject, object and mediating artefact may be seen as individual *action*, which is given meaning once placed within the broader community of practice with a shared object and within a network of activity systems. Leont'ev (1947, 1981, cited in Engeström, 1987) identifies three levels within a collective activity system: the collective *activity* which has a shared motive or object, individual *actions*, which are goal-oriented and contribute to the object of the collective activity through division of labour, and *operations*, which are methods by which actions are accomplished and are responsive to local conditions. These operations may not always be 'consciously or purposively selected or controlled' and may be so internalised as

to have become second nature (Blunden, 2009, pp. 11-12). This allows for a dialectical relationship between what may or may not be an agreed collective object and the objects for each individual subject in terms of their myriad quotidian actions.

Engeström (2005, p. 54) notes that 'collective activity is realized through individual actions, but it is not reducible to the sum total of those actions'. He suggests that collective activity systems are emergent and complex systems in which 'cognition, volition and emotion are distributed and historically accumulated' (*ibid.*), the points of the triangle are fluid and may switch roles. Thus, the object for an individual playworker's actions (for example, to prevent harm through intervening in a fight) may become a mediating artefact (a collectively accepted technique) or a rule (an agreement for the conditions under which playworkers intervene in fights) within the local or universal collective activity system. In addition, the interrelation between mediating artefacts, objects and the bottom line of the model in Figure 3 above (rules, community and division of labour) also play their part in influencing objects, and may at times be mediating artefacts. For example, the histories of and relationships between team members will affect the extent to which there is a shared object and which tools are used for mediating activity towards this object.

Some versions of Engeström's (1987) model (Figure 2) show an arrow from the activity's object towards an outcome. Outcomes, in marketised public services, and particularly in the Labour government's *Every Child Matters* agenda, are significant. In examining the contradiction between playwork's use and exchange value, the object might represent use value (the co-production of a space where children can play), but the outcome might represent the exchange value of totalising policy projects (Lester and Russell, 2013a) that either (or indeed both, dialectically) seek to help children achieve their potential (DCSF, 2007) or manage children's undisciplined minds and bodies in 'waste management' policies (Katz, 2011).

The discussion in the previous section on the history of playwork discourse as a mediating artefact has shown shifts in the articulation of playwork's object from facilitating children's development through play to a more spatial emphasis. For the purposes of this study, the primary object of playwork as a collective activity system is principle 5 of the Playwork Principles: 'to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play' (PPSG, 2005). 'Creation' implies a process of production, and the idea of space as something that is produced provides a useful analytical tool. This is carried out here using Lefebvre's (1991) ideas on the production of space. The following section first considers the

processes of production, distribution, exchange and consumption and the fundamental contradiction within activity systems of use and exchange value before introducing Lefebvre's thinking in some detail.

6.4 Production and its related processes in the playwork activity system

Marx's 'germ cell', the starting point for his analysis of the political economy, was the 'commodity', defined as:

an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another (Marx, 1887, p. 26).

Each commodity has a use value, calculated independently of whatever it takes to produce it and coming into existence through consumption. Alongside this, and in a dialectical relationship to it, is exchange value, the value placed on a commodity in the marketplace. (Marx's other two attributes of commodities, value and price, are not considered in this framework.) For playwork, both use value and exchange value are sites of contradiction given the tensions in understandings of the nature and value of play and childhood between theorising, practice and social policy.

Marx (1973 [1859], appendix 1, section 2) outlines the processes that accompany production:

Production creates articles corresponding to requirements; distribution allocates them according to social laws; exchange in its turn distributes the goods, which have already been allocated, in conformity with individual needs; finally, in consumption the product leaves this social movement, it becomes the direct object and servant of an individual need, which its use satisfies...
production, distribution, exchange and consumption form a regular syllogism;
production is the generality, distribution and exchange the particularity, and consumption the singularity in which the whole is joined together.

The concepts of production, distribution, exchange and consumption are mutually implicated. For example, in order to produce a play space, it is necessary to consume the required materials; in consuming, something is produced: through playing as consumption of a service, children constantly reproduce the space as a play space; through the consumption of playwork as labour by employing or commissioning agents, the activity of

playwork is reproduced. Similarly, although distribution generally occurs after production, it may need to precede it. For example, prior to the co-production of a play space, playwork services are distributed to areas considered most in need. Many urban open access settings are sited in areas of economic and social deprivation, the service therefore being seen to address the needs of those communities, possibly as 'waste management' (Katz, 2011, see Chapter 4). Debates concerning access for and inclusion of particular children within the play and playwork sector are also issues of distribution (KIDS, 2013; Woolley, 2013; Jeanes and Magee, 2012). Through exchange, playwork services are valorised economically insofar as they can address private or public need. Services are consumed by the children who use the spaces and also by communities (in terms of keeping children safe and/or off the streets) and those who commission or purchase them. For out-of-school childcare there is an enduring contradiction regarding whether it is the playing child or the paying parent who is the consumer.

The concept of 'consuming' playwork services may seem alien, but I argue it is appropriate within a neoliberal mode of production that employs the language of economy in terms of choice and self-interest. People are envisioned as individual consumers of services that were once collectively 'public', but are increasingly commissioned rather than provided. Growth is seen as the driver of economic policy even though this increases inequality in terms of distribution of wealth that is created by such growth (Massey, 2013). This creates 'failed consumers' of those who cannot afford the goods and services they are told they need (Bauman, 2005). For poorer families, this affects children's sense of belonging (Ridge, 2009) and also extends to choices in childrearing practices as described in Katz's (2008, 2011, as discussed in Chapter 4) notion of the child as site of accumulation (through consumption), ornament (through conspicuous consumption) and waste (for those who cannot afford the first two).

Production, however, whilst being interdependent on the other three processes, predominates:

The conclusion we reach is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity. Production predominates ... The process always returns to production to begin anew (Marx, 1973 [1859], pp, 29-30).

It is for this reason that the next section focuses on the idea of the production of space, both as playwork's object and the process of production itself, drawing on Lefebvre (1991).

This process also embodies and is embedded in the broader politics of space and so implicates all other points and processes of the activity triangle.

6.4.1 The production of space²

Understanding space as something that is produced and constantly under construction allows for the possibility of co-production; in other words, through their practices within the space, both playworkers and children build a culture with its own expectations, rituals, rules and sanctions. These are usually tacit and come into being dialectically alongside the more formal rules. Although this does allow for a more horizontal relationship (Hart, 2009) between playworkers and children than may be found in other professional adult-child relationships, issues of power still remain. Developmentalism has a temporal focus that assumes an expert-to-novice vertical relationship between playworker and child. In resisting this and conceptualising playwork spatially, children can be seen as ‘Other’ than adults rather than incomplete and apprenticed versions of adulthood (Jones, 2008). The heterogeneity of everyone within the play setting, adults and children, and the need to find ways of getting along together will inevitably result in conflict at times. This ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey, 2005) contributes significantly to how the space is produced.

This spatial conceptualisation of playwork operates alongside the more dominant temporal one, particularly in terms of relationships with other aspects of the model such as rules and mediating artefacts, and with adjacent activity systems such as early years education and childcare. Moss and Petrie (2002), in their exploration of the dialectic between understanding children as active agents in their lives and increasing adult control and surveillance, suggest that constructing social policies and professional practice through the lens of children’s spaces rather than children’s services has much to offer in helping navigate this tension. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Labour government’s *Every Child Matters* agenda rested on the expectation that specific inputs would lead to specific outputs netting specific, future-focused outcomes. These outcomes can be seen as playwork’s exchange value; within this paradigm, play settings are expected to *produce* the citizens of the future, and the object (or outcome) of playwork might be the future citizen. A spatial analysis returns the focus to the here and now, to playwork’s use value; however, the two necessarily co-exist dialectically.

² Parts of this section are adapted from Russell (2012a, 2013a).

Lefebvre's (1991) work on the production of space applies his dialectical triad discussed in Chapter 2. For Lefebvre, space is not a mere neutral container, it is *produced* by interrelationships between physical, social and symbolic elements and the actions of individuals and institutions. These interrelationships are political because they represent power relations, with ultimate power, in Lefebvre's eyes, resting with the state, and particularly with what he terms the state mode of production. It might be argued (for example, Harvey, 2012) that since the hollowing out of the state (Rhodes, 1994) through marketisation of public services, the growth of supranational governance through the European Union and the effects of globalisation on macroeconomic policymaking (Holliday, 2000), the state's centralised power has been dispersed to a more nebulous global marketplace. The argument concerning the neoliberal mode of production, however, holds; it is of relevance here because of its impact on the lives of the children attending urban open access play settings and on the distribution of services that tend to be sited in deprived areas.

In his history of space, Lefebvre (1991) begins with what he calls *absolute space*, that is, the space of nature, where relationships between people and space were *immediate* and cohered with the (somatic, lunar, circadian) rhythms of nature. Industrialisation and the growth of cities led to an *abstract space*, where relationships were *mediated* through urban planning, the imposition of commercial rhythms and the segmentation of time (Lefebvre, 2004) and specialisation in the production process. Cities developed to prioritise space for the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services, with power relations seen in the central positioning of state power (government, banks, commerce, law, etc.) and those excluded from such decision making at the periphery, creating what Lefebvre (1972, cited in Shields, 1999, p. 178) terms

a collection of ghettos where individuals are at once 'socialised', integrated, submitted to artificial pressures and constraints ... and separated, isolated, disintegrated. A contradiction which is translated into anguish, frustration and revolt.

The production of space is an on-going endeavour through the dialectical relationship between three productions or moments of space, which are introduced here.

Representations of space: also termed 'conceived space', this is the mental space of cartographers, planners and architects. The power in this space is seen in how people's daily lives are governed through urban design, as well as in the symbolic power of

buildings, institutions and transport systems. This is where we see the ghettos described above, including the 'islands' of children's institutions such as home, school and play centre (Rasmussen, 2004).

It is conceived space that dominates playspace design. The naming and zoning of areas and resources (for example, the chill-out zone, the arts and crafts table, the basket swing, the fire pit, the den-building area, 'natural' play, loose parts) pre-suppose straightforward causal relationships between their design, use and value based on adult rational understandings of play and its purpose. Similarly, discussions on the affective environment (for example, Sturrock and Else, 1998; Hughes, 1996a) imply that the culture of the space can to an extent be designed. This may not have been the original intention of publications aimed at finding a narrative for playwork; however, concepts from them are taken up and repeated often such that they become reified as truths to be enacted technically rather than ideas for dialogue or possibility.

Spatial practice: also termed 'perceived space', this refers to the everyday routines of life as experienced through the senses. Much of this, in Lefebvre's analysis, is about hegemonic cultural practices, the humdrum of daily struggles, and can be a site of 'alienation'. Developing this concept from Marx's ideas, alienation arises when daily life becomes disconnected from the meaning of life. Much of this comes about because of specialisation and the mediation of spatial practice and life itself. Lefebvre sees alienation as 'a fundamental structure of human practice' (Kelly, 1992, p. 62), arising through the three-stage evolution of human activity where an initial spontaneous response becomes rationalised and organised, and eventually commodified and fetishised (Kelly, 1992).

This pattern is evident in playwork's development through rationalising and standardising it as technical procedure laid down in the NOS (SkillsActive, 2010a), the requirements for Ofsted registration and inspection, or the monitoring forms required by funding agencies. Playwork, together with other public sector occupations, has been drawn into New Public Management systems where performance is measured in this technical manner (Banks, 2004). Thus, it could be argued that playwork has been reduced largely to exchange value and the playworker to a commodity: a thing that can be measured, assessed, bought and sold (Adcroft and Willis, 2005). Manifestations of this commodification of playwork labour can be seen in the moves towards sessional hours only, and the idea of working across several sites managed by one provider (Martin, 2013), both practices making it difficult to build the necessary relationships for supporting children's play. The playwork sector tries

hard to valorise its existence through showing how it can speak to policy agendas; increasingly these agendas are economic in their futurity (Communities and Local Government, 2012; Allen, 2011; DfE, 2010). To consider the impact of this on playwork requires something more than a de-contextualised, universal child development or playwork theory purporting to be politically neutral. In emphasising play's instrumental value and playwork's exchange value, play becomes objectified and loses its defining characteristics: it is no longer autotelic, non-productive, emergent, or a display of children's power over real-and-imagined worlds. Ultimately, robbed of emotion and meaning, play itself becomes alienating, becoming less like play and more like work.

Such an analysis paints a depressing picture, yet, as anyone who has visited a successful playwork setting knows, this is not the whole picture. The discourses of play and playwork emanating from conceived and perceived spaces are but two sides of a triadic story. In Lefebvre's analysis, there is also the third dimension of lived space. This is so for both children and playworkers. Lived space does not exist merely in opposition to conceived and perceived space, it is a player in the co-production of space.

Spaces of representation: also termed 'lived space', this is the space of moments of escape from and resistance to the hegemony of conceived and perceived space; it is the space of art, poesy, imagination and play.

Moments are those instants that we would each ... categorize as 'authentic' moments that break through the dulling monotony of the 'taken for granted' (Shields, 1999, p. 58).

This is the space of 'disalienation', where people feel truly alive. At the same time, it may also be the space where resistance is seen by others as disruption, anti-social behaviour or even violence. The policy construct of 'at risk' children sees the deficiency as residing in the individual child, and the purpose of the intervention is to normalise the deficiency: this is an example of the influence of psychology in both the representation of space and on spatial practice (Rose, 1999a, 2007). A Lefebvrian analysis might see the challenging behaviour as a form of immediate and spontaneous resistance to the struggles of daily life experienced in the institutions of the family and school that are related to the power of the neoliberal mode of production through conceived and perceived space.

A key feature of lived space is that it defies the representations of conceived space: it cannot be planned, provided, measured or reduced to exchange value. It cannot be

represented in the modern, rational science of certainty, determinism and absolute truths and thus sits uncomfortably with current evidence-based policy discourse that provides the basis for public funding. The dominant paradigm of rational and technical interventions has been challenged in other areas of work with children and young people from ethical and political viewpoints (Banks, 2007; Moss, 2007; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005); it is particularly pertinent in relation to working with children at play, given play's liminal relationship between the rational and the irrational (Spariosu, 1989), reality and irreality (Winnicott, 1971), and what Sutton-Smith (1999) refers to as the relationship between the adaptive and ludic dialectic, between equilibrium and disequilibrium (as discussed in Chapter 5). The difficulty with this theorising is that it becomes impossible to predict instrumental outcomes with any certainty. 'From this perspective, planning play spaces becomes the process of leaving room for disturbance and uncertainty (for play) rather than fixing and naming things' (Lester and Russell, 2010b, p. 10). This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for understanding the 'heart' of the playwork endeavour, which the chapter explores next.

6.5 Subject

Some conceptual problems arise in considering the subject of a collective activity system. Generally speaking, it is understood as a collective, social subject. Lektorsky (1999, cited in Blunden, 2009, p. 14) shows both this and the performative realisation of the subject:

Activity cannot exist without a subject. But the initial form of a subject is no ego, but a subject of collective activity (e.g., a group, a community, a team). The individual subjective world, individual consciousness, ego are not something given (as philosophers in the 17th and 18th centuries thought), but the result of the development and transformations of collective activity or practice.

Playwork's collective subject can be seen in official statements describing what all playworkers should do in order to be deemed competent (SkillsActive, 2010a). Yet the social subject is not some homogeneous entity acting in harmony towards a shared goal; rather it is a collection of individuals who collaborate, compete or conflict in their actions towards a broadly agreed goal. The collective subject encompasses diverse motivations, power, influence, qualities, aptitudes, competence, cultural understandings of the joint object and so on. Subjects are 'multivoiced':

An activity system is always a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interests. The division of labor in an activity creates different positions for the participants, the participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artifacts, rules and conventions (Engeström, 2001, p. 136).

Engeström (1987, ch2, p30) recognises the ‘clash between *individual actions and the total activity system*’ (emphasis in the original) as a contradiction inherent in collective activity systems. This contradiction can also be played out through the division of labour and a range of interpretations of ‘community’.

Yet this should not mean that the subject is to be understood as a disparate collection of Kantian rational autonomous actors either. Although Blunden (2009) warns that merely thinking in terms of group membership is inadequate; I suggest Wenger’s (1998) concept of identity as built through engagement in and membership of communities of practice is helpful, since it allows for heterogeneity, recognises membership of different communities, and highlights the relationship between subject and community in Engeström’s model. Wenger (1998, p. 149) states ‘there is a profound connection between identity and practice ... practice entails the negotiation of ways of being as a person in that context’. How people approach and carry out their professional roles affects and is affected by the relationship between them as individuals and their interaction with the job context, culture and demands. This encompasses negotiated experience, community membership, situated learning, and reconciling membership of a number of communities of practice into one ‘identity as a nexus of multimembership’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 158).

Many playworkers articulate a strong sense of belonging to a community of practice through emphasising playwork’s uniqueness both in the literature (Hughes, 2012; Kilvington and Wood, 2010; Sturrock and Else, 2005) and through informal communications, particularly when playworkers feel other (more dominant) approaches threaten to distort or dilute the approach (Newstead, 2009; Playlink, 2003).

Alongside this potentially unifying collective sense of identity sit (at least) four challenges, which arise from the nature of the playwork workforce (notwithstanding the heterogeneity of playworkers as individuals). The first is the tension between attempts to practise an approach in line with the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005) on the one hand and on the other the expectations and requirements placed on playworkers by, *inter alia*: funding streams linked to instrumental policies; registration, inspection and other legal

requirements (including health and safety); the culture of managing or hosting organisations; parents and carers themselves (Wragg, 2008). The second challenge is the range of playwork settings, and particularly the enduring schism between out-of-school care and open access play provision (Playlink, 2003; Sturrock, 1999; Petrie, 1994). Currently, most playworkers work in the out-of-school childcare sector (SkillsActive, 2010b). For these settings, the primary object is to relieve caregivers of the responsibility of childcare, enabling them to work or train, whereas in open access settings it is easier for the primary focus to be the creation of a space where children can play. Many out-of-school care settings operate under the auspices, and often on the premises, of schools and so are greatly influenced by an educational ethos. The third challenge resides in the nature of the workforce itself. The rise in out-of-school childcare provision took place alongside a decrease in open access provision (Children's Play Council, 2006; Hallsworth and Sutton, 2004; Head and Melville, 2001). It is staffed predominantly by part-time, hourly paid workers, the vast majority of whom are female (SkillsActive, 2010b). By contrast, key playwork theorising comes mainly from men whose grounding was on adventure playgrounds during the 1960s and 1970s, when jobs tended to be full-time and much of the work entailed building play structures, and therefore more men worked in the sector (Conway, Hughes and Sturrock, 2004). The fourth challenge arises again from the influence of policy imperatives. The very quick growth in out-of-school provision took place alongside two other key developments: the first was the implementation of the Children Act 1989, which brought play provision into a much closer relationship to early years provision; the second was the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and a national qualifications framework. This created a demand for playworkers, registration officers, trainers, assessors and verifiers in unprecedented numbers and in areas of the country that had hitherto not had a history of playwork. Since the changes were largely brought about by an extension of an existing early years childcare infrastructure, these roles were filled by those whose experience was within that field, not within playwork, leading to an identified gap in what was termed 'occupational competence' (Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork [JNCTP], 2000) and influencing the activity system's mediating artefacts.

These challenges are further complicated by the heterogeneity of individuals, their motives, values, aptitudes, preferences and needs (Langemeyer and Roth, 2006). Sturrock and Else (1998) suggest playworkers may be attracted to the work because they themselves have unresolved material from their own childhoods, and the play setting affords an opportunity for this to be played out.

Stetsenko and Arieviditch (2004) suggest that CHAT can offer a way of conceptualising the self that acknowledges this dialectic between individual and collective activity. Moving away from the persisting psychological focus on the self as a context-free set of essentialist individual possessions such as traits, personality or attributes, CHAT presents the self as inherently embedded within sociocultural contexts. The 'self' is a process, a continual production arising from the interrelationship of body, mind and environment through collective, collaborative and contradictory activity. In this way, the self is something that subjects *perform*, rather than *have*.

6.5.1 Playwork as performance

The starting point for conceptualising playwork as a performance is Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis of self, through which the dialectical relationships with other points of the CHAT triangle are considered, notably mediating artefacts, rules, community and division of labour. This provides the foundation for further examination of Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour.

Goffman's underpinning metaphor is theatrical: the context for each encounter with other people sets the stage, allocates roles and defines the cultural script to be performed, with others taking the role of audience. Individuals seek to manage the impression they create through their delivery and also through the use of props (for example, clothes, or other defining objects such as keys, badges, clipboards, phones, cars). Cultural scripts comprise ethos, programme, agenda and rules that define proper and improper conduct. To an extent, these scripts are prescribed insofar as each context expects certain ways of behaving (for example, ordering a meal in a restaurant, or waiting at a zebra crossing for traffic to stop); yet within this there is room for some 'dramatic licence' (Turner and Stets, 2005).

Such ways of 'framing' encounters are necessary for understanding how to behave. The concept of frames was influenced by the work of Bateson (1972 [1955]), a colleague of Goffman's, who used it to explain how animals (including humans) know whether certain behaviours are playful or for real (as discussed in Chapter 5). Goffman's use of framing is more akin to the dynamic and multiple framing of pictures in a film, where 'framing becomes a habit and a sign of style of the photographer or the director' (Czarniawska, 2006, p. 1667). In addition, frames can be deliberately shifted through subtle changes in script and metacommunication in order to change the 'key' of the frame. 'Fabrications' are

the ways in which people seek to deceive others through performances. Sometimes this may be playful, and even understood as playful deception: Henricks (2012) gives the example of flirting. Other times it may be less benign.

Goffman highlights the nuances and complexities of social interaction, and the endless opportunities for misunderstandings. The reason that people somehow usually manage to understand each other is that these endless possibilities for framing are anchored by the cultural scripts required in each frame, and, as long as frames are read with some accuracy, this allows people to feel confidence in their performances. In CHAT terms, framing can be understood as a mediating artefact, a symbolic tool that allows players in a collective activity system to co-construct meaning and so act collaboratively towards the shared object. Yet, as was shown in the 'reframing' research (Russell, 2006), different and contradictory ways of sensemaking may exist. Indeed, given the dialectic of play being framed as 'not-real' and as skills rehearsal, the potential for misunderstanding is greatly amplified.

Critics of Goffman's work highlight the surface nature of impression management, asking whether players are 'cultural dupes' merely acting out a prescribed script or manipulating game players (Czarniawska, 2006); they point out its lack of attention to power, privilege and resistance to established scripts and performances (Henricks, 2012), or its static nature (Sharron, 2000, cited in Henricks, 2012). The expression of emotions, in Goffman's analysis, is subject to the same scripts (for example, one should exhibit sadness at a funeral, joy at a wedding), and if conventions for a situation are not observed, showing shame or embarrassment and enacting a number of repair rituals is required. Emotions, in Goffman's analysis, are about the performance of appropriate emotions for each frame.

6.5.2 Emotional labour

Hochschild developed elements of Goffman's basic premise to build her theory of emotion work and emotional labour. This is pertinent here because it facilitates an analysis of playwork activity (as labour) and talk that acknowledges the centrality of emotions. Additionally, it recognises the potential for exploring the dialectic between how playworkers feel about a situation and how they feel they should act professionally, addressing the issue of what Sturrock and Else (1998) term 'authenticity' from a socio-political perspective rather than a psychodynamic one.

This last is Hochschild's (1983) starting point in her description of Goffman's work. She talks of Goffman's 'affective deviant, the person with the wrong feeling for the situation and for whom the right feeling would be a conscious burden' (Hochschild, 1983, p. 224). The existence of the affective deviant highlights the conscious effort required to play by the rules in order for social institutions and encounters to work. This effort is rewarded with the security of group membership. Yet Goffman's analysis is restricted to performance, what Hochschild terms 'surface acting'; he does not address the emotion work necessary for successful performance of the correct emotion. Hochschild argues 'we need a theory [of emotion] that allows us to see how institutions ... control us not simply through their surveillance of our behaviour but through surveillance of our feelings' (Hochschild, 1983, p. 228).

Institutions, encounters and other forms of social interaction are bound by emotion cultures and ideologies that determine both how people should feel and how they should display those feelings. People engage in emotion work and emotion management in order to adhere to both feeling and display rules, through body work (for example, deep breathing in order to remain calm), surface acting (in the hope that giving the semblance of an emotion may evoke that emotion), deep acting (attempting to arouse the required feelings) and cognitive work (deliberate attempts to have thoughts that may evoke the required emotion) (Turner and Stets, 2005). Hochschild uses the term 'emotional labour' to describe jobs where people are paid to have and display particular feelings. Emotions become commodities that the worker produces and exchanges for others to consume in return for a wage. Alienation, estrangement and feelings of inauthenticity can arise if workers feel a disconnection between, or lack of control over what they are required to feel and what they actually feel. However, control and commodification of feelings cannot be total, and workers find space to 'be themselves' where they can engage in emotion work that fosters well-being and interrelationships among staff (Vincent, 2011).

Conceptualising playwork as (emotional) performance offers much for an analysis of the playworker as subject of a collective activity system. Playwork settings are highly charged, often with the sheer exuberance of children playing, sometimes with the distress of physical or emotional pain, other times with anger and aggression when emotions spill from frames that cannot hold them. Playworkers perform responses to these displays; at the same time their own emotions affect the atmosphere. Chapters 9 and 10 explore these ideas, situating the analysis within geographies of affect and emotion.

6.6 Rules, community and division of labour

The 'bottom line' of the activity triangle has been implicit in much of the discussion of the activity system as a unit in this chapter. Similarly, these aspects are interwoven throughout analysis of the fieldwork data. The way they may be analysed presents a trialectic between local, collective and networked activity systems (that is, what takes place at local settings, how these aspects are envisaged within the playwork sector, and the macro structural contexts for social relations and interactions). Community, for example, may be construed as playwork as a community of practice, as well as the contradictory relationships playworkers may have at local level with those in the neighbourhood or in adjacent activity systems. For rules, there is a dialectic between explicit and tacit rules, as well as imposed and co-constructed ones. At local level, settings have explicit policies and procedures as well as histories of 'the way things happen here', played out through the triad of the production of space discussed in section 6.4; these may be arbitrary, negotiated, or sheer bloody-minded. At sector level the mediating artefacts discussed in section 6.2 can also be seen as rules. At macro level, rules encompass the legal requirements of the role. Tacit rules at macro level will be a reflection of structural politics, particularly the politics of power and social stratification that determine the rules for social interaction and often also divisions of labour. In addition, any analysis needs to address the political ideology that informs social policy and therefore funding streams (Chapter 4). At local level, this is about the everyday 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005) of co-producing space and the relationships between everyone in the space, as well as the feeling and display rules discussed above. Each level is affected by and affects the others.

In terms of division of labour, again some of this will be explicit and formal (for example, the hierarchy of the playwork team and designated key responsibilities) and some implicit, relating again to wider macro structures and social divisions. The gradual reframing of playwork from construction to care work, together with broader macro-level work patterns with a shift away from manufacturing towards (part time, low paid) service and care work (Held, 2002; Macdonald and Merrill, 2002) has led to a feminisation of the playwork workforce (SkillsActive, 2010b); within this there are gendered aspects to the division of labour. Individual playworkers may perform different roles within the team (for example, the mother figure, the joker, the sporty type, and so on); these may be prescribed by cultural rules for performing gender as an element of Lefebvre's spatial practice and at the

same time resisted in lived space. Similarly, normative expectations of adult-child relations can be disturbed. These spatial practices and their disruptions, together with personal differences in style, allow analysis to move away from a homogeneous uniform description of playwork towards a multivoiced and idiosyncratic style that each individual performs.

6.7 Playwork's contradictions

This final section thematises some of the contradictions within the collective playwork activity system illustrated through the NOS. In the undergraduate programme at the University of Gloucestershire, these have come to be known as playwork's 'hot potatoes', and four are explored here as illustrative of the contradictions that weave themselves through the fieldwork data: planning, behaviour, risk and equality (Russell, 2010b). Although the NOS have moved away from an explicit developmentalist perspective towards a spatial one, this paradigm remains in the regulation (Ofsted) and some funding of practice, and in playworkers' own 'common sense' understandings. The debate about the place of structured activities illustrates this. Whilst they do not sit well with a definition of play as 'a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated' (PPSG, 2005), activities are a consistent element of playwork practice. Settings catering for younger children are required to plan 'purposeful play' (DCSF, 2008b) on the understanding that particular inputs will lead to particular play forms and then to particular skills development. Often playworkers plan activities knowing that things will change, recognising activities can act as a springboard for more emergent and self-organised forms of playing (see Chapter 12). Despite this, in day books and reports, it is the planned activities that are recorded rather than what emerged from them (Russell, 2007a). This illustrates how the mediating artefacts that support planning (like the paperwork required of monitoring and inspection systems) help to reproduce discourses that assume causal links between input and outcome, ideas situated in Lefebvre's (1991) conceived space. Similarly, playworkers often divide spaces into named zones (for example, the arts and craft table, or the den building area), fixing their purpose and assuming (and often ensuring) these spaces are used in the intended way. Yet ideas of the production of space as something that is produced and that is a sphere of possibility for 'contemporaneous plurality' (Massey, 2005), together with the understandings of play as the deliberate creation of uncertainty (Spinka, Newberry and Bekoff, 2001), point to the likelihood that children will seek to actualise a field of free action in the gap between, and overlapping, the

fields of promoted and constrained action designed by adults (Kytta, 2004). Power and control are maintained over the use of space through this naming process, and it leads to a reification of play as a 'thing' to be planned for and provided rather than as a disposition (Lester and Russell, 2013a). The activity of planning uses such mediating artefacts, which are reproduced until understood as common sense. It takes an alternative discourse to disturb it. Such tensions are also apparent in much of the literature on planning for play (for example, Children's Play Council, 2006) and the design of play areas (for example, Shackell *et al.*, 2008). Assumptions are made about the causal relationships between the provision of specific named spaces ('play areas' or 'play spaces') or services ('play provision') and outcomes, whilst at the same time advocating for play as a self-organised process. Play becomes commodified into a thing that can be designed and provided rather than an emergent, subjective experience for children.

Similar contradictions can also be illuminated through bringing a critical eye to the other 'hot potatoes'. Current registration and inspection documentation (Ofsted, 2013) make reference to the requirements for staff to 'manage' children's behaviour, as did those at the time of the fieldwork (Ofsted, 2001). This creates a dilemma for playworkers. Whilst they have to accept responsibility for the setting, and some behaviour does require intervention, it is understood (PPSG, 2005; NPFA *et al.*, 2000) that children will exhibit behaviour in their play that may be interpreted as 'testing boundaries' and this is an inherent aspect of playing. It is one of the dialectics of play that children 'refract' (Stevens, 2007) aspects of their everyday life in their play, exaggerating them, turning them upside down, mimicking and mocking them in order to experience the emotions arising therefrom (Sutton-Smith, 2003). If the content of children's playing is interpreted literally, much of it could be understood as needing intervention, yet applying this alternative understanding of play could lead to a different response. Russell (2006) used this theorising in an action research project that explored a discrete playwork response to working with children labelled as having 'challenging behaviour'. The starting point was to rethink the playworkers' own understandings of what was taking place when children exhibited 'challenging' behaviour, and to set this within a deep and shared understanding of the children's own preferred play styles. In working to support play rather than manage behaviour, playworkers found they could reframe the phenomenon and therefore their own behavioural, and eventually emotional, responses.

A similar internal inconsistency can be highlighted through the discourse on play and risk. In attempts to counter the powerful safety lobby and growing risk aversion amongst adults in terms of children's play (Gill, 2007) and to advocate for the benefits of risk-taking in play, the play sector has worked with safety agencies to produce guidelines on managing risk in play provision (Ball, Gill and Spiegel, 2008). They attempt to navigate the contradictions between adult responsibility for safety and children's propensity to take risks in play, and in so doing make two assumptions. The first is that the benefits of risk taking are embedded in the future-focused, skills-based developmental paradigm: through risk taking children learn to assess and manage risk. The second is that risk is something tangible and 'out there', something that can be offered and managed by playworkers and play space designers (Lester and Russell, 2008b). It is not unusual to hear playworkers talk of providing 'risky play'. Understanding play as the deliberate creation of uncertainty (Spinka, Newberry and Bekoff, 2001) and the relationship between this and the development of flexible responses to the unexpected, provides a more nuanced appreciation of the role of risk in play (Lester and Russell, 2008b). This is discussed further in Chapter 11.

Finally, issues of equality and diversity can also give rise to contradictions between playwork's espoused support for play where 'children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons' (PPSG, 2005) and the legal and moral duty to promote equality and diversity and protect children from discrimination as outlined in article 2 of the UNCRC. This conundrum can be seen clearly when two units of the NOS at Level 3 (SkillsActive, 2010a) are set side by side (Russell, 2010b, pp. 134-135):

<p>What do the standards say about play?</p> <p>To explore this, we'll look at element PW9.3. The Unit title is 'Plan for and support self-directed play.'</p> <p>The element title is 'Support self-directed play.'</p>	<p>What do the standards say about anti-discriminatory practice?</p> <p>To explore this, we'll look at element PW6.3. The Unit title is 'Contribute to an organisational framework that reflects the needs and protects the rights of children and young people.'</p> <p>The element title is 'Promote a diverse and inclusive environment.'</p>
<p>What you must do</p> <p><i>To meet the national standard, you must:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 encourage children and young people to choose and explore the range of play spaces for themselves, providing support when necessary 2 leave the content and intent of play to the children and young people 	<p>What you must do</p> <p><i>To meet the national standard, you must:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 make sure the environment reflects and promotes diversity and inclusion 2 make sure there are resources which are accessible to all children 3 promote the environment to children and young people who may experience barriers

3	enable play to occur uninterrupted	to participation and provide them with appropriate forms of support
4	enable children and young people to explore their own values	4 provide a positive role model for issues to do with diversity and inclusion
5	ensure children and young people can develop in their own ways	5 provide opportunities for children and young people to understand and value diversity and inclusion
6	hold children and young people's play frames when necessary	6 promote diversity and inclusion to colleagues and other relevant adults and, where necessary provide them with relevant support
7	observe play and respond to play cues according to the stage in the play cycle	7 deal with words and behaviour that challenge diversity and inclusion in a way that is appropriate to the people involved.
		(SkillsActive, 2010)

Figure 5: comparison of Playwork Level 3 NOS Units PW9.3 and PW6.3 (SkillsActive, 2010)

6.8 Conclusions

This chapter has returned to Engeström's (1987) triangular model of the collective activity system to apply it theoretically to playwork. It has explored the development of playwork's mediating artefacts, its object and subjects, ending with an illustration of contradictions inherent within the activity system. These contradictions can be grouped into two broad but interrelated categories: that between use and exchange value of playwork as labour and the tensions between a libertarian and paternalistic approach to working with children at play. This, together with the discussions on adult knowledge production and spatial practices regarding childhood and children's play as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, provide theoretical underpinnings for the analysis of the fieldwork data that welcome in Lefebvre's third dialectical moment of playful resistance to the hegemonies of knowledge production and social practices.

This concludes the first part of the thesis that considers literature relevant to the study. Part Two begins with the methodology, incorporating a description of the Play Centre where the fieldwork was carried out, before embarking on three discussion chapters that look at playwork as the production of space, playworkers as emotional subjects, and violence and kicking off as an aspect of playwork.

PART TWO: PLAYWORK IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE: APPLYING THE CONCEPTUALISATION

Chapter 7: Methodology

Once understanding of the limits of objective science and its universal knowledge escaped from the genie's bottle, there was no going back. Despite the best efforts to recover 'what was lost' in the implosion of social science, too many researchers understand its socially constructed nature, its value laden products that operate under the flag of objectivity, its avoidance of contextual specificities that subvert the stability of its structures, and its fragmenting impulse that moves it to fold its methodologies and the knowledge they produce neatly into disciplinary drawers (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 681).

7.1 Introduction; aims and objectives of the study

This chapter considers the methodology for the study looking first at ethnography and insider research, then at the methods used. This is followed by an introduction to the Play Centre where the participant observation was carried out and a consideration of research ethics, with a return to the ethics of ethnography. Next the framework for analysis is given, describing the *bricolage* approach to analysis and interpretation of the data.

Much has already been said about the broadly interpretivist and (post-) Marxist approach taken in this study. Chapter 1 outlines the epistemological standpoint, Chapters 2 and 6 introduce and apply Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), and Chapter 3 reflects on the both the inadequacies and excesses of language and on the power and politics of knowledge production through language. The approach taken in this study addresses disciplines dialectically, through what Kincheloe (2001, p. 689) terms 'boundary work' in the liminal spaces between disciplines. It critiques and sublates existing playwork theorising and draws on a range of disciplinary studies on play, acknowledging their role in playwork's development. This approach has also been used in terms of research design and data analysis.

The aim of the study was to explore the dialectics of playwork using Cultural Historical Activity Theory as a framework. The objectives of the study were:

- to use the playwork activity system as the primary unit of analysis, with playworkers as the subjects of the activity system, identifying objects and instruments through observation and semi-structured group discussion;
- to identify stages in the dialectical and dialogic evolution of playwork using the framework of CHAT, particularly identifying key contradictions and playworkers' responses to these through desk-based research and interview;
- to explore historical and current theorising on playwork from a CHAT perspective in order to identify key mediating artefacts and moments of change;
- to explore the contradictions inherent in children's play, in adult-child relations and in playwork through a literature review of play theory, adult-child relations theory and playwork theory and linking this to observations of playwork practice and discussions with playworkers.

These objectives have been addressed in this study. At the time of designing the research, I had also intended to explore the usefulness of the Brawgs Continuum (Russell, 2008b) as a potentially new mediating artefact, but given the way in which the study evolved over its seven year life, this element lost its relevance and so was dropped.

7.2 Ethnography, politics and ethics: a personal reflection

If research is seen as a collective activity system, its object becomes the production of knowledge mediated by the instruments and conventions of academic research.

Hammersley and Traianou (2011) note the rise of managerialism in research, both in terms of a focus on its instrumental rather than intrinsic value (for example, in the focus on impact in ESRC-funded research) and in technical and regulatory approaches to research ethics (explored in section 7.5). Furthermore, if the object is seen as the production of knowledge, given what has already been said regarding knowledge and power, research becomes an ethico-political activity. This section considers the politics of ethnography and

the ethical requirement of the critical researcher to pay attention to the production of self through the research process.

It was always clear that this was going to be an ethnographic study. By that I mean that I wanted to study playwork as a community of practice: to write (*-graphy*) the tribe (*ethne*). Much of what is written in the extant playwork literature presents a particular understanding of children's play and consequent justificatory account of the value of playwork together with normative assertions of how playworkers should ply their craft (for example, Hughes 2012; Kilvington and Wood, 2010; Brown and Taylor, 2008; Sturrock and Else, 2005; Brown, 2003a). The focus is on how playworkers can support play, with a tacit assumption that play is what children (should) do all the time in playwork settings (and perhaps not much anywhere else). Technical books also consider administrative, development and managerial aspects of the work. There is little about what playwork looks like on a daily basis in all its complex, messy, opportunistic and co-produced ordinariness, although some narrative accounts do exist, for example, Nuttall (2012), Head and Melville (2001), and stories in the playwork magazine *iP-D!P*. Additionally, the growing engagement in social media is giving rise to a narrative turn (for example, the Playwork Bloggers Network). Yet even these are mostly promotional texts extolling playwork's value and the wonder of play.

I wanted to move beyond justification and draw on ethnography in order to describe the everyday contexts and practices of the small, local community of playworkers that constituted one group of my research participants. This was to be no 'how to' text, nor was it to be an evaluation of how far the team of playworkers met, exceeded or fell short of any normative benchmarks for practice, although to some extent this is what they appeared to want. Although I am familiar with playwork and have been immersed in the literature for some decades, I did not know beforehand what would emerge from the research, what direction it would take; the study is inductive in that regard. Given this, my methods reflect key features of ethnography summarised by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 3) as: studying the group in their everyday context; using participant observation and unstructured discussion supplemented by documentary evidence; using an inductive approach to research design; focusing on one small group of people to study them in depth; and finally analysing the data through interpretations of 'the meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and ... wider contexts'. It is this last that makes ethnography a political

endeavour. It is perhaps more honest to acknowledge that data are produced rather than neutrally collected, and that the researcher cannot easily detach herself from the process of constructing knowledge from them (May, 2002) than to make claims for objectivity and single universal truths.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) strongly criticise early social research, and in particular anthropology and ethnography, for representing non-minority world cultures in exotic ways that reified and subordinated customs and practices and that served to reproduce colonial ways of knowing. Earlier forms of anthropology made a virtue of detachment as the source of objectivity; indeed the gravest sin was to 'go native' (Hellaewell, 2006). As ethnographers began to extend their research towards groups of people closer to home, the task became one of balancing 'destrangement' and 'estrangement' (Maso, 2007). The ethnographer is required to treat familiar situations as 'anthropologically strange' in order to move away from tacit assumptions about the meaning of social interactions. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) identify seven 'historical moments' of qualitative research over the last century that see a journey from positivism, through a number of critiques, towards a crisis of representation and beyond. These later moments attempt to confront issues of power, politics and representation:

Ethnography is a not an innocent practice. Our research practices are performative, pedagogical, and political. Through our writing and our talk, we enact the worlds we study. These performances are messy and pedagogical. They instruct our readers about this world and how we see it. The pedagogical is always moral and political; by enacting a way of seeing and being, it challenges, contests, or endorses the official, hegemonic ways of seeing and representing the other (Denzin, 2006, p. 422).

All this becomes further complicated by the fact that I 'went native' over 35 years ago. I have been immersed in the comparatively small UK play and playwork community, initially as a playworker on adventure playgrounds in the 1970s and 1980s in London, and then in various roles, mainly education and training, working with the voluntary, statutory and private sectors at local, national and international level. This means that I carry an emotional investment in wanting to represent playwork well; it also means that the process of estrangement may be particularly difficult. Yet, alongside this, it is also many years since I was a face-to-face playworker, and so the experience of going back to an open access playwork setting, after a long time away during which there have been many social, policy and cultural changes, brought both challenges and opportunities.

Representations of the Other are representations of the power of the researcher and the reproduction of those power relations. My power lies in my status as an academic and as an 'elder', which gives rise to ambivalent and contradictory feelings. These feelings aside, my status bestows power. Postcolonial, poststructural and postmodern approaches seek ways of addressing this power relationship by attempting to represent the Other through 'an understanding of the way in which [research participants] are produced as subjects by the very narratives and discourses that position them in the social world' (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2002, p. 180). This requires problematising assumptions the researcher may make through exploring reflectively the relationship between researcher and research, recognising this is complex and sometimes contradictory or even conflictual. Yet representation still overwhelmingly occurs through writing; researchers produce research reports and other written accounts. Writing assumes a mantle of authority and so this needs to be problematised (see Chapter 3). Skeggs (2002) argues that the research process itself, not just the writing of it, needs to be reflexive; even so, the finished text will be static and assume authority.

It became clear, both because of the requirements of ethical ethnography and because of my insider perspective, that I needed to write myself into the research. Yet this insider research perspective presented a fresh set of challenges. How should I do this and still address issues of representation and power? How could I do this without producing an essential and fixed 'self' isolated from the research and the researched? In their discussion on subjectivity within the research process, Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2002) highlight the importance of emotions (an aspect that also emerged in my analysis – see Chapters 9 and 10), and particularly understanding the emotions at play in the 'dance' between researcher and research, not because this reveals psychological truths but because it allows for an examination of the fictions and fantasies of varying subject positions and therefore a glimpse at an understanding of the production of self within the research process, something that reflexivity as mere confession will gloss over.

Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2002) draw on Elliott and Spezzano's (1999) postmodern reworking of psychoanalysis, acknowledging the multiplicities of an often fractured and fragmented self that arises through intersubjectivities and the relations between otherness and unconscious processes understood as desire, affect, imagination. Interpretations of these are grounded in historical, social, cultural and psychic contexts that are also intensely personal. This has been extended to include material and symbolic artefacts as actors in the

co-production of emotionally-charged space, and the collective activity system of CHAT as an event.

The same dangers accrue to a telling of the self as did to the original colonial ethnographies, in that the self that is required to be brought into existence reflects existing power relations (Skeggs, 2002). In one sense, the collective playwork identity has to date been represented in particular ways in the literature and it may seem an act of resistance or even betrayal to represent it alternatively through ethnographic accounts. Yet how far would these accounts be mine and to what extent could and should I claim the multiplicity of playwork voices that emerged from my observations, recordings and interviews as mine? Skeggs (2002, p. 360) summarises her criticisms of bourgeois productions of the reflexive self in the name of problematising claims of authority thus:

[T]he dictum to be reflexive has become interpreted in a banal way, whereby the experience of the research is one of the researcher-only and their story. Their story is based on their identity, which is usually articulated as a singularity and takes no account of movement in and out of space, cultural resources, place, bodies and others but nonetheless authorizes its self to speak.

These are strong words and I cannot say for certain at this stage whether I have fallen into this trap or not. In one sense, the interpretation and writing *is* mine, in that I am the author. Yet this interpretation is produced through an assemblage of histories, discourses and other artefacts. It has evolved inductively and changed significantly over a considerable period of time during which I have debated with the sector (including with some of my research participants) and also undertaken other research that has made me question my own understandings of the nature and value of playwork (see Chapter 12). This led me to consider playwork in ways that may not be readily accepted by the sector, particularly in terms of the sector's articulation of a deficit model of children's play in crisis as a response to the need for validation by policymakers and funding bodies. Does that make it my story and if so, have I exploited my research participants unfairly in its telling? In a sense, this reflection is a confession of unanswered questions, and therefore on its own insufficient in terms of reflexivity. However, throughout the analysis and interpretation of the data I was acutely aware of my position as researcher, often to the extent that progress stuttered and stalled. The efforts to go beyond mere confession are explained in following section on methods; the question of whether this suffices is a judgement to be made.

The stories that I have created from my research are not a singular, universal assertion concerning the truth of playwork. Nor are they an entirely personal fantasy superimposed onto my research participants. A conclusion that embraces the dialectics of playwork allows for a multiplicity of subjectivities and a moving between and among ways of making sense of play and playwork. The idea of the researcher as *bricoleur* seems fitting here. There are many kinds of *bricoleur*: 'interpretive, narrative, theoretical, political, methodological' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). *Bricolage* involves using multiple tools, methods and disciplines; it requires a critical appreciation of competing discourses and paradigms, emphasising the hermeneutic and dialectic nature of interdisciplinary enquiry; it acknowledges that all research is interpretive and therefore political. Hopefully, this will not fix my research participants into colonial stories not of their own making.

7.3 Methods

At the centre of the study was an intensive period of fieldwork, working alongside and observing a team of playworkers in an open access playwork setting in a city in the East Midlands region of England (referred to throughout the study as the Play Centre and described below). This included participant observation, recording of post-session discussion during the process of completing monitoring forms required by funders, and semi-structured interviews with each member of the team as well as analysis of documentary data. The participant observation was contextualised through an exploration of both contemporary and historical articulations of playwork drawing both on the literature and on playworkers' own voices. This latter included previous research (Russell, 2006) and a range of conference workshops and seminars, together with semi-structured interviews with a selected sample of people who were playworkers prior to 1990, when the implementation of the Children Act 1989 brought playwork settings under the registration and inspection programme of first Early Years inspectors and then the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). These participants were known to me at the time when I was working at adventure playgrounds in London; they were invited because of this shared history.

The participant observation fieldwork was carried out over a month in October-November 2006 (including the half term playscheme), producing fourteen sets of fieldnotes, ten transcripts of post-session debriefs (not all of these were recorded because one part-time member of the team initially did not give her consent for this to be recorded but later

changed her mind) and one transcript of a team meeting prior to the session. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six playworkers at the Play Centre (referred to throughout the study as ‘contemporary playworkers’ and in interview quotations as ‘CP’) and seven playworkers who were working in the 1970s and 1980s (referred to throughout the study as ‘pre-1990 playworkers’ and in interview quotations as ‘PP’), three of whom had remained within the sector, two others who were working with children in different contexts and two who no longer worked with children. The themes and prompts used for the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix 2. All the empirical data (except the handwritten journal) were stored electronically using QSR International’s NVivo (version 8). The approach to using NVivo is discussed in section 7.6.

In addition, the data production and the analysis and interpretation were augmented and informed by discussion within the sector. After a particularly fraught session at the Play Centre, I discussed events with a close colleague on MSN (Microsoft Network Messenger Service, an instant text-based messenger service popular at the time), which was added to the NVivo project as data. The analytical approaches were discussed at seminars and workshops; although this helped me to refine my thinking, these events did not form part of the raw data. A series of workshops at the National Playwork Conferences in Eastbourne offered a useful platform for debate. Some of the key contradictions emerging from a major literature review (Lester and Russell, 2008a) were debated at the 2009 conference at a round table discussion entitled ‘*Yeah but ... no but*’ or ‘*YOU CAN’T SAY THAT!*’: *Six Unaskable Questions*; the CHAT framework was debated at a round table discussion in 2010; the analysis for Chapter 8 was presented and discussed at workshops in 2011 and 2012, and for Chapter 11 in 2013. In addition to this annual conference, the CHAT framework was presented and playwork’s contradictions discussed at a seminar for playworkers in London and at a SkillsActive Playwork Employer Network seminar in 2010. The analysis for Chapter 8 was debated at a seminar for playworkers in Brighton in 2012; it also formed, together with the CHAT framework, the basis for a paper at the International Play Association conference in 2011 (Russell, 2011), and at the *Philosophy at Play* conference in Gloucester in 2011, this last published as Russell (2013a); a version of this analysis was also published in a peer-reviewed journal (Russell, 2012a). The analysis for Chapter 9 was presented and critiqued at an academic seminar of geographers entitled *De/centring Education* at Leicester University in 2012, and the analysis for Chapter 10 at playwork workshops in Hackney and the Welsh national playwork conference in 2012. The analysis for Chapter 11 was presented and discussed at the *Philosophy at Play* conference

in Gloucester in 2013. In addition, I was lucky to have the opportunity to present and discuss an early literature review and an early draft for the journal article on Chapter 8 at two research seminars at Stockholm University in 2010 and 2011. All these afforded the opportunity to write, reflect on, refine, present and debate the material and to reflect on the ethical positions of self as author representing the stories of others, discussed in section 7.2 above. In addition, research participants have been kept informed (although with long gaps in between communications) and were offered the opportunity to comment on the article submitted for publication (Russell, 2012a) and the final draft thesis. Finally, a journal was also kept throughout the period of the research during the review of the literature and the fieldwork and also during the analysis. This was not systematic but on an 'as-and-when' basis, and a number of formats were used including handwritten notes, memos within NVivo, typed notes stored as data in the NVivo project, and audio-recorded reflections that were also transcribed and stored within the NVivo project. Each format supported a slightly different articulation and therefore perception of issues under examination.

7.4 The Play Centre

Following discussions with the play service manager within the City Council to approve the research, a call was made to the city's five open access settings for expressions of interest in participating in the research. Three settings expressed an interest, and following further conversations with the whole team at each setting and explaining the process of consent, the Play Centre selected was the only one at that time with full team consent. I had a relationship with the team as I had previously carried out a small study there when undertaking a course in therapeutic playwork. Conversations continued with the other two settings, with the intention of doing additional fieldwork there should the opportunity arise, but this did not materialise.

The Play Centre is situated in an area of dense Victorian terraced housing close to city centre. The ward was one of the two most densely populated areas of the City at the time of the research. The City ranked highly in the 2004 English indices of multiple deprivation (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM], 2004a), with the three Super Output Areas that form the Play Centre's close catchment area within the top 10% of the most deprived in the country (ODPM, 2004b). Figures from the 2001 Census show that the ward had just over 30% population from ethnic minorities, just over half of which was of Pakistani origin.

The Play Centre occupies the space of two or three terraced houses on a residential street, on a comparatively small site. Outdoors there was a small kickaround area, a central climbing structure, a zipwire, a large raised sandpit, and an enclosed nature area, with several smaller areas that were left undefined (they may have bushes, trees, or be at the side of the building and so on). There was a fairly new portacabin building, with one large room, a kitchen area, two smaller rooms and toilets. The house adjoining the site was used as an office and for some activities, and there was a gardening project in its small back yard. The setting was registered with Ofsted and in the 2004 inspection had a 'good' rating.

At the time of the research, the Play Centre, together with the other open access play projects across the city, was in receipt of funding from the Children's Fund, established by the then government to work with children at risk of social exclusion (see Chapter 4 for a description of how the project was indicative of the risk and prevention paradigm in social policy). This was for two projects, one an inclusion project and the other originally entitled the Challenging Behaviour project, both providing extra staff to work with children whose behaviour would often see them excluded from other services. As a result of an earlier action research project (Russell, 2006), the name was changed to the Play Support project. The earlier research project, which used Developmental Work Research (Engeström, 2005) as its methodology, worked with two teams of playworkers to explore playwork-specific approaches to working with children with challenging behaviour. That is, it sought to move away from traditional behaviour management approaches to look at how playworkers might support the play of specific children through the development of a new mediating artefact of 'play profiles'. These were intended to help playworkers to arrive at a dialogic understanding of play styles, preferences, cues (Sturrock and Else, 1998), types (Hughes, 2002, 2006) and frames (Sutton-Smith, 2003; Bateson, 1972 [1955]). Following intensive discussion on these profiles, strategies were agreed for the playworkers to work to support the children's play rather than manage their behaviour. Following the research, the approach was rolled out across all the play centres and adventure playgrounds in the city, the name of the project was changed and the playworkers (including those at the Play Centre) used play profiles as a basis for their monitoring reports back to the Children's Fund.

7.5 Ethical considerations

In terms of research ethics, the procedures and protocols of the University were followed. Approval for the research was given by the University's Research Ethics Committee. Research participants (that is, the contemporary and the pre-1990 playworkers) were given an information sheet outlining the aims of the research (see Appendix 3), and all signed a consent form (Appendix 4). In an effort to avoid pressure from team members, the contemporary playworkers were all given individual forms with stamped addressed envelopes so that they could respond anonymously within the team. It was made clear that the focus of the research was the playworkers and not the children and young people. The question of whether the informed consent of the children and young people and their parents and carers was required was the subject of a discussion with the playwork team at the Play Centre, as recommended by the Research Ethics Committee. It was agreed that parents/carers would be informed through the leaflet for the half term playscheme, with my contact details for further information or to discuss concerns. The children were informed of the research, and although several were curious at the beginning, they soon became accustomed to my presence. The extract below shows the difficulties some had in understanding the idea that playwork might be something worthy of research and teaching:

One child asked how long I was there for, and I said I wasn't really working there, he asked which play centre I was from, I said I worked in a university, he said what doing, I said teaching, he said what school, I said again I worked in a university. So he asked what subject did I teach and I said playwork. That stumped him for a while and then he asked did I teach Gareth? I said 'Yes, a bit, did I do a good job?' He said yes (fieldnotes, 18/10/06).

The information sheet also addressed issues of confidentiality and data protection, assuring participants that all data would be stored securely and names of adults, children and settings would be changed in any publication. Details were given of possible kinds of publications. Finally, it was made clear that the organisation's procedures would be followed if I became aware of any illegal or unprofessional conduct or child protection issues.

These ethical procedures are important; they provide a structure and a procedure for addressing, to some extent, specific ethical issues concerning the rights of research participants. Debates could be had regarding the voluntary nature of consent (Gallagher *et*

al., 2010), the problems of on-going ethical considerations in inductive research processes, or the increased bureaucratisation and regulation of research ethics that challenge the autonomy and discretion of professional academic researchers and present particular problems for social research (Hammersley and Traianou, 2011). These issues are not straightforward, static or easily shoe-horned into ethics forms and ethics committees. What is addressed less frequently is the matter of the ethics of the research itself (Hammersley and Traianou, 2011), of the knowledge that is produced and the relationship between research, the researched and the broader sector as well as on the lives of children that are also represented in this study. This chapter opened with a discussion on ethical considerations of the practice of ethnography and representing the stories of others through a form of reflexivity. I return to this now through an application of Foucault's ethics and the care of the self (which is also discussed in Chapter 11). For Foucault (1984, p. 290), the subject was not a pre-existing entity but 'constituted itself ... through certain practices that were also games of truth, practices of power'. Care of the self, which is the first ethical principle for Foucault before one can care for others,

is not the humanistic, romantic, or self-focused search for introspection, insight, enlightenment, revelation, or individuation but an act of resistance that comes from the awareness of the disciplinary roles of knowledge and power (Koro-Ljungberg, *et al.*, 2007, p. 1079).

This perspective allows for both working with the regimes of truth that constitute ethical research conventions and ethical playwork and seeking the freedom to trouble them. Ethical research, then, is about protocol and it is also about identifying the power of discursive formations and regimes of truth. To this end, this research has sought to do this in three ways: through a review of the literature that offers a critical perspective on the nature and value of childhood and play; through an analysis that allows for the messy ordinariness and emotionality of everyday playwork to be made visible and to be located in a political context; and through proposing an ethics of playwork. The shape of these discussion chapters emerged through dialogue with the data, with myself, with trusted colleagues (including my supervisors – a very helpful research convention) and with the sector.

7.6 Data analysis

[G]iven the social, cultural, epistemological, and paradigmatic upheavals and alterations of the past few decades, rigorous researchers may no longer enjoy

the luxury of choosing whether to embrace the *bricolage* (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 681).

Kincheloe's assertion above refers to the need to move beyond monological attempts to discover pre-existing universal truths about the world, shored up through positivist research conventions such as validation, triangulation and other techniques supporting claims for objectivity. The *bricoleur* 'uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). The theoretical *bricoleur* works at the borders of multiple, counter-hegemonic interpretive paradigms in order to explore the interconnectedness of phenomena, subjectivities, artefacts, texts, histories and so on. This is more than mere eclecticism, however, as it also requires a reflective crafting of meanings. Kincheloe's (2005) development of the concept reveals a distinct ethical project in which *bricoleurs* 'aim to disrupt imbalances of power, social injustice, marginalization, and oppression perpetrated through traditional meaning-making practices' (Rogers, 2012, p. 8) through employing a critical hermeneutics. This critical hermeneutics acknowledges complexity and the impossibility of objectivity and value-free interpretation, it also transgresses the boundaries between empirical and philosophical enquiry:

Bricoleurs are not aware of where the empirical ends and the philosophical begins because such epistemological features are always embedded in one another (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 341.).

Forms of critical *bricolage* have been employed in this study. CHAT provides a useful framing for both the desk-based research and the fieldwork. The historicity of CHAT allows for a Foucauldian genealogical analysis of the development of playwork's mediating artefacts discussed in Chapters 6 and 11. Engeström's (1987) triangular model offers the opportunity to identify starting points, such as the object of playwork as an activity system, and also embraces the fluidity of points and processes thereby avoiding reductionism and essentialism. For example, the rules of the Play Centre could start off in the analytical process as rules, but could become mediating artefacts, subject players in the production of the space, determinants of the division of labour, and even the object of the activity at times of stress. General themes such as emotion can begin with a consideration of subjectivity but soon move to the process of production and consumption, or, as with rules, can temporarily become the focused object of the activity.

The analysis progressed in fits and starts over a seven year timespan during which both my own understanding of play and playwork evolved and the policy landscape changed dramatically from a period of unprecedented growth in the sector during the years of funding from the BIG Lottery and the English Play Strategy (DCSF, 2008a) to one of severe cuts (Martin, 2013). Data do not stand apart from everyday wisdom and experience, and my analysis and interpretation took the form of a dance between raw data, literature, my other work, discussions in the sector, and whatever else was 'to hand'. The work of Lefebvre emerged as significant during this process and has been used extensively alongside other spatial theories, particularly geographies of emotion. The theme of violence arose from the data and chimed with memories of my own experience and so was something that was researched from scratch, combining empirical and conceptual enquiry.

Early on in the analytical process, I drew the model onto a sheet of flipchart paper and used this to scribble thoughts (Figure 6). This process allowed for a visual and developmental approach to the analysis, with thoughts and ideas being added as time went on. Further notes are also on the reverse side of the sheet. The difficulties of fixing ideas to the model became apparent and can be seen in the scribbles and comments that are not attached to any point in the triangle. Some of the concepts and themes in this early diagram found their way into the final analysis, often in changed forms, and some did not. It is not possible to exhaust the data, and topics that I would have liked to explore further, for example the gendered nature of the playwork practice that I observed, or the idea of children's play being an adjacent activity system to the playwork one, were not included in the final analysis.

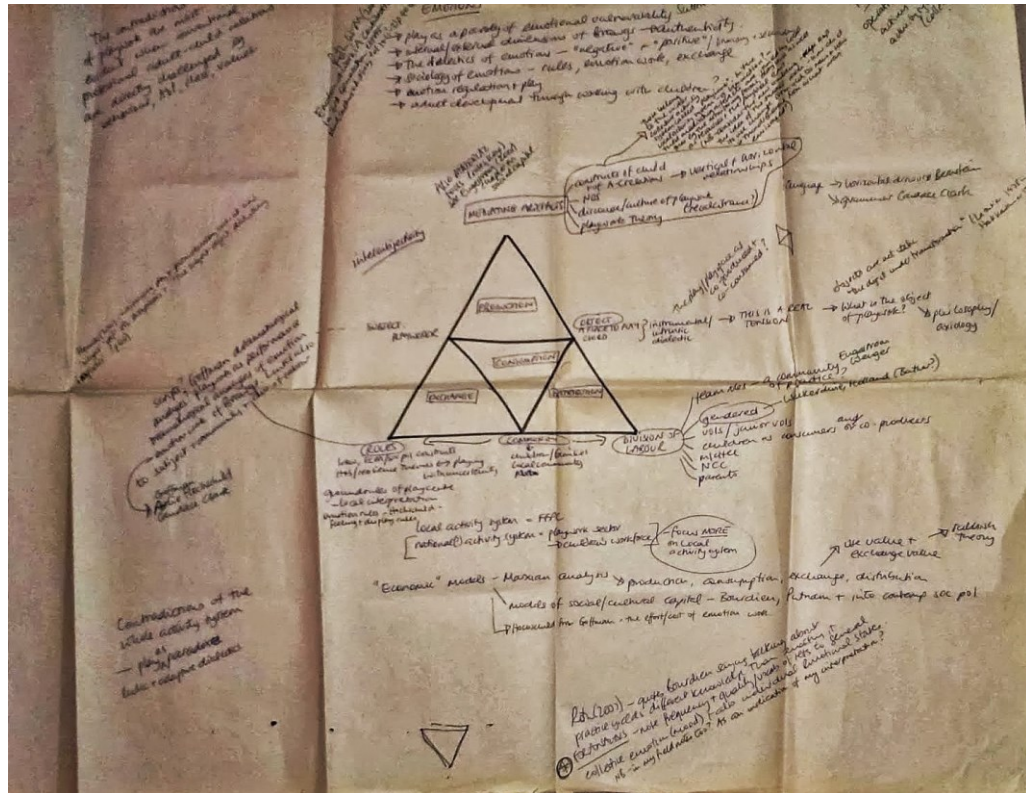


Figure 6: early framework for analysis

7.6.1 On coding

Some voice concern that using software to code and analyse data mechanises the analytical process and removes the researcher from intense engagement with the richness of the data and its context (Ryan, 2009; Bringer, Johnston and Brackenridge, 2004). Advocates of NVivo suggest that it should be employed right from the outset of the study, including for the literature review, memos and other recordings of the research process as well as the empirical data, and that the use of NVivo should not be isolated from the epistemological and methodological approach of the study as a whole (Johnston, 2006).

I made a decision to use NVivo for storage, coding and retrieval of my empirical data, but for little else. The bottom line was that the program offered a single site for storage and retrieval, and coding within NVivo was a useful starting point for interpretive analysis. This is a common approach and can lead to researchers becoming stuck in coding traps such as the code and retrieve cycle (Johnston, 2006). In one sense I accept this and feel that had I been in a position to use NVivo from the outset and understood its full potential, this may have ended up being a very different study. However, I also felt that my epistemological approach, a form of *bricolage*, meant that I needed to engage with the data in a number of ways. It was interesting quite how easy it was to be seduced by the quantitative aspects of

the software. As can be seen in Figures 7 and 8, the summary windows of coding nodes give statistical information, and it was tempting to infer that the nodes with the most references were the most important. Yet the coding process itself was tedious, and I would often break off to consider another aspect of the research; paradoxically, the very mechanistic nature of coding (whether electronic or manual) led me to employ a *bricolage* approach of moving between the data in NVivo, printouts of fieldnotes and interview transcripts, audio recordings, the literature and my own journal to ‘worry’ the data and become very familiar with it.

It has been argued that coding itself is a reductionist process; for example, Jackson (2013) states that the process of naming, grouping and theming fixes people, ideas and material and symbolic artefacts into categories that essentialise and thereby claim truths. However, Ryan (2009) argues that this does not always follow, if coding is used in line with the chosen epistemological standpoint. Codes are not necessarily pre-determined or essentialising structures; in the case of this research they were used as ways of organising the raw data so that they were readily available for further analysis and interpretation (Ryan, 2009). Some interpretation has to take place, and this requires organisation of the data; research conventions mean this is usually in the form of coding, but as Ryan (2009) suggests, this can be approached in a number of ways. The coding used for this study started off using the points in Engeström’s (1987) activity triangle, and additional codes emerged through an engagement with the data and with concepts.

All the empirical data (except the handwritten journal) were stored in a project in NVivo and were open coded. NVivo 8 allowed for coding to be made at free nodes and tree nodes (the latter with sub-categories). Figure 7 below shows that the tree nodes created for initial coding map directly to the points of Engeström’s (1987) CHAT triangle. Within a day or two, the tree nodes of ‘contradictions’ and ‘space’ were added. The process of coding and reflecting on the epistemological and theoretical approach for the analysis identified the need for these two core concepts to be included as tree nodes. Sub-categories were added at various points during the coding process as they became apparent. Similarly, most of the free nodes were identified during transcription and reading the data and created at the outset of coding. There was no attempt to exhaust the data or identify themes that had the most codings, as that was not the intention of the research. The final grouping of the data into themes for the discussion chapters emerged from both the literature and a deep

familiarity with the empirical data arrived at through mixture of manual sorting and retrieval from NVivo.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On
community	27	175	17/03/2011 22:11	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
children, community of play centre	19	58	05/06/2011 17:31	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
parents	16	72	05/06/2011 17:31	WR	24/07/2012 10:49
contradictions	20	95	18/03/2011 10:30	WR	24/07/2012 10:31
division of labour	28	281	17/03/2011 20:58	WR	24/07/2012 10:38
mediating artefacts	29	444	17/03/2011 22:32	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
discourse and language	17	155	05/06/2011 20:24	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
object	25	271	17/03/2011 20:30	WR	24/07/2012 10:50
play	19	112	05/06/2011 17:33	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
rules	28	199	17/03/2011 22:33	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
space	29	505	19/03/2011 14:40	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
atmosphere	21	114	05/06/2011 17:28	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
lived space and disturbance	12	54	21/07/2011 19:28	WR	24/07/2012 10:29
metaphor	14	89	19/03/2011 14:43	WR	24/07/2012 09:14
power and control	21	197	05/06/2011 17:29	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
practice and activities	27	333	19/03/2011 14:42	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
representations of space	9	23	05/06/2011 18:27	WR	25/10/2011 10:54
subject	28	499	17/03/2011 22:32	WR	24/07/2012 10:50
emotions	27	364	19/03/2011 10:19	WR	24/07/2012 10:34
motivation	9	65	20/07/2011 09:37	WR	24/07/2012 10:34
performance	24	264	19/03/2011 10:20	WR	24/07/2012 10:50

Figure 7: tree nodes in NVivo

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On
children	29	336	17/03/2011 21:05	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
class	12	58	17/03/2011 20:48	WR	24/07/2012 10:10
communities of practice	24	276	18/03/2011 10:31	WR	24/07/2012 10:19
edge of chaos	17	111	18/03/2011 10:30	WR	24/07/2012 10:36
ethos	29	420	17/03/2011 21:02	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
politics	21	191	18/03/2011 10:29	WR	24/07/2012 09:45
relationship with children	29	480	17/03/2011 21:29	WR	06/01/2013 11:16
stories	26	101	17/03/2011 21:03	WR	24/07/2012 10:38
violence and aggression	22	133	18/03/2011 10:28	WR	24/07/2012 10:23

Figure 8: free nodes in NVivo

The themes for the three main discussion chapters emerged during the *bricolage* of coding and engagement with the data and the literature and were refined through the dialogic processes described in 7.3.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the approach to the study in terms of the ethics of data production, interpretation and representation. It acts as a bridge between the literature informed material in Part One, particularly the reflection on language and power in Chapter 3, and the dialectical perspective used in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, and the discussions on the data interpretation in the following chapters.

Chapter 8: Playwork as the production of a space in which children can play³

8.1: Introduction

This chapter draws on the data from the fieldwork to explore articulations (in interviews and post-session debriefs) and expressions (from observations) of playwork's object (in Activity Theory terms), and how playworkers navigate the dialectics of use and exchange value, dominance and agency, power and resistance, alienation and authenticity. Starting from the definition of the role of the playworker in the Playwork Principles as 'to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play' (PPSG, 2005), the chapter uses Lefebvre's (1991) dialectical triad of the production of space (conceived, perceived and lived space), introduced in Chapter 6. All three can be seen interacting dialectically in playwork practice and discourse. The analysis explores dialectics of playwork that, particularly in the current macro political neoliberal context, are unlikely to be resolved.

As described in Chapter 6, contemporary generic descriptions of playwork and its value tend to start from assertions about the importance of play in terms of children's development and well-being (Brown and Patte, 2013; Hughes, 2012; Brown, 2008; Sturrock and Else, 2005). The argument is that playwork can compensate for the ways in which modern life has gradually eroded opportunities for children to play outdoors and away from the eyes of adults through:

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).

The compensation argument, together with the later addition of the concept of play deprivation (for example, Brown, 2013; Brown and Patte, 2011, 2013; Hughes, 2006; Voce,

³ This chapter reworks material from early versions of a published article (Russell, 2012a) and a chapter (Russell, 2013a).

2006), sits within the dominant discipline of playwork theorising, that of psychology. This is not surprising, since theories of playwork have developed during a period when psychology permeated almost every aspect of social life including individual health and well-being, social relations and behaviour, child development, marketing, management, economics, justice and defence (Rose, 2007).

This chapter offers a slightly different perspective for theorising what playworkers do and what their value might be. It returns to an analysis that was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s (Cranwell, 2007; Conway, 2005; Conway, Hughes and Sturrock, 2004) but that has become rather unfashionable, that of politics. Whereas the focus then was on the politics of identity and issues of civil liberty, this chapter considers the *politics of space*.

Psychological theories of play, childhood and playwork focus on progress through time, with a rather narrow treatment of the interrelationship between time and space. The Playwork Principles describe the role of the playworker as being ‘to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play’, although this statement is based on the Principles’ ‘recognition that children and young people’s capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments’ (PPSG, 2005). Given this, much playwork literature concerns itself with techniques of creating both physical and affective environments that can support play (for example, Hughes, 2012, 1996; Shackell *et al.*, 2008; Brown, 2003b; Sturrock and Else, 1998).

Lefebvre’s (1991) analysis of space offers a different articulation of playwork’s purpose and value. This is not in any attempt to refute the strong foundations laid by those who have developed playwork theory, it is to proffer an alternative perspective that sets playwork as an activity (and a form of labour) in a social, cultural and political context beyond that of psychology or policy analysis.

Given the importance of seeing the whole activity system as the unit of analysis (Langemeyer and Roth, 2006; Engeström, 1987), any exploration of playwork’s object inevitably includes aspects of its close relationships with other points in the triangle, particularly subject (motivation and professional identity), mediating artefact (discourses as well as texts) and rules (at micro, meso and macro levels), as well as the four processes of production, distribution, exchange and consumption, discussed in Chapter 6. The focus on object acts as a starting point, and it becomes evident that other aspects of the model are also imbricated in the analysis.

8.2 The primary contradiction between use and exchange value

As discussed in Chapter 6, much that is contradictory within activity systems stems from the fundamental Marxist dialectic between use and exchange value (Engeström, 1987, 2001). A simple rendition of this dialectic can be seen in the day-to-day tensions playworkers face between the intrinsic value of play (use value) and the instrumental (exchange) value placed on both play and playwork in terms of its capacity to speak to social policy interests (Lester and Russell, 2008a). This is not, however, a straightforward dichotomy, since this relationship is mediated by research. Furthermore, research itself is a political activity in terms of what is researched and what constitutes evidence for policymaking (Pawson, 2006; Roberts and Petticrew, 2006; Woodhead, 2006). While intrinsic and instrumental value cannot always be substituted for use and exchange value respectively, the analogy is useful, and, as Beunderman (2010) highlights, unless the playwork service provides something the children want, particularly in open access settings, they will stop coming: instrumental (exchange) value is moot without intrinsic (use) value.

In interviews, playworkers rarely expressed the use and exchange value as a contradiction. Responses to direct questioning on playwork's purpose often led – initially at least – to particular expressions of instrumental, exchange value:

It kept them off the street and they knew if they were on the street, inevitably they would have got in to trouble, and it would have meant trouble with the law (Ken, PP).⁴

By enabling children to play it enables them to learn how to socialise and to interact with each other. But then you've got the other view as well that I also believe is play is experimental, it helps you to internalise things and work out what's happening around you (Gareth, CP).

Although Carol (PP) highlighted tensions:

The idea of the playground was that it would support the work of social workers with families ... , it was very difficult really, and I think everybody would say it didn't quite work because of the sorts of tensions that existed (Carol, PP).

⁴ Names of interviewees have been changed. 'PP' refers to 'pre-1992 playworkers' and 'CP' refers to 'contemporary playworkers'.

As Lester and Russell (2008a) note, there is a dearth of academic research on the value and benefits of playwork (a notable exception is Beunderman, 2010). There is much, often contested, on the value of play, and this is frequently conflated into the value of play provision and playwork. One example of this conflation can be seen in a headline in the magazine *Children and Young People Now*, proclaiming 'Cuts Force Children to Play a Little Less' (Watson, 2010). This is challenged by Russell (2013b, p. 3-4):

One of the reasons I think it is important to make the distinction [between play and play provision] is that the conflation runs the risk of sidelining the ways in which children create their own time and space for being playful – the many ways in which they resist adults' organisation and control of their time and space. And play services are an adult organisation of time and space.

This conflation can also be seen in Manwaring and Taylor (2006) who, although recognising the lack of research into the impact of playwork, nevertheless assume that the benefits of play apply equally to playwork. Generally speaking, as is shown in Chapters 4 and 9, social policy projects tend to be future-focused, seeking to influence what children will become through interventions aimed at normalising developmental trajectories under the banner of helping them to reach their full potential (Lester and Russell, 2013a); although playworkers did express instrumental value in their work, these were more in terms of social benefits in the here and now and the near future, as can be seen in the earlier quotations.

Elsewhere in interviews, two other common characteristics highlighted the primary dialectic:

1. *Being 'other'*: A sense, particularly from the pre-1990 playworkers, that playworkers were situated outside 'the system', 'the establishment' (articulated in various ways), that what they did was different from other adult-child relationships either within the family or within other institutions of childhood such as school, youthwork, social services, or the probation service, and that the more dominant influences of the state and these institutions often constrained their ability to work in ways that they felt were true to the ethos of playwork. These external influences were grounded in exchange value, since they belonged to more powerful others who funded, managed or inspected their work:

It was a different world, with its own rules (Ken, PP).

I think maybe one of the things that we quite often thought that we did was ... offer something that was slightly different from everything else (Ewan, PP).

It kind of reversed what I thought was the then paramount, um, you know that kind of adult dominated agenda (Graham, PP).

They just saw us as grubby playleaders, we saw them as interfering and not understanding (Ken, PP).

A place for children to come ... and have some freedom, you know a place where they're not at home and they're not at school and they've not got so many rules and they can ask for what they want (Verda, CP).

2. Articulations of use value tended to be in the form of spontaneous stories or accounts of moments of peak experiences that gave meaning to playwork. Interviewees often spoke about how tough the work was, but they also conveyed a passion, a sense that it was highly significant, as these stories encapsulated:

Then the horse decided it wanted to trot and catch up and the horse just kept trotting but he, only being small, was bouncing up and down in the saddle, he was all over the place like this, and he started to laugh. And he just laughed and laughed and there was tears rolling down his face, his head was flicked back sort of literally like that hahahahahahaha, laughing his head off just absolutely like that and I've never seen him so happy, ever (Gareth, CP).

You did have good moments, you know. Some kid who had been a right pain-in-the-arse would turn around and ask you to do something for them ... You did live for the odd days, and the odd sessions, and the odd evenings, when things were going, and after an hour or two you looked around, and there'd be a group doing something there, and there'd be a group doing something there, and there'd be a group doing something there, and there'd be this buzz, and this positive vibe going on. And nobody was getting hit, and nobody was getting threatened, and nobody was falling off a structure, and, you know, people were in and out, and, you know, they happened once in a while. And when it happened you thought 'yeah, do this again!' (Callum, PP).

One interviewee felt that playwork could only be defined by what she termed 'its negation': by what it was not (neither school nor home but something entirely different).

This highlighted the difficulty interviewees had in articulating what was unique about playwork; indeed several interviewees became hesitant, stumbling over vocabulary, contradicting themselves, or using ‘inverted commas’ in their descriptions, testament to their acknowledgement that instrumental value was only one representation that evoked ambivalence, but unable to offer another narrative other than through stories. I suggest that this stems from a difficulty in articulating intrinsic use value that can be explored further using the ideas of Lefebvre (1991) on the production of space (Chapter 6), particularly that moments in lived space, the moments that give authentic meaning to life, cannot always be represented through rational means; indeed attempts to do so risk reducing them to commodities to be bought and sold.

8.3 Playwork as the co-production of space

I think we provide a space ... however big or small it is, it's an accepted place
(Carla, CP).

A striking characteristic of the responses to questions regarding the purpose of playwork was that these were articulated in the language of space. At first blush, this may seem obvious or indeed a small claim for the value of the work; yet the importance of this space was that, in the words of Tanith (CP):

Wherever they play, there are intrusions into their play space from adults.
Whatever they're doing there's always going to be an adult saying can't do that, shouldn't do that, making too much noise, making too much mess. It's one of the few spaces where they are not annoying somebody, they're not told off for being a child and playing.

The overriding message was that playworkers offer something children need and value *that they cannot get anywhere else*. These ideas could be broadly grouped into two themes: firstly, that the design and organisation of urban space and its institutions (including the home/family as an institution) were not always supportive of children or their play, and secondly, that the spaces offered opportunities for dominant adult-child power relations to be reframed. These two themes are explored throughout this chapter. In dialectical relationship to them as well as to each other, were also ideas about progress, hope and redemption: playwork projects offered children the opportunity both to feel better now (in

terms of enjoying playing) and be better in the future (in terms of social skills, citizenship or, in some cases, realising a talent or potential).

These themes can be analysed using Lefebvre's (1991) work on the production of space, introduced in Chapter 6: space is produced through the interrelationship of perceived space (the spatial practices of daily experience that can be alienating), conceived space (space as planned and represented) and lived space (the disalienating space of emotions, poesy, imagination, meaning and, of course, play). The urban landscape is designed in conceived space to facilitate the processes of production, exchange, distribution and consumption over and above any social aspects, rendering the less powerful 'out of place' unless they are contributing to these processes, corralled into spaces designed for them. For children, these are the institutions of childhood: the home, the school and the growing out-of-school institutions. Playwork's exchange value is as one of these institutions: in conceived space, it keeps children off the streets, away from crime, encourages physical activity and instils citizenship skills. In lived space, its use value lies in moments of playfulness that can make life seem worth living, even if only for the time of playing. Playworkers' spatial practices operate dialectically to create the conditions for both. Chapter 6 describes how playwork practice has become more professionalised – or more commodified – over time, with increasing regulation, standardisation and monitoring, possibly rendering it a site of alienation. The pre-1990 interviewees spoke of their work in terms of it being new and exciting, and of the sense of being a part of an all-consuming, alternative way of being with children:

It was like the wild west, and it could be very exciting ... it was just the anarchy of it, it was just the immediacy, the energy (Ken, PP).

What the hell were we running off? Because we didn't have any theory, no knowledge, at all (Mary, PP).

Alongside this, however, they also acknowledged there was much bad practice that would not be permitted in today's regulated forms of playwork. Examples of the more outlandish practices and events provided material for much laughter and animated reminiscences in interviews. Yet this was not only a case of rose-tinted glasses nostalgia for the good old days: the relationship between the immediacy of playwork then and the regulated procedures of playwork now is a dialectical one. Although the contemporary playworkers

did speak about the instrumental value of their work, they also acknowledged the importance of moments in lived space. As Gareth (CP) said:

They should be able to come on feeling as though they want to disrupt the place. They should be allowed to do that.

Moments in lived space are also possible and important for playworkers as well:

I became aware of the fact that I was getting something from the children. In that bonding process, it wasn't just me being an adult provider in their space, it was that they were giving me something (Graham, PP).

In conceived space, play is an activity (den-building, making things, playing games, dressing up, etc.) with attendant benefits; in lived space, it is *moments* of authenticity and subversion of and resistance to play's commodification and attendant alienation. The two are not binary opposites – it is not a question of either/or – they exist in dialectical relationship. This relationship is illustrated next using an example from the fieldwork.

8.3.1: Monster! Monster!

'Monster! Monster!' was a big group tag game that had evolved over many years and at the time of the fieldwork was a part of the culture of the Play Centre. The call of 'Monster! Monster!' across the Play Centre usually brought most children across a wide age range (including teenagers) running to join in. It took place on one piece of climbing equipment with a number of platforms, tunnels and rope bridges as well as several access points. The 'monsters', usually playworkers, had to stay on the ground and the children started off on the structure. At the signal, the monsters tried to 'dob' the feet or any other part of the children on the structure. Once dobbed, children were supposed to descend and join the playworkers as monsters, but often they ignored this and remained on the structure.

'Monster! Monster!' is an example of the interrelationship between all three dimensions of the production of space. There were rules to the game, and different playworkers at different times would impose formal rules or go with the flow of emerging rule changes in order to keep the play going. In perceived and conceived space, playworkers may have pointed to the game's instrumental value (physical activity, learning to play by rules, and so on); this understanding may also affect how far they insisted on 'playing properly'. Yet it also afforded opportunities for moments in lived space. In 'Monster! Monster!', the children knew that the playworkers were not real monsters, yet the frame allowed them to

feel the fear of being caught and to experience the exhilaration of overcoming this fear (Sutton-Smith, 2003). The roars of the monsters and the squeals of those being hunted added to the emotional vitality of the experience. It was, actually, very easy to avoid being caught just by staying away from the edge and out of reach; but that was not what the children did. They dangled their feet tantalisingly, and they taunted the playwork monsters and drew attention to themselves. They actively courted the danger of being caught. The motivation and the enjoyment came from experiencing that feeling of fear within the safety of the frame.

‘Monster! Monster!’ provided a very simple frame that allowed for a number of emotional and embodied experiences and the expression of different play narratives. One example was the expression of power narratives, particularly by the older children. It was often used by the playworkers to diffuse situations of rising tension, a way of controlling the space to prevent it tipping into violent chaos (see Chapter 10). The game attracted the very teenagers who often presented challenges to the playworkers. From my experience of playing the game, in my more participative moments, the teenagers frequently taunted me from the structure platforms, then, when they had my attention, they leapt to the ground and ran at full speed across the playground. I would valiantly take chase, knowing this was a hopeless endeavour (in terms of catching them) because they were far fitter and more agile than I was. They would stop, taunt me, zip off in all directions and literally run rings round me. Usually, I ended up collapsing in giggles on the ground utterly defeated and in admiration of their superior athletic performances. I was also left with a feeling of closeness and companionship, a moment fleetingly shared, of dominant orderings temporarily disturbed. ‘Monster! Monster!’ can therefore be seen as much more than ‘play with rules’ (Piaget, 1962), but as a shared ritual that both resisted and reproduced vertical and horizontal adult-child relationships (Hart, 2009) and contributed to the immediate moment and the production of the space as a whole.

The remainder of this chapter presents themes arising from the data that illustrate the tensions in the production of space.

8.4 “It’s the only place they had to go” (Ken, PP)

In conceived space, planners and architects design cities to facilitate the processes of production, distribution, exchange and consumption, creating fragmented islands of

specialisms that then need routes to link them. The most obvious manifestation of this in spatial practice is rush hour: workers clog up the transport routes as they move at the same time from home to work and back again. It can also be seen in the growing (increasingly homogeneous) institutions of childhood: the home, the school, and the varieties of after-school recreation or activity institutions (Rasmussen, 2004), and the increase in traffic in order to take children to and from these islands. The normalisation of this fragmentation, together with the exclusion of children from the processes of production (although not entirely, and certainly not from consumption), renders them increasingly *out of place* on the street.

[C]hildren and young people suffer from a mix of invisibility, segregation and exclusion. They are, for example, invisible in economically dominated town centre regeneration strategies which privilege commercial interests and uses; they are segregated temporally, spatially and by age into designated play areas with supervised activities; and finally, they face exclusion from public spaces and places through a combination of adult fears and complaints, legal controls and dispersal orders, and even high-tech tricks such as the infamous 'sonic teenage deterrent', the Mosquito (Beunderman, Hannon and Bradwell, 2007, pp. 15-16).

Whilst there is a body of research that shows a significant reduction in children's independent mobility overall, the pattern is not uniform for all children: attitudes and practices differ across social divisions such as class, gender, ethnicity and disability. Nor is mobility entirely independent: children do not journey in isolation but in a related manner with other connected distant or near people, knowledge of spaces, technologies (such as mobile phones) and so on (Kullman and Palludan, 2011; Mikkelsen and Christensen, 2009; Sutton, 2008). There is also evidence that playing out continues to be a defining feature of childhood, particularly in lower socio-economic groups (Barker *et al.*, 2009; Lester and Russell, 2008a; Sutton, 2008), although the increased commodification and commercialisation of children's leisure activities also excludes children from poorer families (due to the cost of entry, problems with travelling to them, and parental time to accompany them), meaning they spend more time indoors and in front of screens than their wealthier counterparts (Ipsos MORI and Cairn, 2011). This demonstrates these issues are more complex than headline concerns suggest.

Play advocates' attitudes to children playing in the street have been and remain contradictory. In the UK there has been a growth in projects aimed at 'reclaiming' streets

for children's play, through roadscape, streetplay projects, play rangers, and local residents' action (see, for example, the Bristol-based 'Playing Out' organisation: <http://playingout.net/>). However, historically, the street was often seen as a site of moral danger, particularly for the urban poor, where children witnessed the loose morals of adults in the pubs and cinemas or were drawn into crime (Brehony, 2003). Later, concern about the safety of streets extended to 'ubiquitous high speed motor traffic' (Stallibrass, 1974, p. 255), and Abernethy (1968a, p. 28) suggested that adventure playgrounds were 'remarkably successful in attracting the non-conformist element' and that this 'would keep them off the streets and help reduce accidents'.

Similar contradictions were apparent in the interviews. The reproduction of the street as an inappropriate space for children can be seen in these extracts, where interviewees expressed concepts of safety or sanctuary:

We're turning inner-city spaces into places where they can play safely ...'cos they can't play in their flats, and they can't play in the streets ... I think it was the beginning then of, you know, 'streets weren't safe', mainly through cars, and I think it's now exponentially, you know, the paranoia of what goes on out there (Jim, PP).

They don't feel as vulnerable as they'd be outside on the streets, cos [for] a lot of children there aren't places for them to play where they feel safe, where they feel comfortable (Tanith, CP).

Safety, in this context, was broader than the dangers of traffic or fear of adult predators. The vulnerability was often expressed in terms of aggression or abuse from other people, including the authorities, and older children, through bullying, racism or the territoriality of gangs. In addition, it was expressed in terms of children keeping out of trouble:

they realised that it kept them off the street and they knew if they were on the street, inevitably they would have got in to trouble, and it would have meant trouble with the law (Ken, PP).

8.5 A place of refuge

It's a safe space ... you're seen as being a safe container of that kind of emotion (Graham, PP).

Responses about safety and sanctuary sometimes referred to the idea of the playgrounds and play centres being a sanctuary away from the children's often stressful, chaotic and unpredictable home and street lives. It perhaps needs to be repeated that the projects were situated in areas of great deprivation, and the interviews included a specific question asking interviewees to describe the kinds of children attending, giving rise to some emotional responses:

It tends to be those with a lot of emotional shit [who] access play centres. The ones that haven't don't feel that need, that driving need to be accepted because they're comfortable in their space. But it's amazing how many youngsters have got emotional shit going on in their lives (Tanith, CP).

I feel the majority of children that use this centre have greater social needs and play needs than a lot of the other children that are out there. Their social background is often, not always, often more difficult and they've had less opportunities to develop and so the children that do tend to come down here really really get involved in the play a lot more. They've got more of a desperate need to play (Gareth, CP).

I now have a map, right? Which I call 'the child map'... There, she is there, and there is no significant male, changing significant males, prostitution, drugs, death of siblings, der der der der coming off. And then I've got a box underneath that I say 'who's involved in this family?' So 'police, social services, der der der'. And then at the bottom I put 'playworkers', with a question mark ... The best thing I can do is a safe haven, where they feel they're safe, they feel solid, they feel they belong, they feel they're cared for (Mary, PP).

You know a lot about the family backgrounds and even then knew it was the tip of the iceberg. And, yes, there were so many, no wonder they wanted to let rip somewhere, and be angry somewhere and have jewellery somewhere, you know, it's not all negative, you know, they need their jewellery as well and the sort of exhilaration and pleasure and all that sort of thing ... it's all the inside stuff that they can't escape, it's there for the rest of their lives, you know, the families, the extended families, oh god, poor little shits, god (Carla, CP).

These extracts show clearly the emotional impact of the children's home lives on the playworkers illustrating the highly charged atmospheres on the projects most of the time. It is clear that playwork in these spaces is very different from playwork in other settings. Evident in the interviews was a dialectical relationship between anger/hopelessness and

hope, being and becoming, empowerment and redemption (themes explored in Chapter 9).

Some spoke about 'moving children on':

I think there's a large degree of satisfaction, um, being able to help ... move someone on, help them to develop. I think the big thing is when you get that point where a child sees something for the first time, doesn't matter how old they are, whether they're 2, 3 right through to 17 or 18, you're working with somebody and you might not be the one that's shown them it but you might have enabled them to see it and when that comes back and you just think ... it's all worthwhile (Gareth, CP).

Others suggested playwork could empower children to change their own circumstances:

I was gonna save the world! ... adventure playgrounds were gonna save the world! ... By offering children a different life experience, yeah. By making...by giving them a real place, and a recognised place, and power (Carol, PP).

One interviewee spoke playfully of the impetuosity and immediate aggression of the younger children:

It was funny. It was like working with these wild, you know...*Where the Wild Things Are*. Perhaps you were Max ... taming the wild things (Ken, PP).

At other times, interviewees spoke of the benefits of enjoyment in the here-and-now, the value of play in making things a bit better for that moment:

If I can chase a kid and he's happy and he's coming up to me and giving me a brilliant play cue, you know, and he's laughing at me calling me big nose or whatever and running off and giggling, say a little six-year-old, you've done something for that child, you've made them happy, even for a split second (Jem, CP).

This idea is reflected in Lester (2010, p. 5):

What play might represent ... [is] brief moments of positively charged affect that appear in mundane routines, not as a grand vision and statement of hope for a distant future, but simply coping with and enlivening the practicalities of everyday, ordinary life. In its own way play contains 'utopian impulses' (Stevens, 2007), a subversion of existing social order and its limitations. Through play, the instrumental and rational regulations of everyday life are temporarily and spatially suspended.

8.6 A last refuge

‘The playground was the only place that would take them (Carol, PP).

There was no youth centre in the area that would even work with them they would just turn round and say you are barred. We worked with them (Gareth, CP).

As well as the playspace being seen as a haven, several interviewees spoke of it also as a last refuge:

This particular group of kids, they were banned from everywhere, and the playground was the only place that would take them (Carol, PP).

It was almost a sanctuary for the really aggressive disaffected, the only place they can go, you know, they were standing out in the rain because they were banned from every...all provisions that were organised in any way, and we were the last refuge (Jim, PP).

The history of adventure playgrounds shows how the ideas were felt to be particularly appropriate for what Abernethy (1968a, p. 28) termed ‘non-conformist elements’. This was echoed in Hughes’ (1975, p. 2) statement that ‘most playwork is done in areas of chronic emotional, cultural and often financial deprivation’. These themes are considered further in Chapter 10. Such generalised sentiments were more prevalent amongst the pre-1990 playworkers, although the contemporary playworkers talked about particular children being excluded from school, or contact they had had with other local professionals (for example the nursery and after-school club next door or the local youth workers) about problem behaviour. Many of the children attending the Play Centre were known to the local Youth Offending Team, and the two Children’s Fund projects (Play Support and Inclusion) at the Play Centre were targeted towards children ‘at risk’ of social exclusion (described in Chapter 7). The paperwork for the Children’s Fund projects was designed to direct the discourse and spatial practice towards supporting play, through appreciating play styles and preferences. However, this cannot be entirely separated from improving social skills, since understanding metacommunication is a skill necessary for successfully engaging in play. Thus, even though the project was conceptualised as ludocentric (Russell, 2008b), its connections to linear and future thinking were still apparent in conceived and perceived

space. However, the playworkers navigated the tensions well between this and playful moments in lived space, helping to co-produce a space where the children could play:

when you have a good session, and everybody's interacting and everybody's engaged and everything, and having the knowledge of play frames and cues and stuff like that, types, that makes it easier because I think, your understanding where they're coming from and why they're doing it and what our part is in it (Kay, CP).

8.7 “It was their place...you were there to facilitate it” (Jim, PP)

The Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005) state:

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process.

A dialectic that emerged in interviews, albeit with little explicit acknowledgement of the internal contradiction, was that between control and agency, power and resistance. Several interviewees spoke of how children were free from restrictions that may be imposed in adult-dominated spaces:

These were spaces where the children had the choice. They made the choices. They elected to come on the playground, to stay, to leave, and while they were there elected to do things and elected to either involve you or not involve you in what they were doing so it kind of reversed what I thought was the, was the then paramount – you know that kind of adult dominated agenda (Graham, PP).

There aren't all these rules and regulations, and all that sort of thing, only what they've made themselves, and those are just, I'd say, normal 'getting on with' rules (Carla, CP).

It was somehow they'd found that place for themselves, and made it their own, to a very large degree (Carol, PP).

Yet at the same time, interviewees also spoke about the need for containment of some kind. The extract from Carol's interview above continued:

And that was the problem in the struggle, because they burned it down three times, so the issue was who did it belong to?

Sometimes control or containment was practised through indirectly working the space: through preparation, organising resources for activities or following up on things the children had made. Usually, resources were set out, or even specific activities planned, but all the interviewees recognised that these were flexible: there might be no interest, or children might participate with enthusiasm, or activities might develop spontaneously into something else.

Kids would make their own den...make their own space. Use wood, ... nails, tools, and built their own little dens ... Also they weren't just left to do it. It was overseen by us, it was 'managed', in inverted commas, by us, the resources were initially found, sourced by us. And when they walked away from it, we would actually go and check it, in terms of nails sticking out and stuff like that. But they were given the space and the environment to do it, but overseen by us (Ewan, PP).

There were lots of arts and crafts activities. Sometimes they were really successful, sometimes we'd attract two kids in the whole place. And end up with someone nicking something (Ewan, PP).

If I set something up and it's taken a bit more to set up and they're just not interested, I think blow me, waste of bloody time. But then no, I've got no particular expectations because I just, depends what mood they're in (Carla, CP).

Alongside this were more direct ways of managing the space in an effort to widen participation, linking to a more equal distribution in the production of the space. Several pre-1990 playworkers spoke of having to develop strategies for making the playgrounds safe for all children, not just the dominating older youth.

So much racism that existed was really, really hard to breakdown, and existed all the way through it. I mean, our first task was to encourage, was to put out there that the playground was open and it would be safe, basically, you know, safe for anybody to use. Boys, girls, Black, White (Callum, PP).

You certainly worked to ensure that each and every type of group could come in and find their space and their stuff ... we dealt with the issues about why a six year old had a right to tell a seventeen year old to back off (Mary, PP).

At times there could be dynamics on a playground where a group ... tended to dominate, and we would discuss the impact of that, and how we should try and, not sort of break up that group, but try to not make that group dominate the playground ... we would sometimes use spaces, and say right 'well this space at this point of time is only going to be for this age group' or 'is only going to be for the girls' (Ewan, PP).

Finally, some spoke of rules, whether formal and explicit or informal and tacit, with various opinions on their place:

There were rules, there were rules to the playground, and there were sanctions if the rules were broken (Ewan, PP).

We have unwritten boundaries and we have ground rules. The children know what's expected of them, they know better than you, you know, the children know the rules (Jem, CP).

They all have to take on board that there is ground rules, they still have to abide by them ... They need boundaries, you know. Sometimes they think when they come here it's, oh, we're free to do this, we're free to do that, you know, there's no boundaries, there's no rules, but then all of a sudden we get the moany old playworkers saying 'no, you can't do this because', and 'you're breaking the rules there' (Kay, CP).

Sometimes you do feel like a policewoman, I hate those sessions where everything's on the edge (Verda, CP).

How might the idea of rules speak to Lefebvre's three kinds of space? Certainly, they begin their life in conceived space. The ground rules at the Play Centre were developed with the children and this was seen as an exercise in ownership, participation, democracy and citizenship. The rules were fairly standard and were mostly to do with respect, as Carla said, 'general getting on with rules'. They were observed to varying degrees with different children at different times, with a range of sanctions including a system of warnings and exclusions. These explicit rules operated alongside a range of tacit rules that emerged in perceived space through the daily practices and relationships among children and playworkers. As one pre-1990 interviewee stated:

The relationship you had with them, that's all you had to go on (Ken, PP).

Three brief observations are made regarding the dialectic between control and agency. The first is that power relations inherent in wider society were played out in the play projects across stratifications of age, class, status, gender, disability and ethnicity. Yet these were not singular or straightforward. Two white pre-1990 interviewees spoke of their relationships with Black young men, particularly around aggression, gender issues and conflicts between different sound system groups; in both examples the playworkers sought support from key members of the local community to mediate these power relations.

And it was one of the earlier things about how you build relationships and manage those kinds of situations. Particularly then, as a five foot white woman, how was I gonna operate in that manner [responding to aggression with aggression as previous staff had done]? I couldn't, I had to find another set of skills to do that (Mary, PP).

The second point concerns how power and resistance play out in Lefebvre's lived space. Rules are devised in conceived space, implemented or not through spatial practice, and resisted in lived space. The delicious dialectic here is that lived space is the space of play, where players can transform the rules of the drudgery or fear of daily life and rearrange the world in any way they wish (Sutton-Smith, 1997). The Playwork Principles, situated firmly in conceived space, imply that playworkers should produce a kind of lived space, but this is not possible without paying regard to the dialectical relationship in Lefebvre's triad of spaces. This turns the idea that play helps children learn social skills needed for future citizenship on its head.

Rules are developed as a part of creating a space where children can play; children may playfully resist or subvert these rules. Part of the fun is the uncertainty of how playworkers might react. How does this relate to the idea that playworkers should support play that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated? Unless rules exist, they cannot be subverted; unless they are taken seriously by playworkers, there is no fun in subverting them. There are many layers to the subtleties of this kind of communication, including playworkers playing with the rules as well. At the Play Centre, the ground rules had been drawn up democratically with the children who had also produced a poster displayed on the wall. There were two lists of rules, with the headings 'at this play centre you can...' and 'at this play centre you can't...'. The 'can' side included rules like treating each other with respect, listening to the playworkers, bringing in your own toys; the 'can't' side included rules like being nasty to others, swearing, and being racist or sexist. Onto the

beautifully produced poster, two scribbled addition rules had been added: 'don't trump on purpose near someone' and 'no kegging' (pulling someone's trousers down). The playworkers themselves had a variety of responses to these graffiti, ranging from ignoring, to smiling (responses that might be understood as liberal and supportive of children's 'freely chosen play'), to one who exclaimed in horror and asked who had spoiled the poster, thereby reaffirming their importance as rules worth resisting. Each of these responses adds to the co-production of a space where there are 'normal getting on with' rules (Carla, PP) that are observed and resisted to varying degrees at different times and in different ways.

The third point is that the interviewees expressed a genuine affection for the children and young people with whom they worked despite, and often because of, the challenges they presented.

I just found these children so exciting, so amazing and full of life ... I liked their excitement (Ken, PP).

Being with 'street' kids, I loved it from the beginning ... I loved being with them, and they loved being with me. I don't mean in a patriarchal sort of way, but just in a very equitable way. It felt a very – I mean it wouldn't be a term that I used at the time, but a very democratised way of operating ... And that was the first experience of thinking 'well these are pretty amazing these kids, you know' (Jim, PP).

Somehow there's something really important for me about, you know, that it was the sort of roughest, toughest kids, cos I really connected. I think there was something in their lives and my life...I got a lot from the children on the outside (Carol, PP).

Many interviewees spoke of how difficult the job was: constantly monitoring a space operating close to the edge of chaos, intervening in various ways when they felt the atmosphere shift, sometimes directly being threatened or assaulted (as discussed in Chapter 10). Yet set against this were 'moments' for the playworkers, often very small ones, and what they articulated was a general enthusiasm and passion for the times when it all seemed worthwhile.

It was quite nebulous, but you were creating this... I dunno, creating a world? Creating a... I dunno, something. This special, energised, magical thing, which would draw kids in (Ken, PP).

I get such a feeling out of watching children be able to do things their way without even having to ... you know those moments when you stop and you think 'Right, the older lot are over there, got their extension leads, sit and chat and with their music box. That group is over there doing what they need to do in the mud. The others have put all the material down the bottom of the structures there. The others are on the roof marrying each other, whatever. The cardboard boxes are all...yeah? And so and so's brought a bloody funny dog, brought a dog out with them, and someone's brought a train.' And just that ability to...they didn't need us in that moment, in those moments (Mary, PP).

These are moments when lived space is shared between playworkers and children, even if playworkers are not directly involved with the children's play. However, lived space defies being exhausted through analysis; there is always an inexpressible surplus that remains (Schmid, 2008). This may explain why such moments were more evident in observations than interviews; though fleeting, an integral part of every session were moments where playworkers laughed, played the fool, joined in nonsense games with the children, or just stood back and marvelled at children immersed in playing. Conceived space speaks to the modern desire to define, explain, classify and discover truths in order to control events. The naming of things and spaces fixes them with an aura of certainty and rightness. This is not so in lived space; here concepts of uncertainty, unpredictability and vagueness come to the fore. As Miller (2006, p. 463) states:

spaces of representation relate to 'different' or 'alternate' ways of understanding outside the logic of capitalism.

This is why such an understanding cannot speak to policy, and also why lived space is understood in its dialectical relations with conceived and perceived space. The dilemma is not resolved; rather, this allows for understanding its existence. Both sets of playworkers were fully aware of the importance of moments in lived space, although they articulated this differently. What has changed, in the space between the earlier days of adventure playground work in the 1960s and 1970s and today is that the logic and precision of space has come to dominate over its vagueness. Adventure playgrounds originally developed in bombed out spaces after World War II and other vacant lots, understood as rough and ready *terrains vagues*, defined by Carney and Miller (2009, p. 42) as

spaces in the city that are empty, abandoned, derelict, in which often a series of land uses have taken place. Encompassing some of the etymology of the French *vague* (absence of use, the indeterminate, blurred and uncertain, and 'wave' of

movement), *terrain vague* is seen as space that is free, available, unengaged, limitless, uncertain, roving and temporary.

It may be that acknowledging the value of this uncertainty and spontaneity, of the nature of play and the power of lived space both for the children and the playworkers, offers up moments of hope, moments of disalienation from the dominance of conceived and perceived space.

8.8 Concluding thoughts: encounters, throwntogetherness and open spaces

This chapter has drawn on Cultural Historical Activity Theory and the work of Lefebvre (1991) in order to highlight an aspect of playwork that has been buried under the hegemonic rationality of conceived space and the humdrum of everyday perceived space. It has explored and discussed the data in terms of the dialectics of space production, particularly between use and exchange value and also between freedom, agency and control, bringing to life the paradoxes in play scholarship that were explored in Chapter 5. It is not a call to speak differently to policy, nor is it a call to apply different techniques to playwork practice. Rather it offers up a different analysis of the work that leaves room for the importance of lived space, both for children at play and playworkers at work.

In conclusion, I bring together these themes to disturb a little further traditional theorising of 'play spaces' as designated and planned and yet where children are free to play in ways of their own choosing. The idea that the play space is 'their place' may be an aspirational discourse within conceived space, with attendant benefits of democracy and citizenship emerging from the anarchy of self-organisation, as Kozlovsky (2008) suggests. In reality, the dialectic between freedom, agency and control is navigated in various ways, with the resistance being observed in moments of lived space that defy both planning and representation. If macro level politics and policies (Lefebvre's 'state mode of production') produce abstract space that is alienating for children, through planning and through the cultural hegemony of daily routines and spatial practices, it becomes necessary to create separate specialised spaces of the institutions of childhood, onto which these same ideologies are imposed. Playworkers resist this as far as they can by espousing the discourse of freedom and choice while simultaneously engaging in spatial practices that

aim to control, or at least contain, excesses of childhood exuberance or anger that often tip into chaos and violence (discussed in Chapter 10).

Navigating these contradictions can be seen as navigating encounters with difference. Many playworkers saw themselves as different from, other than, the children with whom they worked, predominantly because they were adults and also, for some, because of class and attendant cultural differences. So, alongside the narrative of a bounded and cohesive play community held by both the physical boundaries of the space (where the gate holds particular salience as liminal between inside and outside) and also customs and relationships built up over time and space, an alternative narrative is also discernible. This is the narrative of difference, of alterity, where bodies, identities, histories and material and symbolic artefacts are thrown together and have to co-exist. Massey (2005, p. 140-141) develops this concept of 'throwntogetherness':

[W]hat is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity ... Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman ... This is the event of place in part in the simplest sense of the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of process rather than a thing. This is place as open and internally multiple. Not capturable as a slice through time ... Not intrinsically coherent ... In this throwntogetherness what are at issue are the terms of engagement with those trajectories, with those stories-so-far.

Such a narrative requires openness to otherness (Vilhauer, 2013) and also to the concept of open space. Whilst all those at the Play Centre shared some things in common, they had many differences that led to small and sometimes not-so-small conflicts that constantly had to be negotiated. If the space is to be understood as inherently democratic, this is in a dialectical tension with notions of freedom (Mouffe, 2005); general 'getting on together rules' (Carla, CP) help here and at the same time restrict freedom in the name of democracy. Playworkers are responsible for co-producing space where children can play, yet there will be times when that play – and even non-play – will prevent others from playing, which requires the authority of the adult playworker. This need not be seen as a stark, irresolvable contradiction but as the production of a space that is always under construction and always negotiating encounters of difference. This could be said of any

shared space that has any element of openness about it; for a space that is *designed* to support children's play, that is, a space where the rationality, boredom and fear of the everyday world can be transformed into any fantastical, scary or ordered world of the players' own making, this openness becomes even more important.

Sibley (1995) speaks of open and closed spaces, where a closed space has strongly defined and policed boundaries, where the values of the dominant are normalised and diversity is discouraged; in contrast open spaces have weak boundaries that are not policed, and multiple values and difference are celebrated (Malone, 2002). Open spaces, for example, carnivals, festivals and other events and spaces with weakly defined boundaries, *leave space* for difference. It is possible for play settings to be one or the other, indeed to inhabit both dialectically. However, cultivating openness to ambivalence and difference, leaving room for disturbance is perhaps the nearest playworkers can come to planning for moments in lived space that co-exist alongside those in conceived and perceived space. These ideas are further developed in Chapters 9 and 11.

Chapter 9: Playworkers as (emotional) subjects

Once a man travelled far and wide to learn fear. In the time that has just passed, it came easier and closer, the art was mastered in a terrible fashion. But now that the creators of fear have been dealt with, a feeling that suits us better is overdue. It is a question of learning hope ... The work of this emotion requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong (Bloch, 1986, p. 3).

9.1 Introduction

How are playworkers' subjectivities instantiated? Considering playworkers as individual subjects within a CHAT framework poses (at least) two problems. The first, as highlighted in Chapters 6 and 8, is that the activity system should be analysed as a unit. Separating 'the subject' from its context is a necessary part of the process of making sense of the system, but the subject cannot be considered in isolation from other aspects of the system as a whole. 'Subject' playworkers form but one moment of the continuing processes of assemblage that co-produce playwork settings. This means that at times the material in this chapter imbricates and speaks to material in Chapters 8 and 10, as it touches on the production of space and also playworkers' relationship with violence. The second problem is that of the individual's relationship to what is understood as a collective activity system. The arguments, explored in Chapter 6, are not re-presented here except to acknowledge the tension and to suggest that it can be addressed to some extent through conceptualising the 'subject' as social, spatial and relational (Thrift, 2008; Stetsenko and Arieviditch, 2004) and through a consideration of subjectivity as performative rather than essentialised (Davies, 2012; Powell and Carey, 2007; Butler, 1999b; Goffman, 1959). This allows for heterogeneous playwork styles that both reflect and resist normative ideals of both 'adult' and 'playworker'.

Playwork settings are, to quote Thrift (2004, p. 57), 'roiling maelstroms of affect'. It could be argued that this description applies to any space, since affect and emotions are integral aspects of human everyday life and experience; given the nature of both children's play and the particular children attending open access provision, together with the theoretical perspective taken here, a focus on affect is particularly apt for analysing playwork's

dialectics. Thrift applies this description to (mostly) urban politics and then proceeds to consider how design and spatial practices increasingly attempt to engineer particular emotions. He advocates the development of a politics of affect, of emotional liberty beyond individualism, and in doing so focuses specifically on hope.

In looking at the playworker as subject of the collective activity system through the fieldwork data, this chapter revisits the idea of the subject and then considers three aspects: first, the emotionally charged nature of the work; second, playwork as affective and emotional performance, including the place of emotions in CHAT (Roth, 2007) and concepts of emotion work and emotional labour (drawing on Hochschild, 1983); and third, geographies of emotion and particularly, but not exclusively, hope. Three kinds of hope have emerged, presented as a triadic embodiment of the dialectic between use and exchange value. The first (H1) is the far hope of policy paradigms that has become a common-sense characteristic of performative adult-child relations; the second (H2) is a historically influenced form of revolutionary political hope that emerges at multiple levels; and the third (H3) is a near hope of moments of nonsense in lived space (Kraftl, 2008; Lefebvre, 1991). All three forms of hope also embrace apparently contradictory emotions of anger, shame and despair.

9.2 Playwork subjectivities

The Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005) state:

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

This acknowledgement implies mutually implicated influences of affecting and being affected: spatial, behavioural, emotional, historical and so on. Having been involved in developing the Playwork Principles, I am aware this statement emerged from psycholudics (Sturrock and Else, 2005). Sturrock, Russell and Else (2004) argue for a subjective/objective reversal in professional approaches to working with children, one that moves away from the dominant understanding of 'professional' as the objective application of theories, techniques and understandings of children, which both removes the adult as subject from the professional relationship and subjects children to the hegemony of developmental norms. They suggest that the ludogogue (an adult working in support of children's play) should develop self-knowledge in order to recognise the reflective interpretations of

children's play expressions as playing first through the adult herself. This psychodynamic line of enquiry is not explored in depth here, although the influences of psychoanalysis on contemporary geographical accounts of subjectivity are common (Callard, 2003), and Aitken (2001) shows the influence of Lacan on Lefebvre's (1991) work on the production of space.

The discussion of the subject playworker within the collective activity system in Chapter 6 draws on Wenger's (1998) idea of professional identity being produced through a nexus of interconnected selves. Here, ideas of subjectivity as presented through the fieldwork draw on Judith Butler's (1999a, 1999b) concept of performativity. Butler acknowledges the connection between subjectivity, labour and community, since we gain recognition through both our bodies and our labour: 'the forms we inhabit in the world ... and the forms we create *of* the world' (Salih, 2002, p. 28). Her approach to subjectivity is a dialectical one that questions dominant assumptions about essential and fixed identity, seeing it instead as something that needs to be understood as a process embedded in historical and discursive contexts (Salih, 2002). From this perspective, subjectivity is performative; that is, performing particular roles is the process by which subjectivities come into being and are maintained (or resisted). The performance of 'playworker' predates the individual styles of playwork exhibited by those in the study, and is set within all the other scripts of ideal subjects that both constrain alterity and offer space for resistance. The process by which these ideal norms come into existence and change over time offers much for understanding the emotionality of playwork. Playworkers of course are also adults, with gendered, racialised and other subjectivities that are continually performed. Indeed, the discursive regimes that are both produced by and produce the performativity of these other subjectivities are often in tension with the normative ideal playworker as articulated in the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005) and other playwork-specific mediating artefacts.

As shown in Chapter 4, constructing children as irrational, immature and incomplete becomings also reveals the other side of the binary: the essentialised and fixed endpoint of childhood as a rational, mature, complete adult (Johansson, 2011). The performativity of adult is both inscribed in this construction and maintained (and resisted) through repeated performances. Both children and adults have expectations of how each should perform in relation to the other, 'materialized and stabilized by constant repetitions and translations in law, custom, family structures, literature, professions, etc.' (Johansson, 2011, p. 106). Although a powerful normalised ideal, the construct of 'adult' is not fixed or static and

there remains space for becoming different, for de-territorialising hegemonic adult-child relations (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). In my fieldwork I was aware of several subjectivities performed in the interactions between playworkers, children and the co-produced space; indeed acknowledging the potential for incompleteness, multiplicity and fluidity in playworkers' subjectivities helps to navigate the contradictions inherent in their roles.

A final point to stress here in terms of Butler's ideas on performativity and subjectivities is the role of community and the importance of recognition:

True subjectivities come to flourish only in communities that provide for reciprocal recognition, for we do not come to ourselves through work alone, but through the acknowledging look of the Other who confirms us (Butler, 1999b, p. 58).

Playworkers' subjectivities therefore both affect and are affected by others, including children, parents, managers, colleagues, and myself as researcher. These ideas are picked up again in the discussion on playwork as emotional labour and emotion work (Hochschild, 1983), particularly the desire for recognition and its counterpart the anxiety of non-recognition felt as shame when idealised norms are not realised, for example when things 'kick off' at the Play Centre.

9.3: The play space as emotionally charged

Playwork settings are highly emotionally charged. Generally speaking, it is assumed that this arises from the nature of play itself and of the particular children attending. Playwork practice and playwork talk is often about constantly monitoring a space operating close to the edge of chaos, with interventions aimed at pre-empting the tip when the atmosphere shifts. Several interviewees described the ability to *feel* the shift:

You can feel it when it starts to go and you're losing the session, you're losing it.
And I don't know how you tell, you just do, you can just feel it (Tanith, CP).

In her poetic description of what she terms 'atmospheric attunements', Stewart (2011) describes atmosphere not as inert but as a force field with the capacity to affect and be affected. People can be either or both hyper- and hypo-vigilant to 'pockets' that signify a shift in rhythms, objects and relations that may signify anything or nothing (including our

own fears, fantasies and memories). Over time, some of these become habitual, and it is this that the playworkers described.

The senses sharpen on the surfaces of things taking form. They pick up texture and density as they move in and through bodies and spaces, rhythms and tempi, possibilities likely or not. They establish trajectories that shroud and punctuate the significance of sounds, textures, and movements ... Every attunement is a tuning up to something, a labor that arrives already weighted with what it's living through. The intimacy with a world is every bit about that world's imperative; its atmospheres are always already abuzz with something pressing (Stewart, 2011, p. 448).

One playworker described it as the 'mountain near madness':

I find here, we go up to it, we're at the snow at the top of the mountain that is near madness, we're playing snowballs for half an hour, twenty minutes with the madness, then we come back down the mountain. Cos when it stays on the snow too long, all the kids can come on to add to that and before you know it, sometimes it's weird that it will be kicking off mental, but it's mad, as you know, but it's being controlled and everyone's doing their job properly and observing and it's going off, but 2 or 3 other kids come with say challenging behaviour, or 14/15-year-olds turn up..., just at the point you don't need them there. They just add a bit more chaos that makes it spill over. They add a bit too much into the (jar) and it just goes poooosh (Jem, CP).

This implies a need to *feel* in control, often enacted through controlling spatial practices (Chapter 10), but if this becomes too confrontational, there is somehow a sense of shame both at not being able to avert the tip and at the felt need to micro-manage the space.

Playworkers often spoke of the emotional impact of this:

Sometimes you do feel like a policewoman ... I hate those sessions where everything's on the edge, then I can go home feeling quite, you know, I don't feel like it's been a good session and you start dwelling on stuff (Verda, CP).

You were always walking a tightrope (Callum, PP).

Dialectically related to this fear of loss of control and of violence is the gleeful exuberance of the playwork space. The emotional vitality of play itself (and therefore play settings) is often supercharged, poised dynamically between pleasure and pain, joy and anger, the exhilaration of risk and fear (Sandseter, 2010). Humans desire both stability and change in

their lives (Henricks, 2012). The desire for stability is reflected in playworkers feeling the need to control the space before it tips into chaos; at the same time, humans are also restless, constantly seeking change, and this openness to change is perhaps what helps playworkers go with the unpredictable flow of a session, not knowing where things might lead and feeling a sense of energy from that.

But I mean, they were chaotic, and immediate, and that's the kind of energy, and stuff, that I love, because I suppose that's how I operated. And it was, in some way, trying to create the environment in which this could happen safely in a semi-structured way (Ken, PP).

Sometimes this energy flows from big shared moments, for example, fast, loud and physical games that can involve most children and staff, such as 'Monster! Monster!' (described in Chapter 8). Another example is how a programmed activity might give rise to any number of smaller self-generated and self-organised episodes. An example of this was the initiation by playworkers of making a 'mummy' for Hallowe'en which also created space for paper fights, exaggerated performances and intimate conversations, (see the fuller account in Chapter 12). More often, though, the joy emanated from smaller, fleeting, shared moments, like one where Gareth was about to go over to the house to fetch additional resources:

Another child asks Gareth, 'Will you get some maggots as well?' 'And some maggots,' replies Gareth. 'Oh yes, there's lots of maggots in the house,' I say. Squeals of disgust. I have no idea what 'maggots' are – I discover later they are magnets, for the fishing game (fieldnotes, 23/10/06).

Or this little exchange – a fleeting moment – after a session when one of the children was still waiting to be collected:

Jem: Kailey! Why are you still here?

Zafira: Well nobody's picked her up, Jem.

Jem: Well, I'll pick her up ((he picks up Kailey and she squeals)) (fieldnotes 27/10/06).

Or this comment made by a playworker during a post-session debrief, describing what she could see but not fully understand, looking at the children playing:

And he was having a lovely time out there with, who was it, somebody on the swing, one of the girls – it might have been Kailey actually, yes. Just really having a, they were both laughing away there, I thought how lovely to hear them.

Whatever they were doing they thought it was hilarious, all I could see was that they were swinging backwards and forwards you know (fieldnotes 31/10/06).

Or traces of past moments that can only be guessed at, as notes in my journal described:

I walked past the Play Centre as I often do, even though I knew it would be closed. There is something about the space when it is empty, it carries with it the echoes of recent playing, the on-going social production of a social space. I like to look at the play traces and imagine their stories – a rope left here, a large swathe of fabric there, a puddle made in the tarpaulin on top of the sandpit. Today, a message chalked in childish handwriting on the blackboard/noticeboard close to the gate:

‘The play centre is shut at 5pm tomorrow cos Kay is seeing her feller.’

I smiled at the sight of this message and a number of possible scenarios leapt into my mind as to its provenance. How did it come to be written there? Who wrote it? How much of it was true, if any? Did Kay know it was there? What might her reaction to it be? Although, broadly, I felt that this was a play trace, there is also no doubt that it carries some ambivalence too. It sits, Janus-faced, looking both towards a playful world of ‘harmless’ jokes and also with a nod in the direction of teasing. The board looks outward to the ‘real’ world beyond the playground, it is read by those passing by – residents, council tax payers, parents, prospective playground visitors and so on. If written by the children, does it represent a playful inversion of adult-child power relations, or is it a threat to authority (or both)? The production of this play trace represents a small, everyday moment in the production of the playground as a social space; as such, it offers much for a spatial analysis of the dialectics of playwork (Journal, 27/10/09).

What was less evident in playwork talk is an acknowledgement of the impact of their own emotional states on their performance and on the atmosphere. The emotional valence of the space is relational and co-created: mood influences performance and at the same time people’s assessment of their performance also mediates how they feel about their work (Roth, 2007). In considering the place of emotions, motivation and identity in CHAT, Roth draws on evolutionary and neuroscientific accounts to argue that psychological theories that separate emotion from cognition and action are flawed. Emotion is integral to action in that emotional states pre-shape practical reasoning and therefore action, and organisms (including humans) are predisposed towards positive emotional valence and so direct their

actions towards it. This suggests that what Roth (2007, p. 46) terms ‘the unconscious aspects of emotion – the emotional states of the living body’, what others call ‘affect’ (for example, Thien, 2005; Thrift, 2004) – condition those often-automatic body movements that form individual actions which together constitute collective activity. Affect and emotions, therefore, are inextricably related to body, mind and relations with other people and both material and symbolic objects. Given this, a socio-cultural perspective sees

intersubjectivity and subjectivity as the *results* of collective life and having a material body, which allows the dawning subject, mediated by its embodied and bodily nature, to be conscious of itself as but one among a plurality of subjects (Roth, 2007, p. 44).

This offers a different perspective from the tacit assumption that the playworker acts as a rational, autonomous and objective professional in isolation from others or as the psychodynamic subject at the mercy of unplayed out material (Sturrock and Else, 2005). The concept of entrainment, referring to the process by which two independent but interacting entities can synchronise actions and also affect (Clayton, Sanger and Will, 2005), is relevant here. Also relevant are concepts of mirror neurons and embodied simulation (Gallese, 2009), or background emotions (Damasio, 2000, 2003) and affect synchrony (Feldman, 2007). Collective synchrony of background emotions and affect is what gives rise to the mood of a session, the atmosphere, or what playworkers frequently referred to as the ‘feel’ of the session, echoing Spinozan ideas of affect as the two-sided coin of affecting and being affected (Massumi, 2002), discussed in Chapter 11.

Cumulatively, over time, this produces and reproduces the culture of the setting, the tacit rules of how to get along together that operate at multiple levels. These co-created, sometimes conflictual, spaces of throwntogetherness (Massey, 2005) operate alongside the more formal attempts at articulating ‘normal getting on with rules’ (Carla, CP), but are perhaps insufficiently acknowledged in the discussions about playwork. The calm and rational attempts at controlling behaviour that I observed frequently during my fieldwork are as much displays of feeling and socio-emotional connection through metacommunication and paralanguage as they are literal exhortations to behave differently (Mehrabian, 1981).

On occasions notable by their very rarity, I recorded in my fieldnotes that particular playworkers appeared ‘fed up’ or unwilling/unable to respond playfully to low-level niggling and spiralling altercations. The extract below is one example:

I'm back in the building and get the feeling again that the atmosphere is not playful. Resources are half set out, and there is no playworker actually doing anything ... There is no focus for action, no spark, no stimulus for play really. Children come in, look at what's there, don't know what to do with it and start niggling. X responds to the niggling – for example, standing on tables, saying 'I'm bored,' running, etc. X had already mentioned before the session started about being tired and not in top condition ... I have been surprised usually up until now by how much energy the playworkers put in to their playwork, and tonight (and last Wednesday) stood out because this was not the case. This is not how things are usually (fieldnotes 7/11/06).

There are numerous fieldnotes about the seemingly endless energy and patience shown by the playworkers, which is why this lack of enthusiasm stood out as exceptional. It should also be noted that there is no suggestion that playworkers need always to lead specific activities, but there are times when enthusiasm, getting involved in something, or just making a suggestion is sufficient to change the atmosphere. In interviews, playworkers recognised the effect that taking this kind of action had:

I remember years ago, well some years ago, when there used to be girls club ... there were some girls that were screaming. And instead of saying stop it I said, right, everybody will scream ... I said, right, everybody outside, we'll have a screaming choir. And it was just, you know, pphhhh ((cutting motion with hands)) – that means stop and then bring it up ((hands rising)), scream:::::, higher! Ppphhh, and they'd all whooah ((stop)) ((C illustrates starting low and going to full on scream, laughter)) ppphht. And all that, and it was really good but then somebody told me off because I was making a noise and the neighbours wouldn't like it (Carla, CP).

One experienced playworker felt that sometimes falling back on a large group game might be choosing the easy way out, and that they should try different responses:

And then sometimes you'll see that other bunch coming on, potential problems to come here, so ... you go, 'right, I think what we should do is have another game of run-off' or something like that. And I get frustrated, particularly when I find myself doing it. Cos it's not good. I do see other team members doing it and a lot of that is to control the whole environment ... And to stop it disrupting into complete chaos which, there are merits to that obviously and we do have to look at the other children on site. But sometimes I find myself doing it and thinking, 'oh I shouldn't really have done that,' ... Sometimes it's one of those

things where, I dunno, maybe I should've engaged differently with particular children that were coming on (Gareth, CP).

These excerpts illustrate the effect that playworkers' displays of emotions had on the space, and this ranged from small (frequently observed) moments of affection, calm and rational conversations about behaviour, very rare low-ebb lack of engagement, through to expansive displays of enthusiasm.

9.4: Playwork as emotional performance and emotional labour

What these interventions show is how playwork can be seen as performative, in the sense that the performance of the ideal playworker (and ideal adult) pre-exists each playworker's performance, and that their performances are judged against these normative ideals. It is fully accepted, and made explicit in the NOS, that playworkers are expected to *do* certain things, but these are mostly functional tasks. Given the inextricable relationship between doing, being, becoming and feeling, then these functions and values also carry the requirement to display particular emotions. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor (Chapter 6) suggests that each context requires performing a particular script. The correct scripts for 'playworker' are informed by the mediating artefacts of the activity system: for example, the ethos that is made explicit through the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005) and also has tacit dimensions, being (re)produced through playwork history, dialogue, literature and discourse. These mediating artefacts not only have internal contradictions, they also relate dialectically to other points and processes within the CHAT model, particularly community, rules, the process of exchange. Playwork operates in a relational manner with other networked activity systems (for example, the local authority as managers and funders, the Children's Fund as funders, Ofsted as inspectors, the local community, other professional groupings). The script, then, is required to be flexible up to a point, acknowledging a nexus of membership of several communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) without losing a sense of playwork identity.

Hochschild (1983) extends the idea of scripts by examining the requirement to perform particular emotions at work, suggesting that some jobs require the display of specific emotions and so feeling-management becomes a commodity to be sold in the labour marketplace (Colley, 2006), what Vincent (2011) refers to as the economy of feelings. This is likely to be an alien perspective for many playworkers whose discussions assume a level

of authentic emotional commitment to collective values, and to the children with whom they work. Nevertheless, this analytical perspective is useful in that it foregrounds tacit aspects of playwork.

Wharton (2009, p. 147) defines 'emotional labour' as 'the process by which workers are expected to manage their feelings in accordance with organizationally defined rules and guidelines'. Immediately this is somewhat problematic for playworkers in local authorities, small voluntary organisations with local management committees, or out-of-school clubs based in schools. Each of these contexts has organisational cultures with their own feeling and display rules that are not always coterminous with a playwork ethos; however, what came out more strongly in observation and interviews, is that it is the sense of collective identity as playworkers that is the strongest influence on the feeling rules of playwork. This was particularly evident in interview questions relating to motivation to do the work and the expectation of commitment beyond contracted hours. The extracts below show how this was strong, but may be beginning to shift:

...it's interesting talking about it ... I can hear how passionate I was about it, and felt about it, and how much it mattered (Ken, PP).

You did feel part of a movement, ... it didn't feel institutionalised ... there was a vibrancy (Carol, PP).

There was a real commitment ... and ... a really good sense of networking ... a real camaraderie of philosophy (Jim, PP).

I know they're trying to professionalise it but it's taken a lot of the actual heart of what it is out I think, they're going to get a different type of person, they're going to get a career person instead of someone who does it for the sheer love of it (Carla, CP).

It might be inferred, therefore, that some of the feeling and display rules for playwork stem from a shared philosophy of its purpose and value; at the same time feeling and display rules are informed by the wider common-sense understandings concerning adult-child relations and particularly professional ones. This creates contradictions for playworkers trying to navigate the tension between libertarianism and paternalism. The subjectivity of 'responsible-adult-in-charge' will always require a presence to some degree since, no matter how far libertarian, democratic and playful ideals pertain, this subjectivity will prevail, given the structuring of generational ordering and the legal and moral

requirements of the job. That said, there are several ways of performing this, and, drawing on Johansson (2011), it is possible to imagine and observe a multiplicity of emotional subjectivities that resist the fixity of a constructed adult. What follows are three illustrations of subjectivities displaying feeling rules.

9.4.1: Showing affection and respect for children

It might be suggested that any professional that works with children should show affection and respect; playwork's uniqueness stems from its stated commitment to showing respect for children *as children* and for their self-organised play through avoiding its 'adulteration' (Hughes, 2012; Sturrock and Else, 1998). I was struck (and heartened) by the level of physical contact the playworkers had with the children, particularly hugs on greeting and lots of rough and tumble and tickling. This was at a time of moral panic regarding physical contact with children, brought about through raised sensitivity to both child protection and correction issues, with many settings becoming 'no touch zones' (Piper and Smith, 2003). Staff and children greeted each other enthusiastically and children often initiated hello hugs. In interview, Tanith discussed her particular style of playwork, which was very physical, often engaging in rough and tumble and tickling with the older boys:

W: I think it's part of the culture at [the Play Centre] that there is a lot of physical contact ... Cos that is your style, isn't it?

T: Yeah. And when I look back, it always has been. Probably not as much the rough and tumble but I've always had that physical – like if I see an upset child, my instinctive reaction is to comfort, and if they're kicking off it would be to hold. Because you can talk to children and they aren't going to take any notice, sometimes all you need to do is just touch them. And sometimes that's enough to actually make them aware that you are there and that you're not going to be, you're not going to hurt them you just want them to listen and they start to calm. So yeah, it probably has been always my style when I look back, just not something that I was aware of before.

Physical contact was how Tanith performed affection and respect. However, she also talked about how this was not a prevalent expectation children had of playworkers and her style had to be communicated in some way, performing a subjectivity of 'adult-as-playmate'. Johansson (2011) identifies a subjectivity of 'adult-included in commonality' which may also apply here: a de-territorialising of hegemonic 'adult-in-charge' to co-produce shared moments of playfulness by performing a script not usually seen in adults.

Although many of the playworkers showed this immediate and physical style of performing respect and affection, this feeling rule was also performed in other ways, for example, helping children to set up specific play frames through changing the space and providing resources, or supporting specific play frames through tight holding (see Chapter 10), or generally taking children's experiences, requests and expressions seriously.

Respect and affection was evident in observations and continued 'back stage' (Goffman, 1959) in discussions during the post-session form filling described in Chapter 7. Although the playworkers did not always use the language of play frames (Russell, 2006, 2007a), the talk was frequently about how the targeted children fared in terms of holding frames together and the interventions taken by playworkers when they fell apart. Discussions were always respectful, expressing genuine concern about the children's lives, welfare and the minutiae of their concerns, play styles and preferences. Not once did I hear them deride, mock or moan about the children. The extract below clearly illustrates the excitement at a small win in terms of encouraging parents to support children's play. The boy in question, Haneef, on the Inclusion Project, was on the autistic spectrum and usually spent his time at the Play Centre making swords, which his father used to destroy and not allow him to take home.

G: Hey, you won't believe it, I was really pleased to hear it, Haneef's told me his dad is going to make him a wooden sword.

C: Oh what, really? Oh, how lovely!

G: And he can keep it at his auntie's ((laughter)). He's making it at his auntie's and he's going to keep it there.

K: That's something innit?

Here, the subjectivity might be understood as 'adult-as-play-supporter' rather than 'adult-as-playmate', working round the edges to create conditions that support play. The playworkers were aware that this subjectivity could conflict with 'adult-in-charge', a contradiction that lies at the heart of the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005). For the novice playworker, Jem, the growing awareness of the concept of adulteration is evident in his faltering attempts to explain his desire to prevent sessions tipping into chaos alongside his desire to perform a low-intervention script:

I don't think you try to control, what you're trying to do is monitor, I think the word is monitor the behaviour so it doesn't exceed the agreed boundaries ... I don't think control's a good word, it's trying to control it going over that, if

you're gonna use the word control, allowing it to progress to a point that's safe for everybody involved ... the majority of my play is pretty much outside, you know getting those large groups of kids into football, into doobby run off and trying to control their behaviour through play, not trying to control it through policing (Jem, CP).

The more experienced playworkers sometimes described themselves in rather dehumanised terms as 'adult-as-resource':

I'm part of the furniture. I'm a piece of furniture that talks and can answer questions and suggest things and help them to do what they want to do if they want me to or if they don't want me to I'll just back off and it's knowing when they want me to (Kay, CP).

Although this study does not focus on the views and articulations of children, it is worth paying some attention to this here, in terms of expectations for the co-production of space. In research by Manwaring (2006) and Russell (2007b), by far the most common quality was that playworkers should be kind. This was echoed in an opportunistic conversation with two girls at the Play Centre:

I say I'm there to study playworkers and ask them what they think makes a good playworker. Jess says, straight away, 'Someone who is kind and helps you with your problems.' She says it is harder being a playworker than being a mother, because there are so many children (fieldnotes 2/11/06).

9.4.2: Being cheerful and enthusiastic

This is something that struck me greatly about most of the playworkers most of the time. They displayed endless enthusiasm, patience, energy and humour throughout the sessions. This was expressed in how they greeted the children, their willingness to listen to and take seriously the minutiae of their frequent complaints about others not playing fairly, their willingness to help or to fetch resources, their playful banter with the children and also their general playfulness. These emotions were displayed differently by each playworker. Three examples are given here:

At one point I noticed a 9/10-year-old boy at the sink filling up a bowl with water, taking this outside ... I went outside to investigate. There is an enormous sandpit (approximately 1.5 metre by 4 metres). There was a large black plastic

container in the sandpit (perhaps a water tank) and the children were pouring the water into this, making sludge. I watched as they threw handfuls of the sludge splat against the wooden fence of the kickaround area. One of the 8/9-year-old girls saw me watching and assured me, 'We are allowed.' Eventually the game turned into smearing. I missed the transition, but all the players had plastic pinnies on both front and back. The game is to chase other players and try to smear them with fistfuls of wet sludgy sand. The game ranged across the whole site. Mostly, the children played this in a self-contained way, it was clearly a game that had been played before with established rules ... When Gareth had finished his talk with Jamal's mother, which was taking place near the gate and therefore close to the sandpit, he went inside, had a few words with the other playworkers, and then re-emerged with a couple of children's plastic pinnies, tying them on, shouting 'I'm playing!' and he got stuck in to the smearing with the group of children, welcomed in and becoming the key target (fieldnotes, 18/10/06).

In this extract, Gareth performs a number of playwork subjectivities that combine to display 'adult-as-play-supporter', from 'adult-as-mediator' dealing with a parent's complaint, through to 'adult-in-charge' in his role as senior, communicating the conversation to the other playworkers as far as was possible during the session, to 'adult-as-playmate'.

The extract below is an illustration of Verda's calmer style of performing 'adult-as-play-supporter' through the provision of resources:

Verda seemed to be constantly running over to the house to get more materials, always seeming willing to go. One of the things that has struck me is that the staff seem genuinely happy to get the children whatever resources they ask for. Many resources are openly available – there are paper drawers and some trays with a variety of resources, and others are in a locked store room. When Verda came back with balloons, they immediately took the children's attention and were used in a variety of ways, including, of course, making farting noises and as water bombs (fieldnotes, 19/10/06).

Finally, this extract shows Carla's style of being both playful and at the same time performing 'adult-in-charge':

A boy comes in to the kitchen to get a football. He kicks it, dribbling it along the floor towards the door. There is a 'no ball games inside' rule. Carla stands up,

coughing to the boy ('Ahem!') The boy continues to dribble to ball towards the door. Carla stands up and begins to 'Ahem!' more loudly, following him and chasing him, playfully, out of the door (fieldnotes, 23/10/06).

9.4.3: Calm responses to intense affective situations including aggression and violence

One of Hochschild's (1983) key points about emotional labour was that the emotions required to be displayed were intended to produce a specific emotional response in 'clients', for example, playworkers' attempts to avert, divert or calm displays of aggression or violence. This topic is explored further in Chapter 10, but is introduced here because of the implicit display rules for responses to shifts in the atmosphere. The playworkers often used 'reframing' techniques (Russell, 2006) if they thought the collapse of a play frame into violence was imminent. They also used displays of calm. In an adaptation of Johansson's (2011) adult subjectivities, this might be 'adult-as-secure-containment'. This extract from my fieldnotes shows how Gareth responded to a child who often 'lost it', a phrase used by the playworkers to describe when children's emotions ran so high they were unable to control them. The language of the notes reflects the terminology used by the playworkers.

I'm still in the kitchen and I can see Gareth through the window. Zafira [sessional playworker] is with me saying how Rory [one of the children on the Inclusion Project] has been kicking off a lot today. Gareth is trying to restrain him and make him stay on the bench. He physically prevents him from running off. Rory struggles against the restraint, and Gareth is talking constantly, calmly. Eventually, Rory sits on the bench and Gareth just has his hand on Rory's chest. Then he takes that away and is talking to Rory who is still angry, throwing things, but not trying to run away. I spoke to Gareth later. This is the 'time-out' bench and Rory's mother is keen for the centre to use this as a cooling off place. Gareth says once he can get Rory to stay on the bench for 5 minutes and calm down, he can then distract him and play with him at something else (I saw him on the zipline after this episode, with Gareth being very loud and playful and chasing Rory). Once he is happy again, Gareth talks to him about why what he did was not acceptable. Usually, at this stage, Rory can understand it. At the time, he cannot control his emotions or behaviour. They are working on using the bench because he is now getting too big for his mother to restrain physically (fieldnotes, 23/10/06).

Similarly, the following extract is from the evening after a major ‘kick-off’, when a member of staff was assaulted. The staff team had met earlier in the day and discussed whether or not to open the site and had decided to open, with a list of barred children.

Some of the children that were barred came on anyway, and the playworkers all took a low-key approach to telling them they shouldn’t be there. Carlton came on professing innocence, and it took a while of low key insistence rather than chasing, for him to leave. Later Jamal, Hannah and Sam also came on and just annoyingly took stuff from the craft tables, running on and off site. But this didn’t last very long either and the low key insistence approach seemed to work.

In the building, Carla said that she wanted an end to Hallowe’en activities, and I photocopied some softer/gentler colouring in pics – fairies, faces, butterflies and stars. Carla got out the pearly paints and put classical music on the radio. Children trickled in and it was calm and gentle, quite restorative in a sense. There was an atmosphere of needing just to be ... I sat down at the table and started to colour in, and several children joined me – boys and girls, and Carla joined too, and there was a good discussion about lots of things, not just the night before (fieldnotes, 2/11/06).

9.4.4: Affective deviancy: failure to display required feeling rules

One way to appreciate the power of implicit feeling rules in playwork’s emotional labour is to see what happens when the required feelings are not displayed and undesirable feelings are evident. One member of the team, Jem, although having worked as a youth worker and as a sessional playworker, had been at the Play Centre as a full member of the team only for a few months. In the following conversation between him and Carla, immediately after the major kick-off and assault, he expresses stress and anger and suggests that Jay should not be allowed to come back to the Play Centre.

J: I’m all for taking kids that are hard work and everything but if they assault you and kick all that over, they just don’t care. I mean how old is he? 13? He’s going to be locked away soon. All we can do is work with him the best we can ... I’m all for it, I’ve worked with really hard core kids ... but what I’m saying is that on a play centre where you’ve got a duty of care towards other little children at what point do you draw the line. Maybe Jay shouldn’t be on here.

C: I’m not denying that ... Extra support yes maybe, but not a lifetime ban ... That’s like saying I can’t be bothered with him.

J: What I'm saying is though, where does the health and safety and duty of care towards other kids come in?

C: I can't give up on them, Jem, sorry. Otherwise, you know, it just makes me feel that people have been abandoned.

J: I'm not saying people should be abandoned, what I'm saying is you've got to weigh up all the options ...The safety of your staff and the safety of other children becomes more important than anything else.

C: You get extra help to keep them on, I'd rather do that.

This is a familiar dilemma for playworkers. As was expressed in the interviews with the pre-1990 playworkers (see Chapter 8), playwork settings were often the only place left for children barred from all other services. The collective activity system's feeling rules require a willingness to continue to work with such children. This does not mean it is easy, and later in his interview, Jem implied shame at his reactions to particular children, describing the difference he felt between being a sessional worker and a full member of the team:

It may even be at a subconscious level Wendy, who's to say, you know. I'm a sessional worker, child A who's disruptive is coming on, I know nothing about it. Child A's coming on, as a worker who's worked with that child over a time you've got your pre-perceptions of what you're expecting so it changes ... Your heart goes or your stomach goes, it's natural instincts isn't it, so it is a very subconscious, you know ... it's going to change your attitude towards the child (Jem, CP).

Here Jem suggested that the job required him to perform the appropriate feeling rules but this was surface acting rather than deep acting (Hochschild, 1983). Later, he adds

Sometimes your natural responses aren't the responses that actually work within the setting.

Similar feelings were also expressed by Kay, a more experienced member of staff, on seeing particular children at the gate:

And I seen them all come to the gate and Carlton was sort of like ready to walk in and before he walked over he shouted me, and before he shouted me I thought, 'Oh gawd, I've got all 6 of you,' like. And I'm looking round, making sure I've got the staff and what children are on, what could trigger something, and it's, oh Caleb's not here, and they didn't come in. He shouted to me. Asked me something, what time it was I think and are you all right, so it was something

completely different to what I thought was going to happen but you still have to handle it delicately. And then they cleared off and it's ohhh ((sighs with relief)).

However, the way Kay framed the issue is in terms of the whole space and how the arrival of particular children might shift things, rather than personal feelings about the particular child. In her interview she explained her decision not to press charges against Jay for the assault in terms of not giving up on children she had known for several years. This suggests that the emotion that underpins all the above is that of hope, an emotion that surfaced in all discussions with playworkers and is explored in more detail in the following section from a geographical perspective.

9.5: Playwork, geography and hope

[A]s one of the most pervasive ideals in Western civilization ..., childhood takes on the form of logic and becomes unproblematically associated with the future, because of the affective power of childhood to provoke hope (and, by equal measure, fear and tragic loss) (Kraftl, 2008, p. 84).

Given that this study started from the assertion that playwork is the production of a space in which all children can play (PPSG, 2005), it is germane to analyse the playworker as emotional subject from a geographical standpoint. Geographers debate the difference between emotions and affect (for example, Bondi and Davidson, 2011; Thien, 2005). A simplified summary sees emotions as relational, recognised and named, and affect as visceral, embodied, pre-cognitive and pre-language. This, of course makes discussion of the latter quite difficult (an enduring contradiction within non-representational theory as highlighted by Bondi, 2005). Given this, whilst the role of affect needs to be acknowledged, and will influence, for example, attempts at surface and deep acting (Hochschild, 1983), I consider here the place of a specific named emotion within playwork, an emotion that is at the core of adult-child relations, that of hope. As Kraftl (2008) points out, children are a repository for adult hopes for the future, and in the data analysis and interpretation, three forms of hope emerged:

- H1: a far hope, of policy paradigms and utopian projects
- H2: revolutionary hope
- H3: a near hope, of moments in lived space.

These forms of hope are not discrete categories and there is a need to avoid fixing and separating them, since – as with Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial triad – all three are dialectically related. Thus, the far utopian hope that is understood as ‘progress’ in the policy discourse and the playworkers’ talk is also situated in both the playworkers’ hopes for children’s current situations to be better, and also in mundane, quotidian moments and relationships that both reproduce and resist dominant productions of space. The tensions arise in the space between hegemony and resistance; that is, the tensions between the far hope of policy paradigms as instantiated in funding streams and knowledge production on the one hand, and on the other the leanings towards recalcitrance and resistance, the desire for playwork to be Other than mainstream children’s services.

9.5.1: H1: far hope

As discussed in Chapter 4, social policies relating to children and young people express hope both for and in children. The previous Labour Government’s *Every Child Matters* agenda (operational at the time of the fieldwork) condensed these into five future-focused outcomes within the overall project of supporting children to achieve their full potential. The current Coalition Government, despite its ideology of ‘small government, Big Society’, continues a highly interventionist and technical approach in its children and family policies, investing childhood with ‘a version of hopefulness based on maintaining competitiveness in global markets, couching this both in the moral language of equality and the pragmatic language of economy’ (Lester and Russell, 2013a, p. 41). Seeing children as the repository of adult hopes for the future mirrors other forms of hope that assume development (or progress) is always a force for good, thereby creating ‘the perfect screen for childhood futurity and the much-maligned tropes of paternal philanthropy to return via the back door’ (Kraftl, 2008, p. 84).

Such discourse, firmly ensconced in Lefebvre’s conceived space, and implemented through dominant spatial practices, territorialises children (Bauman, 2003), delineating the boundaries of childhood, reifying it and rendering it a site for adult colonisation. The history of play provision is one of addressing the social concerns of the time; the very permissiveness, anarchy and freedom of adventure playgrounds was aimed at producing moral citizens (Kozlovsky, 2008) (see Chapters 4 and 6). This tension between supporting anarchy and freedom and play’s voluntary and autotelic nature on the one hand, and addressing policy agendas on the other, is an enduring contradiction central to this study, expressed throughout as the dialectic between playwork’s use and exchange values.

In interviews, the future-focused developmental understanding was articulated only in two of the interviews and then only alongside other ways of understanding playwork's purpose:

I would say part of my role, part of that job, is informal education and social education (Ewan, PP).

The purpose of playwork is that facility to enable the children to advance to move on and that's like I say socially and personally ... I think there's a large degree of satisfaction, being able to help move someone on, help them to develop (Gareth, CP).

The rhetoric of future-focused hope through progress was, however, far more evident in the post-session form-filling discussions. Reports that the target children had interacted well with others, not 'lost it' or 'kicked off', or had exhibited other forms of pro-social behaviour were greeted enthusiastically, this being seen implicitly as improvement, although it was accepted that progress was not necessarily linear and that children often regressed. Playworkers reported that when preparing quarterly reports they did a 'synopsis of behaviour patterns'. This allowed for a comparison with other quarters to 'see where it's moved on' (Gareth), and that with some children, you could see a 'huge improvement' (Carla). Children were often described as being 'good' or 'better'. These were small and frequent comments, interwoven into other ways of talking about the children. One post-session discussion about Kailey's involvement in a group of children playing at 'beauty parlour' highlighted the interrelatedness of playfulness and progress. The fieldnotes (17/10/06) described the episode:

Kailey spent a huge part of the session being a beautician, with Tanith [playworker] as more or less willing client. There were usually about 3 or 4 children involved in this, but Kailey was there the whole time and whenever I looked seemed to be running the show ... This went on for ... well over an hour and consisted of using the almost empty shampoo bottles filled with water to 'pretend' to wash Tanith's hair, making her hair and much else of her soaking wet and very sticky. They put several layers of nail varnish on her nails and surrounding areas. Tanith at times protested, but this was clearly playfully.

The team discussed this after the session:

T: Well, there was Kailey, and [names four other children]. Yeah, it was unbelievable. And they spent ages, absolutely ages...

V: Yeah, a really long time.

T: Yeah, it was. They put 4 coats of nail varnish on my nails and then they couldn't get any more on my nails so they started on my hands

V: Oh () I've booked myself in for an appointment on Thursday. I think that was probably a mistake.

C: Well, that's good because that was teamwork and all that sort of thing and Kailey is quite, you know, she usually plays on her own in the sand and that kind of thing doesn't she?

T: Yes

C: Good.

The second extract comes from a conversation I had with the staff team after one session (25/10/06):

K: When I first came here I hadn't worked with children like – I mean this is 7 years ago ... I used to say that they were – specially like Kyle, he was about 7 or 8 – like time bombs waiting to just be ignited ... They've got so much peer and friends baggage, home life baggage ...

G: I mean the one thing like you say about time bombs, look at Kyle now. He's asked, he came up to us this morning and asked am I allowed to come back as a junior volunteer. Cos he stopped just after the holidays.

K: Yeah, you do see some positive things.

G: And I look and I think where would these kids be without the Play Centre? Because we're not, we can't move them forward, we're in a holding (pattern) for kids, we're keeping them at that sociable stage that they're at, and we're keeping them that, do you know what I mean? If we weren't around, the time bomb would go off. But, we're constantly there, there are enough people here to give them boundaries to contain them and to help them [K: guide them] interact socially enough to keep going and to fit in and to not get excluded and be picked on too much and to not go off on the wrong tracks. But there aren't enough adult, positive adult influences in their life to then move them forward ... so what I'm saying is, we can only do so much, for 15, 20 hours a week, we put in some positive interaction with them and they're with us.

K: Which they're not getting at home, they're not getting at school.

G: That they're not getting in so many other places so that's what I mean about we're a holding pattern. Without us there, they'd have probably gone off the rails and not developed those social skills.

K: It's teaching them skills.

J: We do a safe haven. He was at that door every day at half past three for the last year.

G: When he was out-of-school every day he was waiting at that gate for us to open up.

J: That says a lot I think.

G: It does, it says a hell of a lot about what we do.

This conversation was one moment in the whole production of Play Centre space in Lefebvrian terms. The staff expressed pleasure at seeing children avoiding 'going off the rails', they talked about the Play Centre being different from the other institutions of childhood, and they articulated playwork's instrumental benefits. Yet these outcomes were not predictable in any direct causal manner and perhaps only emerged in the way they did because of the relationship between this form of hope and the others, particularly H3 (moments in lived space), arguably the primary explicit object of playwork, but one that cannot be planned or represented, since to do so would render it conceived space. The children attended the Play Centre because it offered them something they wanted: a space to play and also a space where the relationships with peers as well as playworkers had value for them. It was clear in observations, in discussions with children and staff and in the 'feel' of the place that the children and staff developed attachments to each other that would have benefits (Sterrett *et al.*, 2011). 'Moving children on' might be expressed as an exchange value of playwork, but if this becomes the primary focus, much would be lost (Beunderman, 2010).

However, the spatial practices of many playworkers did appear to be directed towards these social skills, as was recorded in my early fieldnotes.

Kay seems to be the one that sorts out behaviour problems. She is very good at remembering the tiny details of conversations and who said what and what happened when, and will pick up issues the next day if they have not been resolved. She behaves in a very calm way with the children and they seem to respect it. Although it may not be termed 'playwork' – because it focuses on behaviour in a very direct way – it does seem to add to the overall atmosphere and expectations of what is OK and not on site. Even the children who are subject to her 'talks' have a respect for her ... She has told me of serious incidents where the police are involved that she has managed to resolve without charges being pressed because she has persuaded the children it is in

their best interest to return stolen property or apologise or give information (fieldnotes, 25/10/06).

9.5.2: H2: revolutionary hope

Alongside this territorialised, even colonised space of hope runs another, historical ethos underpinning playwork. In the late 1960s to the 1980s, when the pre-1990 interviewees were practising playworkers, the adventure playground movement was still young and many playworkers were attracted to the work because of its anti-establishment, anarchic and democratic nature. The playgrounds were self-organising, and democracy was in terms of everyday throwntogetherness, and small moments of embodied and enacted negotiations. Civil liberties underpinned the *zeitgeist*, and many playworkers read writers such as Colin Ward, John Holt, A.S. Neill and Leila Berg (Conway, Hughes and Sturrock, 2004). The interviews conveyed a broad optimism in children's futures being politically and collectively rather than individually better through supporting the development of a form of class consciousness.

Adventure playgrounds were gonna save the world! ... By offering children a different life experience, yeah. By giving them a real place, and a recognised place, and power ... power to construct their own environment, be taken seriously, influence what went on ... [It] was very much about the importance of those sort of children with that sort of position in society having a better deal, yeah? ... I suppose that's where the class analysis comes in, but it was particularly for them. That was the idea, we can do it for ourselves, we don't need top-down bloody government, you know, we can control our own lives. And if children learn to do that on the adventure playgrounds, they'll be able to do it in life (Carol, PP).

I get a gradual politicisation of it, I guess, to think there are rights here ... and we really need to look at what, as a society, we're not doing for these young people ... But there were a lot of very, very, aggressive, disaffected Afro-Caribbean boys, and it was shockingly frightening. But fed in to, you know – what have they got? This isn't right, we can't be treating people like this ... I never really felt they didn't have the right to be angry and violent, you know. They had extremely little, what we were giving them was pathetic at some points, you know, a half-broken table tennis bat – and there were kids who got into the camping, camps, you know, and fires. And that was great, and they liked it ... So

I guess we got put in to more and more stark positions of taking a political stance about children's rights and community rights (Jim, PP).

Although this discourse was fairly common then, there is less evidence of it continuing explicitly in this form today, perhaps due to increasing territorialisation of children's lives, and the individualisation, reification and commodification of radical concepts of structural equality that have become regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980). This shift was recognised by one of the pre-1990 playworkers:

Where has that rhetoric gone recently? ... Aren't we still class warriors, in effect? Aren't we still arguing the issue of class? In this kind of cloaked-and-masked way. And shouldn't we promote that? (Graham, PP).

Playwork discourse and theory is heavily influenced by people involved in the early adventure playgrounds, recognised as a particularly 'authentic' form of provision (Bartlett, 2002; Sturrock and Else, 1998), and the sector retains a strong ethos of anarchic and left wing principles, evidenced in this blog from a long-standing playworker, describing the ideology underpinning the first wave of cuts to adventure playgrounds during the Thatcher government:

The prevailing culture shifted to one that was litigious, inspected to find fault, derided for a lack of conformity and labelled as liberal-leftwing and anarchic. Structures and Playworkers were made to conform to arbitrary, externally manipulating agendas which were not informed by Playwork practices or theories. These theories were still emergent at that time and a language for the Playwork toolkit had not yet emerged. The Adventure Play movement found itself in a reactionary position and floundering for words, a confirmation to those in positions of authority, who were seeking it, that this was a nonsense and a luxury and funding was withdrawn across the board (Wilson, 2009).

Vestiges of these early political leanings remain as recalcitrance (Battram, 2008). It has endured in the culture of the activity system, although it has been challenged by the new managerialists and marketers that have emerged as a result of the rise in commercialised out-of-school childcare services and the latest round of public spending cuts.

There is also much debate within the sector as to whether a playwork approach can be practised in any context, or whether the adventure playground represents the only 'pure' setting for playwork (for example, Sturrock, Russell and Else, 2004; Chilton, 2003). The debate is relevant here because it is a political one that centres on the openness of space

both in terms of everyday democracy and broader politics. Two sources are drawn on here, both influenced by Deleuze and Guattari (2004). The first is the idea of *minor politics* (Rose, 1999b), an everyday, mundane politics that stands alongside major, programmatic politics of governments and the powerful. Many (including Massumi, 2002; Rose, 1999a, 1999b) have pointed out the old forms of resistance to inequality have lost their force, attraction and effectiveness because they understood power as unidirectional and hierarchical, and identities as fixed and oppositional. Newer revolutionary forms of hope lie in a smaller kind of minor politics that recognises the fluid, relational and affective dimensions of power. The quotation below is included in full because it both summarises the concept and because it links back to ideas of performative subjectivities and forwards to H3 moments in lived space.

If one were trying to characterize the creativity of ... 'minor' or 'minority' politics, one would not seek to identify particular agents of a radical politics – be they classes, races or genders – or to distinguish once and for all the forces of reaction from those of progression in terms of fixed identities. Rather, one would examine the ways in which creativity arises out of the situation of human beings engaged in particular relations of force and meaning, and what is made out of possibilities of that location. These minor engagements do not have the arrogance of programmatic politics – perhaps even refuse their designation as politics at all. They are cautious, modest, pragmatic, experimental, stuttering, tentative. They are concerned with the here and now, not with some fantasized future, with small concerns, petty details, the everyday and not the transcendental. They frequently arise in 'cramped spaces' – within a set of relations that are intolerable, where movement is impossible, where change is blocked and the voice strangled. And, in relation to these little territories of the everyday, they seek to engender a small reworking of their own spaces of action (Rose, 1999b, p. 279-280).

In terms of the Play Centre, what was noticeable was how the playworkers treated seriously (that is they *cared* about) the 'petty' details of the children's relationships, power struggles and fallings out. They may well be amongst the few adults in children's lives to do so, and who also treat their play seriously. Horton and Kraftl (2009, p. 15) suggest these caring relationships may be seen as a 'faltering kind of activism that proceed[s] with "not too much fuss"'. I suggest it may be this caring about children's everyday lives that distinguishes playwork from other forms of professional work with children that are required to focus on instrumental and measurable outcomes. A service that has 'play' in its

name, no matter how many instrumental outcomes it may claim, ultimately has to pay attention to these small minor engagements and to moments of playfulness (as explored in H3 below) as these are the basis of both its use and exchange value. Much of the conversation during the post-session debriefs was about the children's peer and family relationships and other everyday aspects of their lives, exhibiting a genuine concern for their minutiae:

And Jess, poor Jess, oh. She's dealing with Caleb [younger brother], she's dealing with her mum and she's what, eleven? She's only just started at senior school, and she's being the mum to all of them poor girl and there's Caleb kicking off all the time. I've got a lot of time for them (Carla, CP).

This concern was picked up by the children and expressed (as described in 9.4.1 above) as being kind. I was struck by the level of concern and how much the playworkers knew about the children's home lives and the ins and outs of friendships and conflicts, and they drew on this in their relationships with the children.

The second source to draw on in discussing revolutionary hope is Massumi's writing on affect as a fundamental aspect of power. The connections that arise from the free flow of capital, particularly via new digital media (for example, entry checks at venues/airports, Point of Sale technology, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), increasingly cookie-monitored internet use, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) on mobile phones, and surveillance of email traffic) means that sovereign power no longer exists in its previous form. Capital requires this free flow but this makes state control harder and a response is to step up surveillance. Politics therefore becomes affective, often playing to fear. The role of the media in the information age has also changed, in that they no longer report but have become 'direct mechanisms of control by their ability to modulate the affective dimension' (Massumi, 2002, p. 232). Parallels can be drawn here with the affective nature of marketing, which taps into hope for a better life merely through consuming particular products or services, including marketing fear to parents, (through, for example, chips, mobile phone apps, reins, webcams in nurseries, educational toys) and also through media portrayal of moral panics concerning children and young people, including the attention paid to particular extreme (and extremely distressing) cases of child abuse, neglect, abduction and murder (Gill, 2013). These discourses seep into common-sense understandings to create the idea that childhood itself is in danger and needs saving by adults (as evidenced in the Save Childhood Movement), or that children may be deprived of particular experiences, such as nature or

play (Russell, 2012b). Playworkers too are subject to surveillance through methods of monitoring (time sheets, funding forms, and so on) leaving less space for autonomy (although Massumi's idea of autonomy is collective rather than individualistic).

Against this fairly pessimistic picture, Massumi's version of hope is not the optimistic grand projects of certainty for a utopian future (H1) but a near hope of being open to possibility. There will always be an element of uncertainty and this gives room for manoeuvrability: the possibility of both affecting and being affected. Focusing on this rather than fixed outcomes offers the feeling that there is always something to be tried out. Things can be slightly different in the next moment. This vague sense of potential is what he sees as freedom. 'Freedom always arises from constraint – it's a creative conversion of it, not some utopian escape from it' (Massumi, 2002, p. 238). This is not a command and control position, but one of 'surfing' or navigating the moment: we are not outside situations but immersed in them, bodily and relationally.

What you are, affectively, isn't a social classification – rich or poor, employed or unemployed – it's a set of potential connections and movements that you have, always in an open field of relations (Massumi, 2002, p. 238).

Revolutionary thinking and hope now need to change from rational evidence-based argument to using the same affective approaches as more successful right wing campaigns (whipping up nationalistic fear is much easier than, for example, emotional arguments to consume less for ecological reasons). This applies readily to the conclusion that has been forming during the literature-informed analysis of the data; that is, that revolutionary hope in playwork stems from the collective and affective relationships that open up space for moments of joy and vitality – moments in lived space (H3). Massumi talks about joy not necessarily being the same as happiness; this might relate to the vitality of kicking off, the idea that violence may actually be in lived space (explored in Chapter 10). The potential is in the gaps, the grey areas. Just like play, hope is interstitial; this is possibility space. This is neither predictable nor controllable. Belonging (for example to the community of the Play Centre and to the community of practice of playwork) gives certain powers of freedom, a stable platform from which to do things differently.

Massumi's version of revolutionary hope can be seen in everyday moments of playfulness and of playful resistance; providing a bridge into the third form of hope that was evident in my fieldwork. The intermingled forms of far (utopian and revolutionary) and near (revolutionary and playful) hope are illustrated in the extract describing the beauty parlour

and the post-session discussion of this (sub-section 9.5.1 above). This was an event of shared moments of playfulness which led to much banter between children and children, children and playworkers, playworkers and playworkers. It was great fun, and both mimicked and mocked dominant ideals of beauty. It also allowed for intimate moments of physical and affective connectedness. This was understood by the playworkers and onto this they also overlaid and articulated satisfaction at the progress made by Kailey at being able to establish and maintain a shared frame for so long. Their engagement both in the beauty parlour play frame and the progress discourse were also enacted through and built what Horton and Kraftl (2009, p. 15) term 'everyday, personal, affective bonds' which produce and constantly reproduce feelings of deep caring, and can constitute a form of political activism.

I understood it as a form of relating really, a way of being and doing things
(Carol, PP).

9.5.3: H3: near hope of moments in lived space

The third form of hope that was articulated in interviews and observed on site reflects what Kraftl (2008) terms modest and everyday forms of 'childhood-hope' that stand alongside the more spectacular future-focused forms. Here the gaze shifts from the dominance of conceived and perceived space to the acknowledgement of the importance of moments in lived space. This is to do with alternative understandings of play and an appreciation of children's agency and their ability to appropriate time and space for just being and just playing, in the cracks left behind after adult orderings (Lester and Russell, 2008a, 2010a, 2013a). The paradox, however, is that this form of hope is transitory, interstitial and often marginal and so does not lend itself to representation in the same detail as forms of H1 and H2 hope.

As described in Chapter 4, rather than play's benefits being deferred until adulthood, they might be understood through play's capacity to enliven everyday life as it is in the here and now (and this will affect the future too). Broadly speaking, playing makes for a better childhood because of the affects and emotions it gives rise to, making life better for the time of playing and leaving the player generally with a better sense of well-being for that time (Sutton-Smith, 1999, 2003). This is what gives rise to a near rather than (or, more accurately, alongside and intertwined with) far hope.

Examples of these moments have been given in Chapter 8 and elsewhere; what is offered here to complement and supplement these illustrations is an extract from an interview with a pre-1990 playworker describing how the management committee did not understand the very different ways of relating to children that supported all these forms of hope:

They [the management committee]... I always thought they viewed them [the playworkers] in very negative terms, or that they wanted a very safe, they didn't understand. I mean, the thing, it was just, as I say it was a bit like the wild west, and I had this, like, earth, fire and water, you know. Like some kids wanted to dig, other kids wanted to swing in the air, others wanted fires, others wanted to play with water. I remember this bloke, he pulled up to the gates ... and he went 'do you want a boat?', and we were like 'what, you just – ', 'do you want a boat?', 'yeah', and he went 'alright', and ... he had this powerboat ... it was a shell and a massive great motor on there. And he brought it in the playground. And one set of kids were, like, bashing it all up and enjoying, and the other kids were, like, patching it up and making things. But people couldn't understand how it was quite valid for them to bring in this thing, and then to have a wonderful time wrecking it. And it was just the anarchy of it, it was just the immediacy, the energy. And they [the management committee] couldn't – they said, well, you know, 'can't you get them to, like, make cakes, or do some nice painting?' (Ken, PP).

However, play frames do not always hold. Part of the unpredictability of playwork comes from the knowledge that frames are not failsafe, that there is often what Sutton-Smith (2003) terms 'seepage' and primary emotions cannot always be contained. Moments in lived space, moments of authentic emotion, will also include expressions of anger and violence. This leads on to the final point to be acknowledged.

Playworkers, in their hope for a better world through the power of play, tend to idealise it, presenting it (at least in formal and outward facing articulations) unproblematically as a force for good. Yet play is not inherently morally good and there is much in playing that is cruel, harmful or pathological. Playing is an uncertain and emotional affair, many players are unable to contain primary emotions within the frame (Sutton-Smith, 1999, 2003), lower status players seek to disturb normal conventions of behaviour (Henricks, 2009).

Playgrounds are volatile spaces partly because that is what they are intended to be. Into the mix we can add Ray's (2011) ideas of performative hegemonic masculinity and the

shame/rage spiral of thwarted goals at micro, meso and macro levels (discussed in Chapter 10). Part of the expressions of hope in playworkers' interviews was that they saw their playgrounds as a place of refuge, either from the chaos of home lives or from the dangers of the street. A dialectic lies in the tension between safety and risk, and this is reflected in the emotional roller coaster for playworkers when things fall apart.

Gareth's understanding of what children wanted from playworkers concludes this section. It is couched in the language of all three forms of hope and highlights the importance of relationships:

I think children probably feel that they need to trust playworkers so that they can do things that they want to, that they can rely on a playworker to do, well to be involved, to protect them if need be from bullying, to help them to understand something, to keep games fair, all those sort of things. Also I think they look at a playworker to say, yes it's OK to do that. It's that whole permission, I think a lot of children want that permission from a playworker to say, you know, I'm allowed to sort of like run around and scream at the top of my voice because I might not be allowed to do that elsewhere and stuff like that. They want somebody who sometimes has more skills in certain aspects than them ... something like den making, I want an adult there that can physically pick up bigger things or can actually knock the nails in better than me, right through to they can actually show me or I want an adult there to show them that I can do it. I think that's a major thing for children. They like to be able to show adults, I can do this, and it's part of that whole have I done it right? Or look I can do it right, I'm growing up, I'm more intelligent, I'm cleverer than you thought I was. And big me up for it because I need approval (Gareth, CP).

9.6 Two more emotions

So far, this chapter has focused on the key emotion of hope, but two other emotions also need to be briefly acknowledged in relation to playworker subjectivities: anger and shame. Henderson (2008, p. 29, emphasis in the original) suggests that 'hope' has become almost a root emotion in geography's affective turn, and notes the distance between this and real people's everyday lives:

Hope may nourish contemporary academic theory, but ... people in the throes of precarity are, practically speaking, hungry and *angry*.

She points out how anger at social injustice is a necessary launch pad for activism, pointing to its ethical basis highlighted by both Aristotle and Aquinas. For the playworkers, anger at the (economic, experiential and emotional) poverty of the children's lives was frequently articulated; this form of anger provided the motivation for much of their work, driving the forms of hope described above. The locus of blame, however, tended to be more structurally placed by the pre-1990 playworkers and more locally situated within the family with the contemporary playworkers, an interesting shift. It should be noted that the fieldwork was carried out during the Labour government and before the financial crash and the introduction of austerity measures. Henderson also suggests that anger at injustice could be seen as morally and politically valid as resistance against regimes of feeling that are engineered to render citizens passive in the face of inequality. Perhaps *feeling* anger at injustice is to be commended; its direct expression, however, becomes problematic. Given this, the relationship between anger at injustice and small moments of revolutionary activism through supporting moments of playfulness and caring relationships seem to be an entirely appropriate and ethical approach for playworkers.

If anger against the injustices suffered by the children is seen as an acceptable emotion for playworkers, anger at their own maltreatment at the hands of the children is not. This is seen in the sanctioning of Jem following the evening when a members of staff was assaulted (see 9.4.4 above) and in this extract from Carla's (CP) interview where she talked about starting to work at a particularly violent playground:

C: When I started at [adventure playground], and it was horrendously violent. I can remember for the first month, two months, ... going out and saying to people, 'just don't talk to me, don't talk I feel so knotted so angry just don't talk. Let me have a few drinks and then I can unwind just don't talk to me cos I'll be really antisocial' ...

W: So it was anger?

C: It was. It wasn't anger but it came out as sort of, 'oh don't be stupid', you know, I'd snap at people and it was just because I couldn't show it on the playground at all ... I don't know if it was anger or just frustration at not being able to let that anger out but then I got used to it and it sort of you know reached a balance and I was just going to say 'no I'm all right tonight', cos people would say 'are you OK?' and I'd say, 'yeah I'm fine' ((laughs)). Then I just got to take it in its stride and all that sort of thing and that was the norm but then it got better and better so it was easier and easier and easier.

Kay expressed her feelings here regarding the self-effacing acceptance of playworkers' role as emotional (and occasionally physical) punchbags:

K: it's about being there for the kids, communicating with them, listening to them, you know, but allowing them to use you for what they, to adapt you for their use basically ... Yes but then you do feel, it does dishearten you because it messes your emotions up because then you think, my god what am I here for because I'm just being a kickboard but then you know when you've had a chance to, time out from that and go away from it and go over what's happening you then know, well they need something to kick ... and if you're a strong person you can take it, do you know what I mean?

W: How do you build up that strength? ...

K: Me personally it's by developing your skills and developing your experience and your ideas and concepts and having the knowledge.

Kay talked about building strength to absorb the emotional impact of the children's expressed anger through techniques to distance emotion and foregrounding skills and knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991), however, suggest that learning is not only to do with formal acquisition of explicit skills and knowledge but is situated in everyday practice. Newcomers can learn through being able to practice, but with lesser responsibility, lessened cost of error, close supervision or similar forms of reduced expectation. These relationships are not always free from conflict, but provide powerful ways to learn the tacit knowledge, including emotional performance. This was explicitly recognised by Jem, who was relatively new to the team:

To come into play and see it is child-centred and meet people like Gareth, you know, their whole life revolves around being drawn in to children's lives, I thought I'd like to work with somebody like that and within this team, this is off the sessional list, and work with people in that mindset and a lot of their, Gareth and Kay and Carla and Tanith rubbed off on me and made me a better person and made my interactions with children better (Jem, CP).

Alongside this is a sense of shame when expectations are not met, whether that is self-assessed or in the form of feedback from respected others. This was felt particularly strongly by Jem:

Last time it kicked off and I was inside thinking (one) is there anything you can do better, (two) is there anything you can do to prevent it and (three) does that mean I'm no good at my job (Jem, CP).

Much of the literature differentiates embarrassment and shame, largely as a matter of intensity (Poulson, 2000). At the mild end of the spectrum, acknowledged shame can contribute to induction into a community of practice, since it accepts that there has been a deviation from expected performance. Examples of this have been woven into this chapter and are revisited in Chapter 10 alongside theorising of more extreme and unacknowledged shame and its contribution to violence.

9.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the fluid, heterogeneous and emotional subjectivities of playworkers within the overall collective activity system. The emotionally charged nature of playwork spaces affects and is affected by the playworkers' emotional states and performances. Playworkers are expected to display particular emotions of caring, patience, enthusiasm and playfulness, and these might be considered the 'feeling rules' (Hochschild, 1983) of the role. Bringing a geographical gaze to the play space identifies hope as a key emotion, and this has been theorised in three interconnected ways: the far hope of policy projects that invest in children as future citizens and also for their own development, far and near forms of revolutionary hope that things can be different, that was articulated by the pre-1990 playworkers as structural political change, but by the contemporary playworkers as making individual children's lives better in the present. For both, these forms of hope can be enacted in caring relationships and in everyday moments of playfulness in lived space.

Chapter 10: Kicking off: playwork, violence and the politics of space

10.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 made the case for the small moments of playfulness as fundamental to the co-production of a space that supports children's play, and therefore something that playworkers should appreciate and notice. This chapter turns to a very different, but interrelated, aspect of playwork that grabs attention at the time, but is equally absent from the literature or public discussions. Violence emerged as a central theme from every element of my fieldwork: observation, post-session debriefs and interviews with both contemporary and pre-1990 playworkers, and yet it is all but invisible in the literature. This chapter explores this dialectic, considering dominant constructions of youth violence within professional work with children and young people, bringing a historical and spatial analysis and contextualising it in broader understandings of structural, symbolic and interpersonal violence. In doing so it moves away from seeing violence as residing exclusively within the undisciplined minds and bodies of children themselves – the justification for many interventions aiming to reduce such violence – and places it, dialectically, within co-produced, neo-liberal, hetero-normative spaces, allowing for an alternative framing of violence. The chapter closes with an analysis of the playworkers' responses to violence, both in terms of attempts to prevent it, and their reactions when it does erupt, looking in particular at emotions of shame when the service ideal of playwork cannot be realised.

I was not expecting violence to emerge as a theme when I began my fieldwork; indeed I was aiming to focus on playwork's everydayness rather than attention-grabbing incidents. Yet it soon became apparent that at this stage in the life of the Play Centre, violence or the threat of violence was an element of everyday playwork and was certainly something that took the attention and time of the playworkers, from their ways of relating to the children, to their constant state of alertness and efforts to prevent 'kicking off', to the monitoring processes at the end of each session. About a third of the way through my fieldwork, one night was particularly chaotic and ended with a member of staff being assaulted; this evening coloured strongly my remaining time at the Play Centre, and was an unprompted topic of conversation during the interviews. Following this, violence became so significant that it had to be included in the overall argument and warranted a chapter of its own.

My own past playwork experience and that of all the people I interviewed, was that violence was a major element of everyday playwork practice, requiring mindful negotiation of spaces that could tip at any moment. Playworkers develop a range of strategies for pre-empting the eruption of violence both between peers and against staff. Here is one example from Carla, a contemporary playworker, talking about when she first started work at a different adventure playground:

When I started at [adventure playground], it was horrendously violent ... but because I'd already worked with children [I'd use] different ways of, you know, bringing them down from spinning stuff across the room. You know if I saw somebody with a chair I'd say 'thank you, great,' ((pretends to take the chair and sit on it)) 'just what I needed,' and then they'd laugh and it sort of, ooh, it defused it a bit (Carla, CP).

And one from Tanith, who was trying to explain when a session began to tip:

T: There's a different feel to a session, it becomes, it's not play any more. That constant sniping and bickering that all children do, all adults do really, that it's turned, it's no longer play, it's starting to get personal, it's starting to get nasty and you can feel it. You can feel it when it starts to go and you're losing the session, you're losing it. And I don't know how you tell, you just do, you can just feel it. Even before it gets to out and out rampaging round the centre, you can feel it.

W: ... What do you think you can do in that situation?

T: You can try and distract, sometimes you start a (big) game – Monster Monster or Tag or I think realistically if things are getting really really hyper, I'd actually be tempted to do a massive game of British Bulldog or something like that, something that's quite aggressive in a way that is actually play because anything less than that is not going to distract, but it is quite hard sometimes. And it's worse because it tends to be that they've fragmented off into little packs of anger, aggression and it's trying to bring it all back together, because you've got workers all over, and then this is like on Tuesday as well, you've got workers dealing with little spots and all the workers are taken up by dealing with stuff. So there's nobody actually looking at the centre as a whole. And that can be quite hard.

Tanith's ideas about the feeling of the place and of distraction techniques are picked up later in this chapter.

Violence was also a theme that arose, again unprompted, in interviews with pre-1990 playworkers:

And sometimes occasionally you came unstuck, but hopefully you got out of it without being beaten, or threatened, or have a knife drawn on you, which some playworkers didn't get away with ... I had a knife pulled out on the playground by an eighteen, nineteen year old, and talked him out of it, fortunately. But, you know, some playworkers didn't get away with it, for whatever reason (Callum, PP).

There were also stories of community violence spilling into the playground, often because children used it as a refuge:

I was working there one night, and some kid came in, a Black kid, and the woman playworker said to him, 'You better go, you'd better go straight away, you're not to come in here', and I'm like, 'What's going on?' Within a very short time of this kid leaving, three adult men, white men, turned up with clubs or whatever, and with a boy, and they covered the doors, and he was saying to this kid, 'Was it him? Was it him?' And the woman playworker said, 'You can't come in here, you can't do this,' and he just ignored her. And it turned out subsequently that a white child had been mugged by one of these Black kids, and he wanted his rings, and he threatened to cut his fingers. Anyway, some kind of violence had been involved, and so this kid was like – this was the posse out looking for him. And whenever he showed up at the playground, word would get back to this family very quickly, and they would turn up. And I just thought, 'What do I do in this situation? What do I do if this is the kid they want and they start laying in to him? What on earth do I do?' You know, do I run out the door, do I get a policeman, do I say 'excuse me, I think this is inappropriate?' (Ken, PP).

In addition, conversations at two seminars I facilitated with playworkers revealed that violence was a part of their everyday playwork experience, but was rarely raised in discussions. Given this, it might be pertinent to ask why there is such a silence in the playwork literature. The following section looks briefly at the acknowledgement of disaffection and delinquency in the early literature, then at two adjacent topics that are present in the contemporary literature – behaviour and aggression – and then considers two reasons for its invisibility that are explored throughout this chapter.

10.2 The conspicuous absence of violence as a topic in public playwork discourse

Contemporary playwork literature, and particularly official articulations of the playworker's functions in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) (SkillsActive, 2010a), has very little to say about violence. In one sense, this is fitting, since, as Hughes (2012, p. 156) points out:

Most children, most of the time, are playful, stable, optimistic and friendly individuals, and because of this predictable norm, playworkers are able to develop particular operational criteria for their work with children. However, not all the children playworkers meet are like this. Some are very angry and highly aggressive.

Early pioneers of the adventure playground movement were very clear about the kinds of children and young people the playgrounds were designed to attract and occupy:

In the case of the teenager, Playleadership is essentially designed for the 'unattached', or as some prefer to say, the uncommitted or unaffiliated; namely those who for one reason or another have not – say as teenagers or young adults – been able to come to grips with their problems, nor have they been able to evolve a satisfactory means of fitting themselves into their community and environment (Abernethy, 1968b, p. 20).

Turner (1961), in his account of his time as a 'warden' at a south London adventure playground, paints a picture of building relationships with the 'big toughs' that both engaged them and prevented them from stopping other children using the space. Kozlovsky (2008) explicitly positions Lady Allen of Hurtwood's promotion of adventure playgrounds as a part of the pacifist moral reconstruction of children and young people in the post-war period; indeed the first two 'junk' playgrounds, in Camberwell in 1948 and Clydesdale in 1949 (finally opening in 1952), were supported by the International Voluntary Service for Peace. There was a moral panic regarding the rise in juvenile delinquency in a generation of children 'schooled in war and destruction' (Kozlovsky, 2008, p. 176). Allen understood the basis for delinquency to be in the after effects of a violent war and also in the impoverished environments that adults created for the children, both in institutional settings and also in sterile fixed playgrounds where the equipment determined the limited forms of play for children:

[D]elinquency is generally a form of rebellion against thoughtless, unimaginative treatment. All children need manifold opportunity to express their inventive energies ... Without them, armies of delinquencies are likely to go on marching into the juvenile courts (Allen and Nicholson, 1975, p. 196).

Junk playgrounds, where children could build their own societies, both physically and metaphorically, were a revolutionary idea aimed at fostering democracy through anarchy and valued by the authorities because they kept the most disaffected occupied (Kozlovsky, 2006; 2008). These words from Hughes' early writing (1975, p. 2-3) illustrate an understanding of the work that is no longer articulated in contemporary literature (even his own):

Most playwork is done in areas of chronic emotional, cultural and often financial deprivation ... we see all around is poverty, violence, isolation and injustice ... Random violence, the violence of one individual against another, though often more immediate and horrific, is less significant socially than structural violence, the violence of one class against another.

It is this geo-political understanding of violence that forms the focus of this chapter. Although violence as a topic is completely absent from the indexes of the best known playwork authors (for example Brown and Patte, 2013; Hughes, 2012, Kilvington and Wood, 2010; Else, 2009; Brown, 2008, 2003a), many do have entries for 'behaviour', generally understood as 'challenging' or 'unwanted'. The Ofsted requirements for registration on the Childcare Register explicitly state that 'the registered person must ensure that children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner' (Ofsted, 2013, p. 4). The NOS make no explicit reference to managing behaviour, although it is implied in the knowledge requirements, for example, Level 3 PW8 unit (Develop and promote positive relationships):

K23 Why it is important to be consistent and fair in dealing with positive and negative behaviour and strategies that you can use to challenge and deal with it, consistent with your organisation's policy

K24 Strategies you can use to encourage and reinforce positive behaviour

K26 Why it is important to encourage and support positive relationships between children and adults in the setting (SkillsActive, 2010a)

Similarly, PW9 (Plan and support self-directed play) makes reference to 'behavioural hazards':

Some behaviours during play are potentially hazardous eg. egging on, showing off, excluding, hyperactivity, dominating, etc. and playworkers need to be aware of these in case their support is needed (SkillsActive, 2010a).

And emotional hazards:

Children will bring their moods and feelings from their day with them to a play setting and this often affects the way they behave and interact with others. They will also experience all kinds of feelings when playing – sometimes by choice and sometimes unexpectedly. Some feelings, eg. fear, anger, excitement, boredom, could be potentially hazardous and Playworkers need to be aware of such feelings in case their support is needed (SkillsActive, 2010a).

These statements refer only to playing and not to those moments when play falls apart and children become upset or violent in non-playful ways. There is a conflation of play and non-play behaviours in the NOS (and elsewhere in much playwork literature); certainly discussions of interventions include the principles of low intervention in incidents that are unlikely to be playful, although boundaries are always fuzzy. The underlying discourse here is the reproduction of the espoused understanding of play as inherently good, defined as ‘freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated’ (PPSG, 2005), together with the associated belief that adults should intervene as little as possible in children’s play, allowing children to resolve conflict for themselves. Here, the sector sets itself apart from other dominant voices within the children’s workforce that make clear statements regarding the role of the adult professional as one who should manage behaviour, and technical approaches to behaviour management abound in texts on early years care and education (for example, Miller, 2010; Rogers, 2009; Herbert and Wookey, 2004; Riddall-Leach, 2003).

Alongside this, there are a few references in playwork texts to ‘aggression’. Hughes (1996a, 2012) links this to his theories of play deprivation to posit a ‘Stimulation Theory’. He suggests that children require a balance of positive and negative environmental stimulation to develop healthily, yet increasingly children experience bias in these environmental stimuli that can be over-positive, over-negative, erratic or lacking in stimulation generally, leading to violent or other forms of unhealthy behaviour. Hughes’ solution is to try to counter the bias within the play environment, supporting his thesis of playwork as compensation for play bias and play deprivation.

Why might violence be such an omission in playwork literature and public discourse? One reason may indeed come down to geography: open access settings tend to be funded in deprived areas, and it is in these settings, rather than after-school-clubs in more affluent areas, where violence is an integral element of the work, although broad generalisations conceal local diversity. It is this aspect of geography – the politics of space – that this chapter explores. Additionally, the evidence from interviews suggests that the silence may also have something to do with protection of a romantic construction of play together with an internalisation of (gendered) feelings of shame if violence does erupt, perhaps giving rise to a reticence to talk about it.

10.3 Play, playwork and the dialectics of violence

Violence is ubiquitous: everyday lives are regulated by precautions people take against becoming victims of violence, and violent images in both news and entertainment media are commonplace. At the same time, violence is also understood as exceptional (Tyner, 2012; Ray, 2011; Jackson and Gray, 2010). It is generally viewed as morally wrong, but can be sanctioned by the powerful through a normalising language of justification (for example, a just war, social control, the justice system). Violence features in many films, plays and novels, and has done since stories began (ancient mythology and the Bible are just two examples), implying that violence has some attraction. Its attractions, which vary considerably depending on the viewers, social relations and context, include sensation-seeking and ideas of justice (Goldstein, 1999). All this shows a range of ambivalent assumptions about attitudes towards violence.

This ambivalence becomes magnified when applied to children and young people, and further compounded when extended to forms of play that resemble or represent violence such as rough and tumble, war and superhero play. There is much debate within the broader children's workforce about whether such forms of playing are to be discouraged, tolerated or encouraged (see, for example, Mechling, 2008; Smith, 2005; Holland, 2003). Pellegrini (2002, p. 223) suggests that perhaps one of the reasons for adults' low tolerance of play fighting is that 'until rather recently, developmental psychologists have confused and conflated play fighting with aggression'. Yet they are separate phenomena, with play fighting, particularly in middle childhood, being about social bonding and social competence, although dominance comes into play increasingly with age (Fry, 2005). Play fighting allows for displaying a parody of the primary emotion of anger, mediated by the

secondary emotional controls that players bring to this play behaviour (Sutton-Smith, 2003), such as signs of mirth, play faces, pulling punches and self-handicapping (Smith, Smees and Pellegrini, 2004; Smith *et al.*, 2002). In this way playing with strong emotions contributes to play's role in developing adaptive systems to support resilience, particularly emotion regulation, stress response systems, capacity to cope with the unexpected and peer attachment (Lester and Russell, 2008a).

The worry for adults is that play fighting may turn into real fighting. Although observational research found this happened in only 1% of cases, instances increased to 25% for children with poor social skills, poor emotion regulation and less ability to recognise playful metacommunication (Smith *et al.*, 2002). The children at the Play Centre who were targeted for the Children's Fund projects all belonged in this latter category, having been identified as 'at risk', with hyperkinetic disorders or behavioural problems.

Play provides children with a way of adapting to their social and cultural as well as physical environments. Given this, such displays of aggression may be understood as adaptive (Lester and Russell, 2008a). If children's lives are affected by toxic forms of stress, that is, chronic environmental stressors over which they have little or no control (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005), such as the chaotic and sometimes violent home lives of some of the children, their capacity for playing is affected, perhaps resulting in stereotypical forms as an adaptive coping mechanism. Burghardt's (2005) work on animal play suggests that trying to change such adaptive stereotypes without changing the toxic stressors may be counterproductive, even harmful.

A key argument here is that because of play's very nature, play settings (especially ones such as this Play Centre) will be volatile places because, in a sense, that is what they are designed to be. Sutton-Smith's (2003) theory of play as a parody of emotional vulnerability sees play as a way of experiencing the vitality of primary emotions within the safety of a frame that says 'this is play' and therefore does not carry consequences of such behaviour in reality. The frame is held in place through using the secondary emotions to co-produce rules, rituals and metacommunications that hold the frame. It was this that the children found difficult, and frames constantly fell apart. One approach to play fighting is to stop it as soon as it starts, but at the Play Centre, there was an acceptance of its value.

I like the fact that we can do this physical play now. That sort of raw, full contact wrestling kind of thing. Because for a long time it was a definite no, it was really, it was such a difficult area to do... And as a female worker I didn't feel

comfortable around that simply because there were such huge issues there ... I'm glad now that it's become an accepted part of playwork cos it should always have been ... I think because of Ofsted ... we were so bound by those early years regulations that actually it crippled us quite a lot with a lot of the stuff we wanted to do (Tanith, CP).

The strategy of playworkers in this study was not to ban such forms of playing but to provide very tightly controlled frames:

Jack is on. He is allowed on only for an hour, so today his time ends at 5pm. This measure has been introduced because he 'loses it' after a while. Jem told me that when he first started coming he used to react all the time, getting other children in headlocks and kicking out. He is greatly improved (what might that mean?) – he can now play for some time before he goes back there. Yesterday his time was extended by 10 minutes because he was able to play with others. I'm standing on the balustrade next to Jem and Jack starts to wrestle with Kane. Jem tells Jack to stop, but Kane insists he wants to and they're playing. Jem says 'OK but I'm watching you' and he stands there watching for 5-10 minutes. Jem talks to me about it, saying it's great that he can wrestle now with other children, but it might not last. It does last a few minutes and then Kane got hurt, got cross and stomped off. Jack tried to follow, Jem said, 'It's over Jack, leave it now. You've done really well, but you hurt him and it's finished now.' Jack said that he didn't mean to hurt, Jem says, 'You did really well, and what you need now is a big tickle!' and the chase begins (fiednotes, 9/11/06).

Often, this is done in an understated way:

And there was one afternoon where he was wrestling outside, you know, we had the mats outside and he was wrestling with some boys, and we was keeping an eye on it ... we was keeping an eye on it, and I'll say to Jem, 'they're all right, but we need to keep reminding Jay it's only a game' – 'Jay, remember it's a game,' you know, just walk past and just say that to him, but not intervene with the game. And it kept it ... it was like he was the strongest and they had to sort of like get him, they had to overpower him, but they couldn't, and he became quite, he thought it was brilliant because it was like he was the master of all the moves. But it could be that intervening by saying, reminding him, 'Jay, remember it's a game,' and then going off, I think that worked with him (Kay, CP).

Some, but not all, of the playworkers engaged in rough and tumble play with the children, and this contributed to the co-production of a space where physical contact was part-and-parcel of social relations. In her interview, Tanith described her response to a particular family of children using the language of 'cues' and 'play needs':

All her children are very physical. They give very physical play cues, they expect physical play. They like to be picked up and swung round and tickled and chased ... And when you've got a child whose play cue is to come up you know and shove you over or punch you, you know, they expect a physical response to that.

She went on to reflect on this particular incident:

He'd already kneed a child in the stomach, really hurt him ... and then he really went off on one and he was running round and I was like, 'come on calm down. We can go and play doobby or whatever'. Distraction didn't work, it wasn't happening. So then it was like do I not chase him and leave him or do I chase him and get him and then see where I can go from there. And he'd been told already he'd got to leave the setting so in the end I grabbed hold of him, I'd got ... one arm over his shoulder, one arm round his waist and we were doing this towards the gate, to get him off. And he was laughing. For him, this was what he wanted, he thought it was fun, it was great.

This shows how using physical play as a response to non-play aggression when a child is 'kicking off' or has 'lost it' (terms frequently used by playworkers) can sometimes defuse the situation. In this particular case the situation was enflamed again by the appearance of the child's mother who assumed Tanith was 'manhandling' her son and unleashed a furious torrent of abusive language at her. This then became an incident that required further meetings with the playwork staff, who were aware that the child was likely to be smacked once home, and that also put constraints on Tanith's future responses to the child:

It's put me in a really difficult position now because it's made me more aware that that's what those children need. They need that physical play in their lives. They need somebody who is non-threatening, who they trust not to hurt them, to have physical contact with in that kind of setting. And who is going to have boundaries, their own boundaries, and who isn't going to stand up and yell and scream and whatever happens is going to stay calm. ...but if mum comes on site she's going to misconstrue that style. She's going to see it as I'm hurting her children. But they don't see it that way... But you know, that's sometimes how it

is ... I know that if they come on site, their play cues are going to stay the same, their needs are going to be the same, and do I, can I turn round and say, 'I'm sorry, I'm not allowed'?

What these extracts show is the complex messiness of small moments and particular children, the fuzziness of boundaries between what is and is not playing, the difficulties and sensitivities of articulating this particular approach to working with children and families, and the many ways in which situations can escalate or die away as a result of a whole assemblage of elements.

There is playing with emotions within the safety of a play frame, however tightly held by supportive playworkers, and there is real, physical violence. They are not necessarily the same thing. The next section explores the various ways in which violence has been theorised and how these approaches might inform a spatial analysis of playwork in areas of social and economic deprivation.

10.4 Theorising violence: definitions and typologies

As with many of the big concepts, there is disagreement over how to define violence, because 'as a phenomenon it is multifaceted, socially constructed and highly ambivalent' (de Haan, 2008, p. 28). The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines it as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (Krug *et al.*, 2002, p. 4).

This definition is followed by a typology of violence under three key categories of self-inflicted, interpersonal and collective. Although the authors present an ecological model for understanding violence, situating the individual within nested spheres of relationships, community and society, it is seen as a physical, intentional and direct act. This does not acknowledge the socially constructed nature of violence that means different forms are sanctioned or proscribed across time and place. Nor does it recognise broader forms of institutional, structural and symbolic violence inflicted by social or institutional practices that dominate, exclude or discriminate (Henry, 2000). All forms of violence are linked to power (Ray, 2011); given this, it is salient to consider forms of power that may themselves be understood as violence.

Despite an overall fall in crime, both through crime report statistics (National Crime Recording Standard) and the British Crime Survey, both accepted as inexact measurements, these headline figures mask increased concentration of violence in specific areas of deprivation (Jones, Sivarajasingam and Shepherd, 2011). Violence is unevenly spatially distributed, leading to much speculation regarding the relationship between culture, social processes and violence (Ray, 2011; Springer, 2011). Springer advocates looking beyond the mere situatedness of particular embodied and violent acts towards its relational geography; in other words, attention must be paid to violence as a process situated in space as a relational assemblage:

[T]he structural violence resulting from our political and economic systems ..., and the symbolic violence born of our discourses ..., are something like the dark matter of physics ... These seemingly invisible geographies of violence – including the hidden fist of the market itself – have both ‘nonillusory effects’ ... and pathogenic affects in afflicting human bodies that create suffering ... which can be seen if one cares to look critically enough (Springer 2011, p. 92).

For a spatial analysis of structural violence, we can return to the work of Lefebvre:

every state is born of violence [through war and territorial disputes] ... violence enthroned a specific rationality, that of accumulation, that of bureaucracy and the army ... it cannot be separated either from the accumulation of capital or from the rational and political principle of *unification*, which subordinates, and totalizes the various aspects of social practice – legislation, culture, knowledge, education (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 280).

The current neoliberal capitalist mode of production emerged from twentieth century processes of industrialisation and the concomitant urbanisation. During this period, urban spaces were designed (by architects and planners operating in abstract, conceived space) to facilitate the processes of production, distribution, exchange and consumption; spatial practices rendered these spaces concrete. Lefebvre (1991) terms this the ‘concrete abstraction’ of space, ‘a material inscription of abstract relations on the social world and on the practices of living bodies’ (Butler, 2012, p. 6); it is this that Lefebvre sees as a form of state structural violence. The repetitive rhythms of the city rationalised and organised time (rush hour, working hours, clocking in, the weekend, etc.), and the state imposed programmes and practices that homogenised spaces that were at the same time fragmented through the specialisations of institutions like factories, schools, financial

centres, shops. The familiar daily routines of work, family life, leisure, civic life and cultural activities become taken-for-granted and make alternatives unimaginable, despite feelings of alienation. There is an element of security in the known and fear of other unknowns (Kipfer, 2008).

These conceived and perceived spaces are also exclusionary: the designation of spaces for particular uses often renders other uses and people 'out of place'. One example is how children and young people are increasingly 'out of place' in the public realm through the increase in motor traffic, the discourse of fear, and the increase in institutions of childhood, including play facilities (Beunderman, Hannon and Bradwell, 2007; Gill, 2007). Similar processes of marginalisation of other groups are produced both through the design of space and associated spatial practices, including laws that proscribe certain behaviours in public space and protect private property; employment patterns; and the production of spatial concepts such as the 'home' (Butler, 2012; Tyner, 2012). Marginalisation also occurs through the spatial practices of space itself as a commodity (Harvey, 2012), together with the increasing marketisation of services such as education and health (Banks, 2004).

Following the decline of manufacturing and the growth of globalisation and the service sector, with attendant changes in employment patterns, urban industrial quarters have been regenerated or gentrified, with common land increasingly moving to private ownership, a process that Harvey (2008) terms 'accumulation by dispossession'. This process can be seen in the Welfare Reform Act 2012, particularly the housing benefit cap and 'bedroom tax' that is likely to see a rise in repossessions, enforced rehousing in lower rent areas (frequently moving families and preventing developments of social and place attachments) and homelessness (Murie, 2012).

These state actions can be understood as a form of structural violence upon subaltern groups. Less obvious are the spatial practices that accompany them. There are expected ways in which various people should behave in specific places; in this sense spaces are disciplined and the relational elements of space are relations of power 'coded by dominant embodied conceptions of "race", sex, gender, and so on' (Tyner, 2012, p. 20). Symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) occurs through the everyday acts of domination enacted in order to maintain cultural capital and status. Many of these may seem innocuous, and so much a part of everyday life as to seem 'normal'; because of this, they are enacted with the complicity of those dominated. For Bourdieu, the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence is gender domination, but such power is exercised across a range of

stratifications. At the Play Centre (as elsewhere), these stratifications were not neatly delineated; rather they played out in complex ways across age, ethnicity, class and gender lines between children and children, children and playworkers, and playworkers and playworkers (and also with other significant actors).

It might be suggested that one form of symbolic violence playing out in the lives of children attending the Play Centre emanates from the risk and prevention policy discourse.

Constructions of risk are culturally determined and reproduced by people whose lives are immeasurably different from those deemed 'at risk'. Ungar (2004, p. 356) notes that researchers

arrive at predetermined conclusions because they assume that one set of behaviors is maladaptive and another, more conventional set is adaptive, thereby missing the important generic functioning of protective mechanisms when resources such as power are limited.

He asks whether the kinds of behaviour that are labelled as deviant or risky may in fact be adaptive *to the contexts in which particular children find themselves*. Ideas of risk, together with the related concept of resilience, featured strongly in the way playworkers talked about the children, as the next section shows.

10.5 Theorising violence: causes and responses

Contested understandings of violence so far described become even more apparent in the literature on the origins and causes of violence and on policy and practice responses. Much of the literature on aggression and violence in children and young people emanates from psychology, placing the 'problem' firmly with the individual committing the violence, perhaps acknowledging broader influences such as dysfunctional families or communities. This is reflected in social policies such as the Children's Fund (Barnes and Morris, 2007; Evans and Pinnock, 2007). A search of electronic databases aggregating keywords 'aggression', 'violence', 'children' and 'urban' yielded myriad multivariate quantitative social psychology research reports. A further search specifying geographical research on violence revealed much on structural violence but little on children and young people's interpersonal violence from a spatial perspective. As Tyner (2012, p. 12) says, 'geographers have been somewhat silent on the centrality of interpersonal violence to everyday life'; this silence applies even more to research on children and young people (Kumsa *et al.*, 2013).

There is a fundamental dialectic in theorising violence in terms of whether it is an element of essential human nature or whether it arises from environmental and social conditions (Ray, 2011). Often traced back to philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, the argument is whether human nature is 'naturally' violent and therefore has to be curbed by submission to a greater political order, or whether human nature is essentially cooperative and is corrupted by the inequalities and scarcities brought about by political and economic systems. The evidence from evolutionary theory, archaeology and studies of ancient social systems is contested. Evidence of violence in previous societies cannot be taken in isolation from its cultural meanings, as attitudes towards violence have changed across time and space, with different forms of violence being sanctioned or proscribed in different contexts. Ray (2011, p. 42) concludes:

Like all other human behaviour, violence takes place within systems of power and meaning in which the body is symbolically represented. To see all violence as the product of neural capacity inherited through evolutionary development ignores the social and cultural meanings and significance of violence that expresses complex forms of social organisation, power and communication.

As well as being unevenly distributed spatially, there is also a gender dimension to violence. Overwhelmingly (but not exclusively) perpetrators of violence are both male and young. Theories of masculinity and violence also disagree across disciplines, particularly the evolutionary (sociobiological) and sociological disciplines. As Ray (2011) shows, evolutionary theories generally assert that aggression is an inherently masculine trait developed to support hunting and competition for mates, but this does not explain its uneven occurrence across other stratifications of class, ethnicity and age. Social theories cluster around either social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), or ideas of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Social learning theory again is not sufficient in explaining why not all children who live with violence end up violent. Having considered these contested approaches to theorising violence, Ray (2011, p. 5) proffers a theory of violence that acknowledges spatial inequalities and systems of power:

Violence is induced by shame, humiliation and cultures of masculine honour; the conditions for this are closely linked to socioeconomic inequalities in combination with a cultural ethos of informality and equalization; violence is spatially distributed in ways that coincide with the spatial structuring of global capital.

Rather than seeing masculinity as something that is learned or acquired, theories of hegemonic masculinity see it as performed against a heteronormative (but not statistically normal) stereotype of masculinity. Ray suggests that if attempts to perform against this norm are thwarted, through lack of economic, social or cultural capital, lack of employment, lack of access to resources or consumer goods and so on, then violence may ensue as a matter of anger induced by shame and justified through normalising language.

Yet the agency-structure dichotomy remains, particularly in political responses to (non-state) violence that manifest in debates over whether responsibility for violence lies with a deviant individual or with structural inequality and disadvantage. This can be seen in two reports on the UK urban riots of the summer of 2011. The Government-commissioned report (The Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012) sought to establish how deviants can be normalised through punishment, education or incentives. Even the section on brands and consumerism says that businesses should work with children to teach them resilience to their own advertising. In contrast, Lewis *et al.* (2011) looked at court proceedings, use of social media and interviewed 270 people who were involved in the riots. They looked at motivation for rioting, stating that the most frequent reason given was widespread anger and frustration with the way police treated them on an everyday basis.

Junger *et al.*'s (2007) meta-analysis of approaches to violence in seven countries including the UK notes a general trend towards harsher punitive responses to crime, suggesting that this is a politically expedient response to perceived media and general public demands to 'take a tough stance'. They recommend a more experimental and scientific approach to building evidence-based policies in violence prevention, citing evidence of generally high rates of recidivism in those given prison sentences. The article recommends the following forms of intervention for further study:

promote the physical health of mother and child, introduce home visiting through the nurse-family partnership, increase the use of childcare, introduce quality preschool programs (such as the High/Scope Perry curriculum), and improve parenting skills (e.g., parent-child interaction therapy) (Junger *et al.*, 2007, p. 330).

All these interventions are framed within the risk and prevention model that underpinned much of New Labour's policies on children and families (Turnbull and Spence, 2011; Lester and Russell, 2008a). This model continues in the current Government's early intervention programmes and projects with 'troubled families' (Communities and Local Government,

2012; Allen, 2011a, 2011b) and its strategy for ending gang and youth violence (HM Government, 2011). Turnbull and Spence (2011, p. 940) describe how the risk discourse has gathered momentum and come to be a tool in its own right in work with young people seen both as 'at risk' and 'as risk':

The concept of 'risk', with its potential use as a tool to ascribe particular cultural groups and individuals as different or to blame for social problems, combines with that of 'youth' and adolescence in multiple and complex ways to provide an environment in which young people are, at times simultaneously, at-risk and risky, perpetrators and victims, vulnerable to their own choices, biological development, psychological drivers and social circumstances.

The risk and prevention discourse was at the heart of the Children's Fund projects at the Play Centre, and the City Council's *Children's Fund Strategic Plan* (2005, p. 20) makes this explicit:

This project targets the play centres in the five areas with the highest rates of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. It enables staff to offer positive activities to children whose behaviour would otherwise lead to their exclusion and therefore a greater likelihood of their involvement in anti-social behaviour and their negative impact on their communities.

The playworkers both reproduced and resisted this discourse. Parkes and Conolly (2011, p. 411-412) show how these 'dominant discursive formulations' have become intensified in both the media and policy and 'seep into the perspectives of professionals and young people ... [and] are reiterated, reworked and resisted [in ways that] are complex and insufficiently understood' (Parkes and Conolly, 2011, p. 411-412). They chart the tensions and confluences of Apollonian and Dionysian child constructs, of the child both at risk and as risk, alongside narratives that place origin and responsibility of social exclusion either in the individuals and their families or in broader structural inequalities, noting the rise of the 'moral underclass' discourse identified by Levitas (2005). Professionals draw on the discourse of risk and the future focus of pathways into crime as a way of making sense of some of the contradictions faced in their work.

The following extended extracts show the range of emotions and discourses employed by the playworkers when discussing particular children (in the first case the 13-year-old boy had been beaten by his father for intervening when his father had hit his mother, and in the second a boy that this playworker had found hard to work with):

Gareth: I just approached him I says, what's up Jay, been crying, he goes, yeah I got into a fight and ... I said who was it mate. He went, it's my dad. I went, d'you want to come and talk. Jay's pretty good at talking about this sort of stuff, he knows he can trust us. So I told him, I said, look, I'm going to have to ring Social Services. They already know, he says. Well, do you mind if I ring anyway? And he goes, yeah, we've got the police interview tomorrow. And the police interviewed him at the hospital the next day ...

Jem: Shit, it is. Shit.

Gareth: The lad doesn't stand much chance. He really doesn't stand much chance. He's excluded from all schools at the moment. Youth Inclusion Project can't officially work with him because he's not in their area ... He's on the YOT's Offending Team rather than the pre-offending, he's on the full thing now, but they're not doing much work with him cos they're right at the top of their limit, they can't do much more work (fieldnotes, 25/10/06).

Jem: And I've been doing it with [this lad] on the other level by getting him involved in games of dobby run-off, dobby join-on you know ... even if it's 20 minutes, he's engaging in positive play and that's how we change it very, very slowly. And then in the meantime it's deal with the other issues that come up with it ... I always engage with him ... I'll go, are you going to school? Nah, nah I've not been going since, right then, what are you going to do when you leave school? I'm gonna rob people. I said yeah but if you're going to rob people you're going to end up in prison aren't you. So? Yeah but prison isn't a nice place ... I've engaged, I've not lectured ... So I do it within play, but it's hard. I'm just starting to learn about the dynamics towards children like that within play and it is getting them into play frames and working on it. ... [His father's in] prison... So when you start to understand where he's coming from, what's happening, ... I'll refer him on to the youth action and after that's gone through I'm contacting school ... we are [part of] children's services, that put all these things together hopefully ... and get this kid back on track but not at the detriment of my psychological, physical well-being and the person he's hitting. There is going to be cockups isn't there, people are going to get hit and I'm going to get upset ((laughs)) until that's won round. And just as you might be getting somewhere, she [the mother] might get moved on again [because of

complaints of noise and antisocial behaviour from neighbours] ... You've got to understand where he's coming from haven't you? (interview).

Parkes and Conolly (2011) analyse the multiple and shifting discourse employed by professionals working with young people, who draw on different signifiers of 'risk', 'youth', and other constructs to present, resist or adapt ways of understanding their lives and behaviours. This can be seen in these extracts. The playworkers expressed anger at the violent family lives and see this as a pathway to 'poor outcomes', expressing no hope for the children's futures. Within this, the children were represented as vulnerable victims. At the same time they tried to work on the children to change the violent behaviours they saw as embodied in them. In their talk, some elements were 'over-determined', emphasised at the expense of other ways of understanding the children and the situation, to build chains of meaning that sometimes became fixed or habitual, so that the linear pathway to a life of crime and violence seemed inevitable. As Parkes and Conolly found in their interviews, so too in these playworkers' conversations there was both a liberal professional rhetoric of anger at structural violence (for example, lack of professional support through the YOT or education system, or families constantly being moved on by housing associations) and censure for the feckless ways of other family members. These discursive connections serve to help professionals navigate the contradictions of structural and social problems that they are a part of, since they work within a professional structure that also creates some of the problems (Parkes and Conolly, 2011). In interview, Kay (CP) spoke about how other agencies call on them to support their work, but this can cut across their own strategies:

K: He attacked Donny, so obviously we had to report it ... to his YOTs worker now. And there was a decision made with his mum that when she can accompany him, he can come on site and he can spend the whole session. But she ..., or a responsible adult that she sends, has got to be with him ... We had a phone call from the YOTs worker on Wednesday night asking if, mum's going to a funeral Monday next week and she wants to know if we would have Carlton from half past three until 7 o'clock ... I thought if we had him on it would give him the wrong message, cos we've just, already, got him to that stage where he's not allowed to come on unless he's with a responsible adult that his mum's chosen or herself. And ... then all of a sudden changing our mind and saying, yes you can come on without an adult, is giving him the wrong message isn't it?

This example also shows how the discourse is further complicated by the playworkers' networks and connections with families; on several occasions, playworkers from other

projects who knew, or were related to, the families were called upon to mediate.

Playworkers understood the domestic situation and worked to support that, as this extract from my audio fieldnotes shows:

Kay was holding him from behind and he was kicking out ... Kay was really keen to keep Caleb on site until he had calmed down because she didn't want to send him home in that state, because his mum had just come out of hospital and was still really ill, I think she had pneumonia and had been seriously ill and they weren't quite sure what was going to happen with her. And so she saw it as her role to kind of help, not send him home in that state (audio fieldnotes, 2/11/06).

These excerpts reveal how the playworkers positioned themselves in ways that could be construed as contradictory, not only in relation to dialectical discourses of childhood, risk and violence, where dominant discourses of prevention and dysfunctional families and communities rub up against sentiments about injustice and inequality, but also in terms of their own professional roles as both caring and 'on the side' of the children and yet as part of the system that perpetuates the inequalities. This is yet further complicated by the distance playworkers placed between themselves and others in the children's workforce in terms of the prominence they gave to democratic principles expressed through personally directed playing. Jem's excerpt above shows how he used play with the child he was discussing to build relationships and a rapport that meant he could have conversations with him aimed at steering him away from violence and crime. Kumsa *et al.* (2013) suggest that the discourse of healing that is prevalent within the social professions (their example is youthwork) needs to be understood as a relational process inextricably mixed with relational processes of violence. The playworkers enacted power relations inherent in structural and symbolic violence that may contribute to the boys' feelings of shame at their inability to perform according to the hegemonic masculine scripts as described by Ray (2011). Resulting displays of violence may be seen as processes of healing for the boys involved, dissolving boundaries between healing and violence. Social stratifications intermingled and were not straightforward: playworkers bore the power of adult professionals, but other stratifications such as gender, class and ethnicity played out unevenly and became further confused by playwork's ethos of supporting play that is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and personally directed. Although they often presented themselves as slightly to one side of 'the system' of teachers, social workers, YOTs (Youth Offending Teams) workers and so on, the playworkers were nevertheless required to work

with them, and were funded to achieve similar outcomes. This returns us to the fundamental dialectic of playwork's use and exchange value.

These complex and multiple relational processes can be seen in how Kay talked about her decision not to press charges against the boy who assaulted her (Jay):

I'd already made my mind up that I wasn't going to press charges, and I explained to the police officer that if he'd been a child or young lad that I didn't know, that was on the street or had just come on to the site and I didn't know his behaviour, didn't know his background, I wouldn't have hesitated. But because I've known his background, and know what he's gone through, and I need to have sympathy with that, and also that I've known him since he was 6 or 7. I've got to take all that into consideration. And I said, and also the fact that he's been and apologised to me, we spoke at length and deep quite deep about stuff.

And on discussing the issue with her partner:

He says to me, you should have phoned the police straight away you should have got him arrested straight away and blah. And I said but I can't do that because I know Jay, I know his background. Doesn't matter, he attacked you, he could go and attack somebody else, what if he attacked, and I said, well then, he'll have to face the consequences and I suppose I'll have to deal with a bit of guilt, but at the moment if I have him arrested, I would have had to deal with more guilt cos I know that there is a nice boy there, you know, there's somebody that needs something, that he's lacking a bit of attention, or a bit of love.

Kay expressed here a healing and professional liberal rhetoric based on sympathy with Jay's situation and the value she attached to her relationship with him, whilst implicitly applying a moral underclass rhetoric to his 'background' (Parkes and Conolly, 2011). This was echoed in other interviews with contemporary playworkers, for example Tanith's assessment of the children who use the Play Centre:

It's amazing how many youngsters have got emotional shit going on in their lives for one reason or another, and it's always adults that have caused it. It's not their own personal, it's been dumped on them by adults. And there's a real lack of awareness in a lot of parents just how badly they need to keep their emotional shit to themselves and not dump it on their children.

This is in contrast to the pre-1990 playworkers who tended to describe the children's lives much more in terms of structural violence, seeing an explicit political role in playwork as an element of community work:

So I guess we got put in to more and more stark positions of taking a political stance about children's rights and community rights in all this, I think. So I think it took on a bigger political – in terms of community action and community development (Jim, PP).

This echoes the ideas explored in Chapter 9 on forms of revolutionary hope.

10.6 Violence as disruption of playwork ideals

This final section follows from the discussions on healing and suggests a number of ways in which violence is understood by playworkers as disruption of the service ideal. In doing so, it links back to discussions in Chapter 9 on playworkers' subjectivities, performances and emotions; similarly it looks forward to discussions in Chapter 11 on ethics and the place of emotions as well as openness to the Other as a way of acknowledging symbolic violence and interweavings of violence and healing.

There is no doubt that when things 'kicked off' it had a big emotional impact on playworkers, myself included, as this extract from a reflective field note shows:

Yesterday's session on the playground was a prime example of what playworkers talk of as 'kicking off' and I think that there has to be a huge section looking at this. It's a really interesting one and it affected me emotionally last night and I really didn't feel like typing up fieldnotes from the sparse notes that I'd made in my little jotter that obviously ran out half way through the session because I was too busy involved in things after that. I did feel emotionally affected, I felt saddened and exhausted and drained and confused. The one thing that I really wanted to hang onto is that what happened was not a result of bad playwork, but as [colleague] said, quite wonderfully I thought, it was a result of playwork. And kicking off is an aspect of playwork that clearly playworkers would rather avoid but it does happen, it's one of those things that will happen from time to time and I don't think it is a mark of failure that it happens (fieldnotes, 2/11/06).

Although my notes asserted that kicking off is not 'failure', the very fact that the statement was made implies that there was a sense of failure attached. This was echoed in the comments of some (but not all) the playworkers in interview:

Last time it kicked off and I was inside thinking (a) is there anything you can do better, (two) is there anything you can do to prevent it and (three) does that mean I'm no good at my job (Jem, CP).

I go home, I don't do it so much now, I used to go and talk about it, you know, take it home with me ... but it does drain you. Because you constantly question yourself, did I do the right thing? And you have to go over it again in your head and come to a conclusion, yeah I did, or, I could have done that a bit differently (Kay, CP).

Others were more pragmatic in their articulations, as this interview with Tanith (CP) shows:

W: And what, when Jamal was kicking off, what is the emotional impact on you ...?

T: It depends. I knew that I needed to stop it because I knew it was going to escalate but apart from that not anything really. If you're going to get into an emotional state about things like that you don't do playwork because you're in the wrong job.

[However, Tanith's voice is brimmed full of emotion at telling this story.]

Some (but not all) of these emotional responses might be understood as forms of shame. May (1996, p. 81) suggests that shame is 'the response that people feel when they believe that others (an anticipated audience) would judge them to have a particular failing'. If we apply this to professional identity, then it is an understandable response to perceived contradictions and failings to live up to professional ideals of service. One explanation for why playworkers might feel shame when things 'kick off' might lie in the dialectical nature of play itself and adult romanticised ideals of its value. Contemporary official articulations of the benefits of playwork, in contrast to the language of moral reconstruction and citizenship of the early adventure playground pioneers (Kozlovsky, 2008; Allen, 1968; Turner, 1961), tend to reside more in the Apollonian and immanent ideals of play, particularly in the neo-Rousseauesque constructions of the natural child playing in nature (Moss, 2012; Louv, 2005). There is a counter narrative, to be found in pockets of adventure playground work that revel in the anarchic nature of the spaces and in stories, often posted on Facebook and other social media, and elements of this were implicit in the fieldwork,

but were dialectically situated in the hopefulness of playworkers' subjectivities, as explored in Chapter 9. Shame, therefore, might also be understood as a loss of hopefulness in the face of inability to enact service ideals.

This might be seen more directly in the contradiction between the ideal of play as freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and personally directed, and the reality of working in a space that operates on the edge of violent chaos. Principles of low intervention rub up against strategies for navigating (and perhaps needing to feel a sense of controlling) the space. As described, the playworkers used a range of strategies for pre-empting the tip into chaos, and for particular children this involved maintaining a tight holding or containment of frames. The contradiction was evident in the extract from Gareth's (CP) interview below in the playworkers' attempts to distinguish between control and containment of frames, the former being an imposition of adult will, the latter being a mode of supporting children's play.

G: I mean some of the times that really annoy me is when we've got a potential lot of trouble about to happen on site ... Often, instead of still pushing for those children to actually explore their boundaries ... we'll go, 'right we need to keep this together'. And we'll deliberately target where they're strong at and use that to keep them together ... And I get frustrated particularly when I find myself doing it. Cos it's not good. I do see other team members doing it and a lot of that is to control the whole environment. And to stop it disrupting into complete chaos which, there are merits to that obviously. And we do have to look at the other children on site. But sometimes I find myself doing it and thinking, 'oh I shouldn't really have done that' and so then I have to find a way of making myself

...

W: Why do you think that, why do you think you should do that though?

G: To give them the opportunity. I think they need that opportunity to not, they should be able to come on feeling as though they want to disrupt the place. They should be allowed to do that ... and they wanted to disrupt something, so give them something to disrupt. Give them me to disrupt. Something like that.

The containment and control dialectic might be understood as a form of borderwork, of working at the edges between play and not-play; control and agency; didactic, ludocentric and chaotic playwork (Russell, 2008b). This borderwork extended to the whole site in the ways in which playworkers worked the gate as a kind of liminal space, a threshold between

off and on site. Part of working the gate was to keep those who were banned off site, but much was also bridging the inside and outside of the site, building and maintaining relations both with those children and members of the community.

If playworkers felt a sense of shame at their potentially adulterating strategies for preventing the space tipping into chaos, this was intensified when those strategies were felt not to have worked. Alongside mixed feelings about controlling the space, stronger emotions arose when these interventions failed to prevent the eruption of violence. If the role was understood as responsible for the physical and emotional safety of children, and although the value of emotional as well as physical risk was acknowledged, there was still a sense of shame when this role could not be competently performed. This sense of shame may be one explanation for the lack of public discussion about violence in playwork settings.

It was also possible to discern a gendered aspect to this shame, one that has perhaps become more complex over time. Turner (1961, p. 32-33), working in the 1950s, describes the moment when he felt his authority was stamped and he had gained respect through 'standing up' to the 'big toughs'. A child had come to him in tears because a bigger boy had hit him, and he had gone out to confront a group of lads:

I asked which one of them had been hitting the little boy. One of them said 'He's a cheeky little bastard, anyway,' but went on to deny having hit him. Then a voice behind me said, 'We're taking over here, Guv.' I turned round and saw a boy of about sixteen or so with a flick-knife in his hand and the blade extended towards me while he stood poised on the tips of his toes in the classic 'ready' position. By this time I was really angry and my reaction was to seize him by the wrist and twist it until he dropped the knife.

'You little runt,' I said, 'if you try that with me again you'll get hurt.'

He reminisces that he had felt the atmosphere shift in his favour as a result of his bravado and that from then on he was respected and supported in his work. This hegemonic masculine approach to nascent aggression was also recounted in a few interviews with pre-1990 playworkers. Ken (PP) described his approach when first working with the older boys on the playground:

K: Their perception, 'cos, you know, especially the way I speak, you know, you're middle class, specky git, der der der. And, of course, they'd try it on with you, and I would just stamp on it very very quickly.

W: How would you stamp on it?

K: I'd be very aggressive ... 'Well if you don't go away, I'm going to put this hammer right across your head, I'm gonna hurt you very badly,' ... And then about half an hour later, you'd go 'Here, silly, come over here and help me with this,' and they would often be the best kids. But you had to, kind of, establish, you know, I'm not a soft touch ... I mean, it was all bluff.

Mary (PP), however, described how a focus on relationships, and building networks in the community was important for her:

M: [It was] about how you build relationships and manage those kinds of situations. Particularly then, as a five foot white woman [working in a predominantly African-Caribbean area], how was I gonna operate in that manner? I couldn't, I had to find another set of skills to do that.

W: So what did you draw on for that set of skills?

M: Lord knows in those days. I think I had a real sense of politics, an understanding of potentially what was happening ... But it was very difficult. But I think the politics helped, ... it's lucky I'm mouthy and cheeky ... I did go down the frontline and I just walked in to [community office] and said 'you have got to do something to support me doing this work or it's not going to happen' ...

W: And it worked?

M: Yeah. Well, it took time, but it did.

What these extracts show is that staff had to be either tough or connected. If violence erupted, the failure (for both men and women) was seen as a sign of weakness, a lack of competence in working with 'tough kids'. Now, the culture has shifted significantly, but vestiges of displays of hegemonic masculinity (or the tacit perception that such masculinity *could* be displayed) remain:

I played the role of superman when I first started, I always wanted to save ((laughs)), I'd naturally run in there and be the big cchhh 'leave him alone!' ... where now I don't try to, I try and go in, be gentle, break the fight up and see what's going off and keep a level head with it all (Jem, CP).

Kay (CP) talked about doubting her ability to do the job after two serious violent incidents

I just thought, oh I'm crap at this, so I went through a few weeks where I doubted myself as a team leader, I doubted myself as working with the kids, was I doing things wrong, you know ... I did have a bit of a blimp about it and I was disheartened a little bit, but it's made, it's invigorated me a bit more, it's made me think, yeah, there is problems like that ... you do get incidents that put you down and then something will happen to make you go back up again.

Her response, as a temporary team leader while the senior was off sick, was to buy flowers for the staff office kitchen ('while there's blooms, there's harmony') and to focus on building a team approach. Kay's *modus operandi* with the children was very much about relationships, and she was often described by the children as 'kind'. The evening she was assaulted, many of the other children were visibly upset that she had been the target.

The post-session debriefs frequently involved almost forensic storytelling of what happened during sessions, partly to build a picture of the children and the playworkers' relationships with them, but, after difficult sessions, this was also a strategy for recovery. I was struck by the level of detail and how the playworkers told and retold their versions of incidents, and realised that this was a way of community building and also a form of catharsis and re-positioning of professional identity. Each playworker had a slightly different style to storytelling: Jem's would often be a way of recounting how difficult the children were, and he would use strong, formal language ('assault' and 'projectiles'):

Donny got assaulted twice, one by a flying object and then you see Jay run down here to assault him ... What we've found out is that loads of kids, a couple of kids were throwing projectiles at kids whilst we're not looking (fieldnotes, 2/11/06) .

Kay, on the other hand, would recount conversations she had had with children, focusing on ways of relating

I said, 'Well, can I just say this then, I'm really, really sorry for what I just said, but I actually thought that you would take it as a joke, it was meant as a joke, but I'm sorry if I've hurt your feelings'. I said, 'If I have to get on my hands and knees and kiss your feet, I will do'. Of course they all started laughing. So I said, 'But can I just say something else, there was no need to attack me like that', I says, 'You've actually hurt my shoulder', I said, 'You thumped me in the back'. And of course, I think it was Danielle was there saying, 'Yeah you hit her, you hit Kay, you shouldn't have hit Kay like that' (fieldnotes, 27/10/06).

As Portelli (1981, p. 99) points out, oral accounts of events ‘tell us less about events as such than about their meaning’. Each narrator tells the story in a way that has meaning for them:

The result is narratives where the boundary between what takes place outside the narrator and what happens inside, between what concerns him or her and what concerns the group, becomes quite thin, and personal ‘truth’ may coincide with collective ‘imagination’ (Portelli, 1981, p. 99).

So, the stories of the playworkers were much more than what actually happened: they revealed rich data concerning the playworkers’ subjectivities and how they used these stories to make sense of the work *for them*.

10.7 Conclusion

This chapter has developed the spatial and emotional analyses in Chapters 8 and 9 to build a conceptualisation of playwork and violence that recognises both its political and spatial dimensions (through structural and symbolic violence) and the particularities of playwork subjectivities. It recognises the fuzziness of borders between play and not-play for children who live with violence in their everyday lives and have developed strategies for coping with this as situated and interrelated forms of resilience rather than the individual skills envisaged in risk and prevention policy discourse. Alongside this it also recognises that one exchange value of playwork may be seen in working with children at risk of becoming embroiled in the justice system; indeed, this was the basis for the Play Support programme funding. Yet, this exchange value cannot be realised in terms of linear causality of intervention-outcome, and playworkers are open to the disturbances and resistance of moments in lived space that at times are violent.

The Play Centre is a volatile place both because it aims to co-produce a space where children can play and because of the particular children who use it. The playworkers cared about these children and developed attachments with them. They navigated the dialectics of agency and control, and of use and exchange value, through developing a repertoire of responses that supported children’s ability to establish and maintain play frames.

The playworkers articulated a service ideal where they could provide a ‘safe’ space for these children to play that recognised and catered for the volatility of the children’s play expressions, containing it within tight frames and caring, reliable relationships. Their

despondency and shame when they were unable to realise this ideal was expressed in a number of ways, most notably through a brief spell of self-doubt followed by a balanced view of the work that highlighted the highs as well as the lows. The complexities of the ways in which the playworkers affected and were affected by this volatility points to the need for a situated ethics for the work that takes account of difference and emotions. It is this that the next chapter considers.

PART THREE: TOWARDS ETHICAL PRAXIS

Chapter 11: Towards an ethics of playwork

11.1 Introduction

Everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality (Levinas, 1969, p. 21).

I remember hearing Brian Sutton-Smith speak about his lifetime research into children's play. Having regaled his audience of playworkers with some of the fantastical, rude, sometimes offensive and cruel stories children told and the things they did, and weaving these stories into his theoretical synthesis of play as a parody of emotional vulnerability, the first question from the audience was about how playworkers should respond to some of the more extreme forms of bullying that he described. I remember thinking that this was not a question that applied to his research; its great strength was that it did not have to address that issue. The folklorists can be descriptive, whereas many other adult researchers of childhoods, from health, education, developmental psychology and other professional practice focused research, are required to adopt a more normative approach.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 have revealed how a number of dialectical themes inherent in playwork are played out in everyday actions, interactions and productions across themes such as space, value, subjectivity, emotion and violence. The analysis and discussion so far have been largely descriptive, with a political element suggesting more normative leanings. This chapter moves from the spatially framed 'is' towards a spatially framed 'ought'. In CHAT terms, this means exploring the activity system's rules, although a deontic conception of ethics is challenged. It proposes an ethics of playwork that moves beyond universal, rational accounts of the right action towards a more situated, relational and emotional stance. Sayer's (2005a, 2005b) analysis of what he terms 'lay normativity', and particularly morality, highlights the normative gap in much social theorising on class. He suggests that descriptive analyses tend to dismiss normative aspects of everyday life as mere affect (therefore subjective and beyond rational representation) or internalisation of norms as behavioural conventions, glossing over how much these issues matter to people. The playworkers frequently sought to justify, not only explain, their actions and emotions. Lay

normativity is a useful concept for exploring the dual nature of morality across social divisions (and particularly, for Sayer, class), and this therefore fits well with the overall dialectical approach taken in this study. In their evaluative responses to how children and adults treated each other, the playworkers drew on both universal and differentiated ideas of moral worth and values. Embedded and embodied within this were strong emotions, as explored in Chapters 9 and 10, particularly hope, anger and shame.

This chapter is structured using a CHAT framework. It opens with a discussion on the professionalisation of playwork, weaving history (in much of which I played a role) with a critical analysis of playwork's codes of practice as both rules and mediating artefacts. These codes have developed as a response to contradictions both within the playwork activity system and between this and other systems and macro socio-politics. Written codes in general tend to draw on deontic (professing specific professional duties) and utilitarian (outcomes-focused) ethical perspectives. The dialectical themes and the critical perspective introduced in this study point to a need for a different kind of ethics. Broadly termed relational, alternative ethical theories foreground a different set of values, acknowledging the particularity of each event and relationship, the place of emotions in moral reasoning, principles of care rather than justice (drawing on feminist ethics of care), and a personal responsibility/response-ability that recognises the alterity of the Other (drawing on Levinas). Yet this cannot be presented as another binary. There is a need for broad-based principles for the work, for broader justice for other Others as well as care for the present Other. To explore this dialectic further, the chapter brings a moral philosophical gaze to playwork's object as the production of the dialectic triad of conceived, perceived and lived space (Lefebvre, 1991), to playworkers as emotional subjects, the place of emotions in moral theory (Sayer, 2005a, 2005b; Throop, 2012), and to discussions on violence, drawing again on the work of Lefebvre (1991) and Levinas (Altez, 2007). These themes are woven together through an exploration of the playwork activity system as a social practice in the MacIntyrean sense, considering playwork's value in terms of the internal and external goods of the practice developed as tradition. Finally, it extends this virtue theory perspective into a consideration of playwork dispositions (to openness, playfulness and humility, together with patience and restraint as dispositions of *not*-doing), that can guard against the totalising and essentialising that policy often assumes and requires. This is influenced by Rushing's (2010) analysis of Judith Butler's ethics.

11.2 The professionalisation of playwork: a historical perspective on playwork's mediating artefacts

In her analysis of professions, Banks (2004) proposes three approaches to conceptualising professions: an essentialist approach, seeking to define the characteristics necessary for an occupation to be a profession; a strategic approach, focusing on the interests of a group of people for recognition and status; and a historical/developmental approach considering how professions have changed over time. Playwork, alongside many other newer social professions, would struggle to meet the characteristics of professions that Bayles (1981) identifies: extensive training with a significant intellectual component, a service valued by society, a process of certificating or licensing for practice, and an organisation of members. Much of the sector's effort towards professionalisation has focused on a strategic approach that seeks recognition of its value to society; this has taken place alongside a general growth in the number of occupations seeking professional status (Banks, 2004) and in developmental changes including the role of the state, the rise of the service sector, political and public opinion, the nature of organisations and institutions, access to information and a diminution of trust in professions (Banks, 2004; O'Neill, 2002; Koehn, 1994). Training and qualifications are key to professional recognition, and this works alongside official codes of ethics or conduct that are designed to profess trustworthiness. It is for these reasons that playwork's official articulations of its uniqueness and its value through National Occupational Standards and formally agreed values and principles are worthy of analysis as mediating artefacts.

Given this, a short history of official articulations of playwork is offered to illustrate how these have evolved in response to both internal contradictions and tensions between the sector's understanding of its value and the broader policy context for children's services. Such efforts are always going to be imperfect and incomplete (partial) since they try to represent the unrepresentable.

Playwork's institutions have been steering it towards professionalisation for several decades (SkillsActive 2006, 2010c; NPFA, 1998; JNCTP, 1979, 1985, 1990, 2000; JNCTP and National Centres for Playwork Education, 1994), and this has not been without its dissenters and critics. The sector has a history of trying to ride two sometimes divergent developmental paths. On the one hand is the history of recalcitrance (Battram and Russell, 2002), born from the adventure playground days of the 1960s and 1970s when, as Conway (2005, p. 2) recalls, 'most playworkers I knew were a mixture of hippy idealists, anarcho-

punks and grass-roots community activists with strong libertarian and left-wing beliefs'. Then, some saw professionalisation (and particularly qualifications as a licence to practice) as a way to 'deskill ordinary people and prevent them from practising' (Conway, 2005, p. 4). The other path sought to gain establishment recognition (and funding) for playwork through developing a system of qualifications and showing how playwork could help governments meet their social policy agendas, in line with Banks' (2004) strategic approach to conceptualising professions. Of course, there were many paths in between, trodden by people in both camps. The tension arises out of a passionate desire to be true to a particular ethos while having to operate within a broader socio-political system that imposes ostensibly incompatible demands.

The socio-political context has had a significant impact on playwork, as on other public services. In the first *Recommendations on Training* published by the Joint National Committee on Playwork (then 'Play Leadership') in 1979, the rationale for developing qualifications was that employers would be making recruitment decisions based on their own assumptions of what was needed in terms of skills, experience and qualifications, and that it was better, despite concerns, that the field should make those decisions for itself. However, the sector's attempts at self-definition took place in a broader context that saw the inexorable rise of New Public Management (NPM). Theorising and descriptions of NPM vary, but it is generally understood as an approach informed by neoliberal political ideology, initiated during the 1979-1997 Conservative government and continued during New Labour's administration (1997-2010) and (despite stated intentions to reduce bureaucracy) under the current Coalition government. Its key characteristics are a focus on efficiency (outputs, performance indicators, outcomes and results); creating competition through the rhetoric of consumer choice; relationships being based on contracts rather than trust (and thus open to litigation); and an increase in explicit and standardised performance measurement and concepts such as quality assurance (Dahlberg and Moss, 2008). This ideology was far removed from the early ethos of playwork, yet over the course of the last three decades playwork's education and training institutions, as the voice of official descriptions of playwork, have increasingly had to operate within this system.

The relationship between playwork as a social practice and its institutions is dialectical. Conceiving playwork as a social practice in the sense defined by MacIntyre (2007 [1981]) allows for the relationship between practices and their institutions to be explored in a way

that acknowledges the complexities of professional ethics and power relations. MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 187) defines social practice as

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity.

Internal goods are those that can only be realised through participation in the practice (that which is unique to playwork), and are contrasted with external goods (such as remuneration and status) that are more general. Parallels can be drawn between internal and external goods and use and exchange value. Framing 'value' as a 'good' implies an ethical dimension that might be seen as absent from CHAT analyses.

Institutions are organisations that structure practices. Playwork's institutions, therefore, may support the sector by distributing money (in the form of grants) and power and status (in the form of recommendations and accreditation) as rewards; reinvesting in order to maintain standards, as in training and quality assurance schemes; generating income by lobbying, applications to national funding sources, and marketing services. At the same time, they may be a corrupting influence since, by seeking to maximise revenue or gain recognition and status, they may compromise the values of a practice. Playwork has a history of criticising its institutions to such an extent that those institutions failed (Conway, Hughes and Sturrock, 2004). Yet, as MacIntyre points out, making and maintaining such institutions is itself a social practice with its own internal goods.

One of playwork's early institutions, albeit one comprising a voluntary elected committee and a membership only, with no paid staff, was the Joint National Committee on Training for Playleadership (JNCTP), later becoming the Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork. I was an active member of the executive committee for much of the period between 1980 and 2000. JNCTP tried to resist being drawn into the bureaucratisation of public services while developing peer-led endorsement as a mechanism for a self-defined and self-regulated training and qualifications framework. Its 1985 *Recommendations on Training* publication included a Charter for Training for Playwork that embodied this tension (see Appendix 5). This charter professed principles of flexibility, responsiveness and inclusion alongside standards and explicit prescriptive criteria that differentiated playwork from other adult work with children and young people. It aspired to an approach to training and qualifications that seemed a long way from the technical prescriptions for playwork's

role in contemporary NOS. Yet, even then, there were those who felt that the spirit of the early days had been lost in this rush to build alliances with the politicians (and therefore funders) (Hughes and Williams, 1984). These tensions were reflected throughout the work of the JNCTP, as noted in a speech I gave at its 30th birthday party:

I would characterise the last 15 years as a period of increasing bureaucratisation, mainstreaming and control of our lives generally and of playwork in particular. JNCTP, and I personally, have played a role in that, pushing as we did for endorsement and recognition of playwork. At the same time, we have also kept alive the debates about values, vision and the meaning of life (Russell, 2005, p. 5).

The JNCTP saw itself as having a unique role from the 1980s until the early 2000s as a democratically-based critical friend of a succession of imposed, top-down national organisations tasked by government to support children's play and playwork (here this means English organisations, although some had a UK-wide remit; another enduring tension within the sector). Key organisations were the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA, now Fields in Trust, playing various roles over the decades in support of the play sector), the Association for Children's Play and Recreation (ACPR, also known as PlayBoard, operating from 1984-1987), the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit (NCPRU, operating from 1987-1993) (Torkildsen, 1999), and then SkillsActive (established in 1995 as Sprito and now operating as the sector skills council for the sport, fitness, outdoors, playwork and caravan industries). The history of national organisations supporting play is fraught, and is not discussed here except to acknowledge this as an illustration of the sector's difficulties with its institutions and its efforts to adapt to external developments.

The playwork sector's strategic attempts to define its approach began with the publication of the 1979 *Recommendations on Training*, but perhaps the first attempt at codifying came in the late 1980s with a national accreditation scheme. This was seen as a way of including those with many years' experience but no formal qualifications into the movement towards recognition and professionalisation. JNCTP carried out a consultation with the sector (JNCTP, 1990), attempting to list core competencies. The report reflected ambivalence towards this task:

Developing an agreed list of Core Competencies is easier for some jobs than others ... With 'people work' jobs like Playwork it is much more difficult. Also Playwork is a very flexible and ever-changing job; we find it hard to define or

analyse what we do and we often resist definitions that might restrict us ... But in order to reap the benefits of a viable accreditation scheme we have to accept the challenge of analysing and, to some extent, defining playwork. We have to work out what the 'Core Competencies' really are (JNCTP, 1990, p. 11).

The core competencies agreed at consultation meetings were grouped into nine themes: interpersonal/communication skills; equal opportunity; knowledge/understanding base; the play environment; creating play opportunities; teamwork, management and administration; self-awareness/self-development; community/external relations; working with children – additional issues. The focus in the knowledge/understanding theme reflected a strong developmentalist bias, and the play environment theme was heavily focused on health and safety issues. These technical foci illustrated a significant shift away from the experimentation, unpredictability, anarchy and freedoms of early adventure playground pioneers (Hughes, 1975; Allen, 1968; Benjamin, 1961, 1974), leading some to mourn the loss of a movement:

The philosophical drive that inspired the play movement of the 1960s, that made it a movement, and made play an issue is no longer there. The philosophy remains, buried in the fading constitution of play organisations everywhere, but the hope has gone (Hughes and Williams, 1984, cited in Cranwell, 2007, p. 62).

Cranwell (2007, p. 62) continues:

The bureaucratisation of playwork and its use as an agent of childcare within the scheme for children's services have made the work appear more prescriptive and bound to external government constraints that have repressed the creativity and potential of playwork. [However,] the idea that organising play was a dissenting presence that had the capability to invalidate dominant norms, needs and values as the spirit of play that was forged in that period remains strong.

What can be seen here is the dialectic playing out between playwork as a traditional social practice with shared internal goods and an increasing focus on technical skills led by playwork's institutions in the name of recognition and status. Playwork's 'dissenting presence', or its recalcitrance (Battram and Russell, 2002) might be understood as the attempts of a social practice to curb the potential for institutions to corrupt its value base. The dialectical tension remains and is played out in the endless rounds of meetings where official articulations are revised, reworded and repackaged in attempts to resolve

contradictions both within the practice and between the practice and its institutions. This exercise, doomed to failure, highlights the dialectical tensions between social practice, knowledge production and poesy (Lefebvre, 2009); the ineffable qualities of the playwork approach defy representation in this technical manner.

The accreditation project ran for only a few years before being swallowed by a much bigger beast, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). The reduction of complex responsive processes of relating (Suchman, 2005; Stacey, 2001) to a functional analysis of performance criteria, range statements and underpinning knowledge was critiqued within and outside the playwork sector (for example, Russell, 2003; Hodgkinson and Issit, 1995). For MacIntyre (2007 [1981]), internal goods are more than a disparate collection of technical skills transferable to other contexts. Although skills or competencies may be a means to realising internal as well as external goods, at the core of excellence within a social practice, the means to achieve the goods internal to it, are virtues (ways of being rather than doing). Rather than universal sets of rules or calculations of the best outcome, what holds a practice together is its members' virtues. MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 191) reworks Aristotelean ethics to link them to practice, and in this context defines a virtue as:

... an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.

Little has been written about virtues in relation to playwork. To date, attempts at articulating a code of ethics have largely been deontic and/or utilitarian in nature, as with most such codes in people-based occupations (Banks, 2004). The concept of virtue ethics and what it has to offer an ethics of playwork is revisited at a later point; here, playwork's codes of ethics are briefly introduced and analysed, drawing on major ethical theories.

11.3 Codes of ethics: duties, outcomes and virtues

Playwork does not formally have a code of ethics. The JNCTP developed a draft statement of ethics in 2006, based on the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005), but the sector never formally adopted it. Nevertheless, some official statements that might operate as codes of ethics have been published, including the *Assumptions and Values of Playwork* (Sprito, 1992), *Best Play* (NPFA et al., 2000) as well as the Playwork Principles themselves. This section examines the ethical theories that underpin these statements.

Banks (2004) differentiates theories of ethics along an axis of impartial, detached approaches and partial, situated ones. Impartial and detached approaches include deontology as a rule-based ethics of duty, and utilitarianism as an ethics of consequences based on a calculation of the most happiness for the greatest number of people. These theories were developed during the Enlightenment by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (the founding father of deontology, for whom the morality of an action lay in the intention of the actor to adhere to rules) and Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (who advocated utilitarianism, an approach that placed moral worth in the consequences of an action not its intention). They are universal, require impartiality and are based on principles of justice and duty. They imply that decisions on the right actions are made by a rational moral agent acting as an isolated individual and applying universal principles. Partial, situated approaches include virtue ethics and the broad category of relational ethics. These are relative to context, particular to concrete situations and times, and based on relationships, virtues and traditions. The emphasis is on care and character, on response rather than action. Moral agents are emotional and historical selves embedded in relationships, developing virtues that focus on the good rather than the right.

In his critique of modern ethical theories of deontology and utilitarianism, MacIntyre (2007 [1981]) proposed a neo-Aristotelianism where moral agents are situated in their place and time (in contrast to Aristotle's universal virtue ethics). This is made coherent through a narrative history and participation in social practices directed towards *eudaimonia* ('the good life' or 'flourishing'). MacIntyre suggests the internal goods of a social practice 'are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity'. 'Standards of excellence' can be seen as personal virtues or dispositions that an ethical playworker strives to develop, rather than externally defined actions. Playwork's internal goods continue to be a matter for debate, but are those that can only be realised through its practice and through developing virtues needed to realise those goods.

The grand narrative search for absolute truth inherent in Enlightenment ethics has been challenged by postmodern approaches that reveal them to be specific to culture and time rather than neutral and objective, as claimed. Feminists point out the gendered assumptions that underpin deontology and consequentialism (Gilligan, 1982). Duties are conceived as unencumbered by relationships, and outcomes are conceptualised hierarchically. For Noddings (1984), caring is seen as the basis for ethical decision making

rather than rules or outcomes, and caring involves being attentive and receptive to the needs and desires of others. Care ethicists are at pains to point out that caring is not the sole preserve of women. Tronto (1993) gives this definition of caring that goes beyond gender roles:

A species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web (Tronto, 1993, cited in Sevenhuijsen, 2004, pp. 34-35).

Some playwork commentators have articulated a binary distinction between open access playwork and out-of-school childcare, that binary being between the work's primary focus of play or care (for example, Play for Wales, 2003; Chilton, 2003; Sturrock and Else, 1998). Ironically, many playworkers *care* deeply about their work and about those with whom they work: it matters to them.

The best thing is I can do is a safe haven, where they feel they're safe, they feel solid, they feel they belong, they feel they're cared for (Mary, PP).

The concept of 'care' has become almost synonymous with low status, low paid, poorly qualified, technical practices largely the domain of women. This arose both out of the campaign of second wave feminists to be liberated from private caring, and a parallel neoliberal marketisation of welfare services. Tronto (2002, para 3) remarks that the more elite people become, the less they meet their own care needs:

Valuable though care is, one way to understand a group's social power is in seeing whether it is able to force some other people to carry out its caregiving work. The distribution of care work thus reflects power ... More powerful people can fob caregiving work on to others: men to women, upper to lower class, free men to slaves ... People who do such work recognize its intrinsic value, but it does not fit well in a society that values innovation and accumulation of wealth.

Given this, perhaps it is unsurprising that many playworkers bemoan what they see as the reduction of playwork practice to 'mere' childcare (Sturrock, 1999). It should be noted also that there is a gender dimension to the polarisation of playwork and carework. In the early days of adventure playgrounds, when work was full time and the role was predominantly building structures and working with 'rough lads', most playworkers were male, and the job

was seen as one requiring physical and emotional strength (Conway, 2005), a concept also borne out in interviews with pre-1990 playworkers:

I have to say, I felt, that as a woman worker ... I was never seen as, you know, being able to be a good playworker ... I felt it was dominated by men who built structures, and if you couldn't, you weren't really rated (Mary, PP).

The women's role was, if I'm honest, sexual fodder for the male playleaders and to work with the smaller children (Ken, PP).

Today, following the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (which reduced the number of self-built adventure playgrounds), the introduction of registration and inspection through the 1989 Children Act (which linked playwork to the early years sector) and investment in out-of-school childcare (staffed mainly by part-time workers), the workforce is predominantly female and part-time (SkillsActive, 2010b) with concomitant, although not simplistically linear, shifts in practice and culture. It is with some caution, therefore, that *care*, understood as a response-ability to the Other, is presented as a useful basis for analysing an ethics of playwork.

Codes of professional ethics are generally public statements outlining a service ideal, and may also contain rules and principles of professional practice and of ethics, and statements about the character of practitioners. As such, they fulfil a number of functions including protecting service users, giving credence and professional status, giving guidance to practitioners, and helping to create and maintain professional identity (Banks, 2004). Such codes will always be problematic since it is not possible to strike a perfect balance between prescription and professional judgement, between universal pronouncements and the particular in everyday practice. Furthermore the multiple functions of ethical codes in addressing external and internal audiences are likely to give rise to contradictions. As has been shown in the history of playwork's official pronouncements, codes will reflect the issues of the time and are often revised in response to crises in the profession. For example, although not an ethical code for playwork, the JNCTP *Charter for Training for Playwork* (1985) reflected concerns about the exclusive nature of professions, the external imposition of standards and issues of equality, and issues concerning ethical dimensions of justice. Many of these concerns remained in its revision (JNCTP, 2002, see Appendix 6) but there was a difference in emphasis reflecting the qualifications landscape of the time. Reference to self-managed learning disappeared (in line with the move towards bureaucratisation and NPM), and a focus on understandings of the nature and value of play

and playwork were emphasised (reflecting a move away from intuition and towards propositional knowledge). This illustrates both a pragmatism (given the shift towards prescribed and regulated curricula) and a defensiveness that saw it necessary to proclaim definitions of the service ideal and the distinctiveness of playwork.

The *Playwork Assumptions and Values* (Sprito, 1992, see Appendix 7) could be considered as the first formal code of ethics for playwork and were developed alongside, and as a counter to the technical and functional nature of, NOS for the first National Vocational Qualifications in Playwork. They highlighted the fundamental contradiction between play as freely chosen and as a mechanism for socialisation and development. The service ideal became one of enhancing opportunities for development through play freely chosen *up to a point*, with the far hope (H1, see Chapter 9) aspiration of helping children reach their full potential. Indeed, the second assumption acknowledged that children play without adults' encouragement or help, and therefore the role of playworkers becomes one of facilitating access to a wide range of experiences in order to support their development. This internal contradiction continued in the following 12 values, which were a mixture of deontic and rights-based statements, within a utilitarian outcomes-based service ideal. Banks (2004) differentiated rules and principles within codes of ethics, but the boundaries between these were blurred in the *Assumptions and Values* statements. One statement used 'must', eight used 'should', five referenced rights, and there were also references to virtues of sensitivity, care, considerateness, respect and non-discrimination. These virtues might be seen as a counter to the rights-based focus on justice, emphasising the importance of care and relationships; however, they have been discussed and disputed in the literature and in online discussion groups far less than the deontic and utilitarian elements. By contrast, the fieldwork, discussed in Chapters 8, 9 and 10, revealed just how core relationships are to playwork.

From a deontological perspective, specific professional duties included supporting children's freely chosen play, enhancing play in order to support children's development, respecting children's rights and operating within the law. Given the opportunity for contradictions, these statements implied room for interpretation in specific situations. However, the assumed causal relationship between particular forms of playing and particular promoted areas of development also implied a rational perspective on children's play fixed in conceived space (Lefebvre, 1991), with little or no room to acknowledge the otherness of children, the nonsense of play and its potential for resistance and reordering

power relations in the here and now. Kant's rational Categorical Imperative demands a universalising rather than a particular response to each situation and each relationship; the far hope focus on fulfilling developmental potential becomes a totalising rather than a liberating project.

Later versions of codes showed a shift away from such a linear causality and towards a focus on play as a process (rather than an activity) and on space. The internal contradictions remained but, as argued earlier, focusing on space offers an opportunity to think differently about relations, interactions and agency. For example, NPFA *et al.* (2000, p.16) state that the core function of the playworker is 'to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences', and, as has been stated frequently, the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005) stated that 'the role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play', marking a putative move away from adult creation of space (conceived space) towards co-production. However, the interviews with contemporary playworkers revealed a stronger discourse of future-focused developmentalism than did those with pre-1990 playworkers, where the discourse tended more towards political liberation.

The service ideal articulated in the Playwork Principles, developed in 2004 through a review of the *Assumptions and Values* (and in which I played a part), rests on the assumption that the broader the range of opportunities available for children to play, the better for their development. As such, they remain fundamentally developmental in focus, but perhaps in a less linear and directed manner. Indeed, in a move away from what some perceived as too much 'adulteration' of play, the Playwork Principles make a bold statement of service ideal:

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.

For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

This brings playwork's fundamental contradiction to the forefront of playwork's professed internal good; at the same time it makes the Playwork Principles problematic in practice. In ethical terms, it explicitly asserts a professional duty to give precedence to children's play

desires, making playwork the only sector of the children's workforce that explicitly professes a reversal of power relations between professional adult and playing child. Implicitly, it is based on notions of rights and justice, and as such has the potential to create problems for the playworker as an emotional and relational subject (Chapter 9). A MacIntyrean understanding of internal goods as realised through efforts to develop standards of excellence – understood as virtues (ways of being rather than doing) – offers an alternative to such a deontological stance.

Whilst the *Assumptions and Values* listed specific characteristics of sensitivity, care, considerateness, respect and non-discrimination, the Playwork Principles rest more on expert propositional than personal or dialogic knowledge (Urban, 2008), despite the reference to reflective practice, something that itself has fallen prey to technical practice (Kinsella, 2009).

The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.

The only reference to relationships was somewhat oblique, phrased in rather deontic language and derived from the psychodynamic theories of Sturrock and Else (2005):

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

This principle is picked up later in the section on subjectivity, emotions and morality. The final statement within the Playwork Principles was also an attempt to acknowledge the fundamental contradiction of agency and control:

All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

This assumes that all interventions in children's play have some relationship with risk, highlighting the pervasiveness of the risk discourse in playwork. It takes a utilitarian stance on issues of risk, in line with sector moves away from risk assessment and towards risk-benefit assessment. Again, the benefit is predominantly seen as developmental, understood as developing skills in calibration and risk assessment (Ball, Gill and Spiegel, 2008), with competence, judgement and control resting with the playworker who has to make rational calculations about the possibility of harm against putative benefit. This reproduces a discourse of risk that paradoxically places playworkers in situations where they may make the wrong decisions, leading to anxiety and frequently higher levels of

intervention to err on the side of safety despite professing to support 'risky play' (Lester and Russell, 2008b). This dialectic provides a useful illustration of the shortcomings of universal and rational ethical theories of both duty and of consequences when applied to relationships with children at play, examined further in the next section.

11.4 Ethics, space and alterity

Chapter 8 illustrates how a spatial analysis of playwork can allow for understanding the value of playwork beyond a utilitarian and future-focused developmentalism. It shows how Lefebvre's (1991) dialectical triad of conceived, perceived and lived space can help to navigate the use/exchange value contradiction by highlighting how moments of lived space can arise within and alongside causal, totalising assumptions about design, intervention and outcomes, and that these can be small moments of implicit political activism (Horton and Kraftl, 2009). It also takes into account the macro- and micro-level politics of play settings. This section picks up these themes from an ethical perspective.

Smith (1997) notes the ethical turn in human geography towards the end of the twentieth century. A key tension in these studies was between justice at macro level and morality at local level, between universal notions of right and wrong and relativism. Smith (1997, p. 587) proposes there may be some broad universal agreement about right and wrong, but these might find different expression in different places, suggesting this offers a particular role for moral geography:

This is to take up where most philosophers leave off: to examine the contextual thickening of moral concepts in the particular (local) circumstances of differentiated human being. And this requires neither the abandonment of the entire Enlightenment philosophical heritage, nor the complete embrace of postmodernism.

Such a perspective suggests there is a place both for universal statements about ethical playwork practice and for a more situated and relational morality as the enactment and embodiment of difference. Professional judgement executed within a broad set of principles implies moving beyond a technical application of skills and procedures towards a form of authentic deep acting (Hochschild, 1983) based on developing a set of virtues and attentiveness to caring. The dialectic here, illustrated by Hochschild, is between virtues as a way of realising the internal goods of a practice and emotional labour sold as a commodity.

Being and becoming a playworker may involve paying attention to the development of a playwork subjectivity through engagement in the social practice and through developing the necessary virtues as a striving for *eudemonia* (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]) seen as an authenticity (disalienation) in lived space (Lefebvre, 1991). This use value will be intertwined with moments of alienation in the demands of perceived space as playworkers also seek to realise exchange value.

Play settings do not operate in isolation from broader spatial politics. Contemporary urban geographers (for example, Harvey, 2012; Katz, 2011) show how neoliberal capitalism works to produce spatial inequalities and injustices (as discussed in Chapters 4, 8 and 10). Spatial planning and dominant spatial practices (Lefebvre, 1991) combine to close down space, reproducing common sense regimes of truth (Foucault, 1977). For Foucault, ethics consist in care of the self, understood as loosening the hold of discursive regimes through identifying and resisting them. As such, his ethics are more ontological than epistemological, personal rather than universal (Fillion, 2005), having much in common with approaches to virtue ethics (Levy, 2004). This suggests that playworkers have some ethical responsibility to look to themselves, to care for themselves in identifying and resisting regimes of truth so as to be able to care for others.

The issue of risk and play was introduced in the previous section, and is revisited here in order to illustrate how Foucauldian ethics might be applied to the hegemony of risk discourse which, when applied to children and play, has paradoxically led to further surveillance and control:

Adults working with children at play find themselves in a position of risk anxiety (an anxiety perceived to be caused by children's play), and to manage their own risks they must reduce or remove the element of risk in the play, creating a vicious cycle that encourages caution and mediocrity for all concerned. It is an expression of fear *for* children and also fear *of* children for what they might do if they are not kept under close control and supervision. The guiding principle becomes one of believing that if we do something (anything), we can stop something else from happening (Lester and Russell, 2008b, p. 6).

The contention here is that the discourse of risk and play needs to be exposed as such, with alternative understandings offered and, following Foucault, that this is an ethical issue. As it currently stands, it is a 'totalising' discourse that does not allow for other possibilities, either in terms of children's competence, or in terms of non-rational elements of playing. It

is a subset not only of a wider risk discourse but also of a child safety and protection discourse that permeates social policy and practices relating to children. This concept is further explored here before offering a more open 'infinite' (Levinas, 1969) perspective.

In their analysis of social policy relating to children, Lester and Russell (2013a) draw on Bauman's (2003) two attributes of policy projects, namely fixity/finality and territorialisation. Far, utopian hope is expressed in policies relating to children. Alongside this is a territorialisation of childhood through 'spaces of enclosure' (Rose, 1999b, p. 35), the institutions of childhood such as a school or play centre. 'These spaces are designed for a purpose and are produced and constantly reproduced through practices, making this seem like the natural order of things' (Lester and Russell, 2013a, p. 42). Bauman (2003) terms these policy projects 'totalising', a concept also used by Levinas (1969). Totality represents an ideology that leaves nothing out, that encompasses everything in generalities, reducing all things to the same. In this sense, it is a denial of alterity, of anything that is different. Thus, applying this to a putative ethics of playwork, 'children' become a total concept; within common sense regimes of truth produced through policies and the practices that ensue, a total concept of all children becomes a generality with no space for difference. For Levinas (who did not discuss children), ethics, as a first philosophy prior to epistemology and ontology, lies in resisting the tyranny of totality, seeking the surplus beyond. In terms of relations with others, we should not seek to know others within our own worldview, since this would be to reduce them to the same as us; we should accept the alterity of the Other. For playworkers, this could operate at two levels, at least: one is the otherness, the 'as if' nature of play (described in Chapter 5); the other is the alterity of children. The issue of play is addressed first, returning to previous discussions on risk and play.

Lester and Russell (2008b) offer an alternative view that challenges the hegemony of the totalising discourse and has implications for an ethics of playwork. Foregrounding the idea of 'uncertainty', rather than risk (which has become conflated with 'harm') as a central feature of playing for children offers broader possibilities for understanding beyond the totality of developing risk assessment skills. From peek-a-boo through to myriad other play forms, children deliberately seek out uncertainty in their play, and develop sophisticated techniques for managing it within the safety of the frame. Spinka, Newberry and Bekoff (2001) suggest that the instrumental value of such playing, motivated by the thrill of experiencing disorientation in relative safety, primes systems to cope with novelty and the

unexpected. Sutton-Smith (2003) suggests that the pleasure such triumph over uncertainty gives in play allows for moments of optimism beyond the difficulties, fears and boredoms of everyday life – moments in Lefebvre's lived space as a resistance to the power and dominance of conceived and perceived space. The ethical implications of this are, in Foucauldian terms, for playworkers to care for themselves and to acknowledge this critique of the risk discourse in order to reduce their own risk anxiety and feel more comfortable with uncertainty.

The specific otherness of playing, its extra-ordinary 'as-if' characteristics, places a unique ethical response-ability on playworkers. To this can be added broader ethical consideration of the otherness of children, an otherness occluded by the totalising effects of the dominant paradigm (Moss, 2007). Geographers, particularly those with leanings towards Non-Representational Theory (for example, Philo, 2003; Jones, 2008; Aitken and Herman, 1997) have theorised the otherness of children, perhaps summed up in the following quotation:

Of all people who can be constituted as 'other' in that they are different from ourselves, children are perhaps the most perplexing because they are intimately part of our lives and they are, in large part, constituted by what we are and what we do. It is one of the great ironies of human experience that by the time we are old enough to reflect upon what it is like to be a young child, we are far removed from the experience and are likely to have difficulty fully empathising (Aitken and Herman, 1997, p. 63-64).

Wall (2010, 2013) brings an ethical perspective. Classical, rational and totalising conceptions of childhood within philosophy have been a Kantian, 'top-down' approach of the Dionysian child; a Rousseauesque 'bottom-up' approach of the Apollonian child; and a Lockean 'blank slate' approach. Wall asserts these conceptions are still evident in contemporary articulations of children's rights, and none of them treats children as full human beings. He suggests an ethics of alterity – 'but only if it, too is rethought' (Wall, 2010, p. 90). Central to this is the notion of disruption: to be responsive to the other without reducing them to the same disrupts our being. Wall (2008, p. 537) cites Levinas (1969):

Ethical 'responsibility' is a call for 'response': not to freedom and power but to 'the strangeness of the other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions' (1969, p. 43). Only by encountering the shock of otherness can

selves and societies open themselves up in hospitality to the genuine complexity and fullness of humanity.

The response to this irreducible otherness is not merely a passive one; according to Wall's interpretation of Levinas, children need active responses. The dialectic becomes one of responsibility, in terms of a duty of care that provides what is needed and that seeks to avoid harm, and a response-ability to otherness that recreates our own selves. Perhaps what this becomes is an ethics of care that is open to disruption by the alterity of the other. This requires accepting there is no essential 'self' that constructs the Other as lack (Nealon, 1998).

This brings the discussion back to Principle 7 (PPSG, 2005):

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

The analysis offered here moves beyond the psychodynamic origins of the Principle (Sturrock and Else, 2005) to draw on emotional and moral geographies and the emotions identified in the fieldwork of hope, anger, fear and shame.

11.5 Subjectivity, emotions and morality

[T]he diagnosis and deployment of subjectivities is not a dialectical ballet – the either/or of the subjective essentialism/constructionism debate – but a hesitating negotiation among the effects that performative interventions produce ... Call its origins socially constructed, call them essential, either way, the stake of the subject and its ethical force remains a question of effects (Nealon, 1998, pp. 169-170).

Throop (2012, p. 150) offers a perspective on the place of emotions (what he terms 'sentiments') in moral codes in order to 'shed important light on the place of sentiments in defining distinctive moral modes of being in particular communities of practice'. This is a useful notion for considering playwork as its ethos is embedded and embodied in the performance of moral sentiments. Illustrating how the history of moral philosophy has largely seen emotions as 'in direct conflict with moral reasoning' (Throop, 2012, p. 151), he outlines how attention and perception are grounded in a set of histories, experiences, cultural attitudes and 'sensory, imaginal, emotional, existential, and embodied processes'

(p 157) that can change over time and that determine the kinds of objects or events that attract our attention. We can modify this perception (which he terms 'natural attitude') through conscious attempts to be reflexive about our own responses to objects ('theoretical attitude'). The way we feel (viscerally) and the way we express feelings (emote) can be culturally influenced, including by professional communities of practice. From this, we may infer that ethics consists in what Foucault termed 'technologies of the self' (Martin, Gutman and Hutton, 1988), where we seek to become ethical not only by following rules but through being an ethical subject. Foucault argues that the ancient Graeco-Roman principle of caring for oneself in order to know oneself has become, over time, a principle of knowing oneself as a fundamental principle of moral asceticism, as seen in Christian traditions of confession and renunciation. This is reflected in playwork sector discussions regarding intervention and its conflation with adulteration:

There is a strong strand of theorising in playwork that asserts that play is a biological phenomenon to do with survival of the species. Play is seen as something 'natural' that is being contaminated by society. Playworkers should leave their politics (and their moral values) at the door and let nature do its work in the play space untainted by the imperfections of social concerns. Play, understood as an evolutionary and biological imperative, is, in this construction, nevertheless susceptible to threats from society. Politics [and by implication, moral sentiments], held up as ideology, is denounced as the handmaiden of adulteration of children's play (Russell, 2010d, p. 1).

In this account, the emoting moral self has little place in the play space, given the potential to adulterate. Consequently, playworkers attempt to renounce the impact on them of children's play, feeling shame when their own values and emotions get in the way. I have long regarded this line of argument as somewhat dehumanising, dismissing the importance of caring relationships and demanding the impossible task of removing the self:

These children come on and I'm part of the furniture. I'm a piece of furniture that talks and can answer questions and suggest things and help them to do what they want to do if they want me to or if they don't want me to I'll just back off (Kay, CP).

The potential to adulterate remains, yet one way of addressing this ethically is through caring for oneself in order to know oneself. Throop (2012) maintains that 'theoretical attitude' develops within everyday situations and also when taken-for-granted modes of being-in-the-world are challenged. Drawing on Levinas, he suggests moral experience arises

in the encounter with the Other where moral modalities and taken-for-granted ways of being-in-the-world are disrupted, even if only momentarily. Ethics consists in making efforts not to reduce the Other to a version of the Self, to stay open to Otherness. This is an emotional and embodied endeavour, through care of the self, towards developing a set of virtues or dispositions. This sits in a dialectical relationship with the Playwork Principles that lay down what the playworker must *do* rather than *be*. Both have their place, but as Levy (2004, p. 22) noted, ‘the two are mutually exclusive in the sense that an increase in one automatically causes a decrease in the other’.

There is also a tension between caring and justice. If justice is seen as ‘law’ – fixed, universal, written down in inadequate language – then this cannot be responsive to the particular. Yet there has to be something universal or merely responding to the particular cannot take account of other Others. The Playwork Principles, as a universal code, lay down what is unique about playwork. As such, they focus on the relationship between adults and children in the moment of playing, although the affective environment, the atmosphere and the culture of settings are co-produced through all relations, not only when the children are playing. The ‘rules’ of the Play Centre (the written law, the ground rules) assumed universality in the name of equality and fairness, but the playworkers also acknowledged, through their everyday practice, that some children were less capable than others of observing them. Nevertheless, there was a feeling that these rules needed to exist and that they could operate alongside a tacit caring, as illustrated in the endless deconstructing of situations and conversations and attempts at agreeing appropriate responses, especially after gross violations of rules, such as the assault.

There is potential for selfless caring, as a form of deep acting of feeling rules (Hochschild, 1983), to become exploitative and lead to burnout. Lawrence and Maitlis (2012) emphasise the importance of caring for each other as workers. For the playwork team at the Play Centre, this caring was largely enacted through discursive practice, through the stories that workers told about ‘sparkling moments’, the contextualisation of the struggles they faced, and constructing future-oriented stories. Such stories were evident in interviews, as was the care they showed for each other at times of stress and anxiety.

Massumi (2002, p. 217) draws on the Spinozan notion of affect, in terms of both affecting a situation and being affected by it, so that things change in the moment. Affect, understood in bodily terms, is about passing a threshold, a change in capacity.

To move in an ethical direction, from a Spinozan point of view, is not to attach positive or negative values to actions based on a characterisation or classification of them according to a pre-set system of judgment. It means assessing what kind of potential they tap into and express. Whether a person is going to joke or get angry when they are in a tight spot, that uncertainty produces an affective change in the situation. That affective loading and how it plays out is an ethical act, because it affects where people might go or what they might do as a result.

This helps playworkers move away from the idea of some kind of rational choice response (although of course bodily affect responses will be bound up in memories of similar situations and past responses). This embodied affect/affecting can link to near hope and can be motivated by feelings of vitality in the here and now, a present form of hope, discussed in Chapter 9. Ethics, then is situational and always relational, happening between people who are both affected and affecting. 'Ethics is about how we inhabit uncertainty, together,' (Massumi, 2002, p. 218).

11.6 Violence

All that has been said so far regarding the ethics of care and alterity applies well to an ethics of playwork that leaves room for uncertainty, moments of nonsense as near hope, the importance of caring relationships in the lives of the children attending the Play Centre and so on. It becomes challenged when applied to the more chaotic and violent aspects of the work discussed in Chapter 10. This section considers what Levinas has to say about violence, and although this does not provide a solution to the kinds of violence seen in the fieldwork and recounted in interviews, it provides an ethical framework for thinking differently about relationships.

Violence was at the heart of Levinas' writing, not least because he was a Jewish prisoner of war during the Second World War. He argued that understanding morality requires an understanding of war and violence as the opposite of morality (Levinas, 1969). Levinas does not define violence, and often there is confusion between 'real-bloody' violence and the violence of reduction, of totality (Altez, 2007, p. 54). For Levinas (1969, 1989), ethics is 'first philosophy' because the responsibility to respond ('respons-ability') to the demands of the Other comes before any self (ontology) or knowledge (epistemology). The self is

summoned to look after the other. There is no guarantee of reciprocity, the relation is not symmetrical, something useful for playworkers to consider.

Levinas distinguishes between *autrui* (the personal Other), and *autre* (a general otherness), but the same responsibility applies: this is justice, bound to social relations. It creates contradictions because responding to some may do violence to others. There is a need for the state and institutions, but justice can often be violence. One-to-one relationships are inevitably affected by third parties (*autré*), the state and macro level politics. There are parallels here with the revolutionary hope discussed in Chapter 9 and professional responses to the violence of the children as discussed in Chapter 10, illustrated through the dialectical relationship between the playworkers' anger at the poverty and deprivation in children's lives – a violence of neoliberal capitalism – and how they answered the call to care, but still worked within the youth justice systems that often perpetuated structural violence (Parkes and Connolly, 2011).

In discussing the violence of epistemology, Levinas uses the term 'grasp' to refer to the reduction of everything to a totality of the Self. The Other becomes the Same by becoming mine. Neoliberal technical practices in working with children and the totalising projects of policy aimed at children reaching their 'full potential' are just this kind of grasping, unethical violence (Lester and Russell, 2013a; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005). This is particularly apposite when looking at children *at play*. Most ethical theories are developed in relation to adults and about real-world behaviours. Whilst the play/not-play boundaries are fuzzy, bringing rational adult morality to bear on children's playful expressions is even more of a violence, since play itself is a form of Other being-in-the-world (Wall, 2013).

This brief summary suggests that an ethics of playwork should acknowledge the capacity to do violence towards others by trying to know them from one's own worldview, that is, grasping and turning into the Same, rather than being open to Otherness. It may extend beyond relationships with children to ethical relationships within the team. This includes accepting there is no single essential 'playworker' and each member of the team brings something different. In particular, caring for each other becomes important at moments of 'kicking off':

We did spend some time talking about these issues ... they were largely nothing to do with the kids but more about the way we looked after each other as workers. We found that when we noticed that things were starting to escalate a coming together of workers in some sort of defence mode was not helpful – it

increased the emerging divide and gave a focused target. The other option was for the workers to play their way out of it together – not directly with children but directed at each other – mimicking each other, grand operatic gestures, etc. – that helped workers recognise what might be taking place. This tended to shift the confrontational aspects into another area – children 'taking the piss' against these actions or starting just stand on the sides and starting to laugh, etc. ... [This needs a team that is fairly solid and] it took about five years to get to that point (discussion with colleague on MSN, 1/11/06).

11.7 Conclusion: towards playwork virtues/dispositions

This chapter has considered playwork's codes of ethics as rules and mediating artefacts that have developed over time in response to contradictions both within playwork as an activity system and with networked systems. Codes of ethics tend to be largely deontic and utilitarian in nature, since they are, by definition, universal statements that serve multiple functions. Whilst there is a need for such statements as guiding principles, there is also a need for a more relational, situated and emotional ethics. The relationship between the two is inevitably dialectical, particularly when playwork is embedded in the broader potentially totalising context of neoliberal capitalism and current social policies relating to children.

Three interrelated ethical theories of being have informed the ethics of playwork presented here:

- Playwork is a social practice that has a history and a tradition (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]). There is a dialectical relationship with playwork's institutions that support and potentially corrupt and also between playwork's internal and external goods. The internal goods of playwork practice are realised through developing standards of excellence – that is, virtues.
- Feminist ethics of care challenge the hegemony of the moral agent as a detached rational being and the totalising potential of universal codes of conduct that risk becoming hollow and technical practice. This approach emphasises the place of relationships and emotions, two themes that were prominent in the fieldwork.
- Levinas' ethics of alterity places a response-ability to avoid the violence of totalising ontology and epistemology, requiring openness to otherness that resists

turning the Other into the Same by grasping and trying to know them. There is also a responsibility for justice towards other Others through broad universal rules.

This closing section returns to virtue ethics and adapts Rushing's (2010) analysis of Judith Butler's ethics, showing how she draws on both Foucault and Levinas to uncover four dispositions that may be understood as virtues. These are generosity, humility, patience and restraint (as a virtue of not-doing). Butler makes the case for developing a subjectivity that is at ease with vulnerability, rather than the overriding thrust towards invincibility, mastery, supremacy. Clear and certain identities risk essentialising and therefore eliding difference. This applies well to the heterogeneity of playworkers as people despite universalising theories and principles. In applying Butler's interpretation of Levinas to playwork, the relation with children precedes being a playworker. Butler suggests that before the relationship there is the issue of social norms: Foucauldian regimes of truth that govern subjectivity. This may apply well to some aspects of playwork theory that potentially dehumanise playworkers through the requirement to put their subjective identities to one side in service of the playing child.

Two further applications of this thinking are worthy of consideration. The first is the idea of dispositions rather than essentialising characteristics or virtues. This is potentially useful, as it echoes similar discussions regarding the nature of play itself (Lester and Russell, 2013a, 2010a, 2008a). Feezell's (2010) pluralist, non-reductive account embraces play as an activity, as an attitude or state of mind, as a form or structure, as a meaningful experience and as an ontologically discrete phenomenon. Generally speaking, in the totalising, future-focused discourse of social policy, play is constructed as an object to be manipulated in the socialisation project, often as a planned activity aimed at achieving desired outcomes. Lester and Russell (2013a, p. 40) suggest an alternative conceptualisation of play as a disposition 'that seeks to create time/spaces that disrupt and disturb the taken-for-granted ordering of the (adult) world', in other words as a resistance to the totalising violence of regimes of truth. It is fitting, therefore, to employ the same term to a reworking of the idea of virtues. The second application is that of Aristotle's 'golden mean' as a guard against essentialising these dispositions. The ideal is to develop an authentic disposition that sits between excess and deficiency. These are not innate characteristics of the perfect playworker; rather they are dispositions that playworkers aim to develop in order to realise the internal goods of playwork as a social practice.

Adapting Butler, the dispositions are: openness, playfulness, humility, and patience and restraint as dispositions of *not*-doing that can guard against the totalising and essentialising that policy often assumes and requires.

Openness: being comfortable with not knowing, in terms of both children and playwork colleagues as Others and in terms of play's unpredictability and spontaneity.

Playfulness: this does not mean forever playing the clown, or being a Pied Piper character. It does mean being open to turning situations on their head, accepting of moments of nonsense that arise, and bringing a playful disposition to situations that may be conflictual, if appropriate. Returning to the discussion in Chapter 5, it means not taking play too seriously, as it is far too important for that.

Humility: linked to Butler's disposition of generosity, this requires an uncertainty regarding our own selves, given that categories (for example, woman, playworker) seek to essentialise and smooth away difference, a form of violence in the Levinasian sense. If we follow Foucault's notion of ethics as challenging the truth of the established order, this equally unsettles our idea of identity, of who we are, freeing us to be unknown to ourselves and to live at the edge of our own limits of knowledge. In terms of relationships with children, and especially children at play, 'we work in a field of not knowing' (Sturrock, Russell and Else, 2004, p. 33).

Patience and restraint: for Butler, this involves not demanding that the Other explain or define themselves in a way we can understand. It is perhaps a disposition of *not* doing, of waiting and seeing. This is not to be confused with doing nothing, particularly in terms of current discussions regarding intervention and adulteration in playwork. It requires a mindfulness and openness to the unknown and to uncertainty, perhaps even a sense of wonder at what may emerge rather than anxiety at what might happen.

As with Butler's dispositions identified by Rushing (2010), these are interdependent and interrelated, applying to relations both with the children and with other team members, leaving space open for disalienating moments in lived space for staff as well as children. Cultivating these dispositions may be a way to realise the internal goods of playwork as social practice alongside recognition of the external goods as defined in the deontological and utilitarian Playwork Principles.

Chapter 12: Conclusions

This concluding chapter opens with a reflection on the external factors that influenced the research and particularly the data analysis before moving on to reflect on playwork as an activity system and on what the study contributes to the body of knowledge on playwork. It then considers the contributions to methodology of ethnographic research that foregrounds small moments alongside the grander assertions regarding the value of playwork. Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory as a framework for an analysis of the dialectics of playwork as an activity system offered an original perspective that positions playwork within the politics of the production of space. An extended extract from the fieldnotes illustrates the myriad elements that combine to co-produce a space in which playfulness can thrive. The chapter ends with some recommendations for further research.

12.1: Reflections on the ecology of analysis: looking back in 2013 to fieldwork carried out in 2006

It is unsurprising, if not inevitable, given its inductive and ethnographic nature (and given my history, investment and immersion in the playwork sector) that this study should have evolved over the eight years of its life. Much has happened in those eight years, in terms of changes in the sector itself, my own understanding of it theoretically and the interplay between the two. Two commissioned desk-based research projects that I undertook with my colleague Stuart Lester were particularly influential. The first of these was *Play for a Change: Play, policy and practice – a review of contemporary perspectives* (Lester and Russell, 2008a), a literature review commissioned by Play England to present evidence to inform the English Play Strategy. This was a major undertaking and reviewed a number of disciplinary approaches to conceptualising children's play that confirmed some of my thinking regarding the dialectics of playwork and at the same time was deeply unsettling. As we trawled through the literature, what emerged was a picture of children's play lives that challenged many of the assumptions underpinning playwork discourse. I remember being left with a profound sense of unease regarding playwork's fundamental contradiction between use and exchange value. A journal entry from that time reads:

PFAC [*Play for a Change*] has been mega. After the fieldwork I had to bury myself in work in order to catch up after a month of minimal maintenance. And then along came PFAC just as I was recovering. The emotional toll of the fieldwork has been ENORMOUS. And then PFAC took over my life for the three months it took to produce the first draft and then the year after that refining it. But more than that it scratched so hard at the wound that was my doubt about playwork's value that I ended up thinking – in terms of what I had come to understand about children's play – that playwork might be part of the problem as well as the solution. How to work through this one?

It perhaps needs to be clarified that at no time did I think that playwork *per se* was an unequivocal barrier rather than a support for children's play. Rather, the traditional justifications for its value had slowly unravelled as a result of reflections on the literature and my experiences within the sector. I began to appreciate that playworkers were adults and that despite the best of intentions, as the Opies (1969) had said, there should be distance between adults and children's self-organised play and that too much adult involvement risks colonisation. This applied to playworkers as well as other adults working with children; we could not deny our adulthood and set ourselves apart. The playwork sector's assertion of its compensatory value (Brown and Patte, 2013; Brown and Patte, 2011; Hughes, 2006, 2012) might be just another redemptive discourse based in nostalgia for a golden age when children supposedly happily played out, engaging in multiple forms of playing unhindered by traffic, power plays by other children, grumpy grown-ups, adult fears for safety, the constraints of programmed activities, academic pressures and the lure of new technology. Whilst acknowledging these changes in children's lives do have an impact on time, space and permission to play, many of them are not particularly recent, and our review of the literature revealed children's play patterns are neither universal nor simple. Beyond the questionable and emotive concept of play deprivation, the playwork-as-compensation argument foregrounds a conceptualisation of play as discrete form of activity that takes place (only and always) in certain places and times, whereas the review highlighted the value of also seeing play as a disposition, a playful approach that can erupt during everyday routines whenever conditions allow. More fundamentally troubling, however, is that the argument perpetuates the institutionalisation of children and their separation from the public realm and it positions adults in the role of providing specific spaces for play, thereby potentially occluding children's capacity and agency to take time and space themselves for playing. If playworkers advocate for the kinds of play that takes place away from the eyes of adults, it might be argued that this should take the form of

campaigning to make environmental changes to the public realm so that children can roam and play on the streets. These internal contradictions were deeply unsettling and have prompted me to search for an alternative way of representing the value of playwork. What is clear to me from my experience as a playworker, from my discussions with playworkers over nearly four decades and from the fieldwork, is that the spaces that playworkers co-produce with children are highly significant for those children and their families. My aim in the analysis of the data for this research study was to find a way of articulating that.

The second desk-based research project was commissioned by the International Play Association and was a 'concept paper' (Lester and Russell, 2010a) in support of their successful campaign for a General Comment on Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2013). This process helped to consolidate the application of ideas presented in *Play for a Change*, and extended the literature review to an international and children's rights perspective. Both projects were political in the sense that they sought to influence policy development and to draw conclusions about what role adults had in supporting children's play. These two themes have exercised me throughout this study. This has become more pertinent given the severe cuts in funding that the play and playwork sector has faced since 2010, three and a half years after I completed my fieldwork. The staff team and the working conditions at the Play Centre have changed significantly, and many playwork projects across the country have disappeared altogether (Martin, 2013; Stephenson, 2012). The task facing the sector now is to find a clearer articulation of the links between its use and exchange value.

In addition, other research projects (Lester and Russell, 2013b; Lester, Jones and Russell, 2011) have further disturbed some of the taken-for-granted understandings concerning the co-production of a space where children can play. In particular, a research project live at the time of writing has begun to focus on the flows, forces, rhythms and movements, the coming together and falling apart of bodies, material and symbolic objects, histories and so on that co-produce the 'atmosphere' of an adventure playground. These begin to welcome time back in, acknowledging the circadian rhythms of the co-production of space rather than the linear time of developmentalism.

The conceptualisations that have informed and emerged from the discussion chapters offer an alternative articulation of playwork's value that acknowledges the contingent, emergent and opportunistic ways in which spatial practices can support children's ability to find time

and space to play and also the importance of relationships based on accepting uncertainty and alterity alongside structures that require monitoring of specific outcomes.

12.2 Reflections on playwork as an activity system

Following an introductory chapter, Part One offered an opening position through a literature-informed conceptualisation of children's play and playwork. Chapter 2 introduced Cultural Historical Activity Theory, and this, together with a critique of language in Chapter 3, provided the basis for the dialectical consideration of the production of childhood in Chapter 4 and of play itself in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 returned to the CHAT framework to propose a theoretical application for playwork, identifying its object as the production of a space in which children can play and highlighting the dialectic between playwork's use and exchange value. The theme interwoven throughout was Lefebvre's triadic dialectics of social practice, knowledge production and Nietzsche's third moment of poesy. This triad allows for an appreciation of moments of playfulness that arise in the cracks between adult knowledge production of children and their play and of social practices that reproduce dominant, taken-for-granted constructs.

Part Two moved on to apply the conceptualisation developed in the first part, looking at playwork's everyday practice. Following a discussion on the methodology and the ethics of ethnography in Chapter 7, the discussion chapters opened with a closer examination of playwork as the production of a space where children can play (Chapter 8). The key message here is the call for a greater appreciation of moments in lived space (Lefebvre, 1991), which exist dialectically alongside the instrumental focus of conceived space and contradictory spatial practices. Chapter 9 looked at the playworker(s) as the subject of the activity system, particularly hope as an emotion that manifests in three forms: the far hope of totalising policy projects, a far and near form of revolutionary hope that things can be better for the children, and a near hope found in moments of playfulness. Chapter 10 explored the theme of violence in playwork settings, offering a political and spatial analysis to moderate the dominant focus on children's undisciplined minds and bodies. It considered how playworkers navigated the dialectic of agency and control, of use and exchange value, through developing a repertoire of responses to support children's ability to establish and maintain play frames. It also explored playworkers' strategies for coping when a service ideal is momentarily disrupted.

Part Three moved towards ethical praxis, reflecting on the conceptual and analytical themes to develop an ethics for playwork, proposing a relational and situated ethics beyond (but encompassing) deontic rules, one that acknowledges the alterity of children and colleagues, suggesting playwork dispositions of openness, playfulness, humility, patience and restraint.

12.3 Theoretical reflections: contributions of the research to the body of knowledge on playwork

Chapters 8-10 presented analyses that offer an original contribution to the body of knowledge, particularly in terms of articulating playwork's unique nature and value. Chapter 11 revisited this material and offered normative conclusions in terms of how the politics of space, emotions and violence might speak to an ethics of playwork. The overall analysis has developed from considering playwork as an activity system, looking at the contradictions both within and between the points of the system, as well as with networked activity system. Conceptualising playwork's object as the co-production of a space where children can play led to a spatial analysis from which emerged a political analysis of the space at micro and macro levels (but not, in this study, paying much attention to meso levels – that is, the management style and policy of the local authority). This in turn led to a spatial and political exploration of the two aspects of the fieldwork that had been most remarkable to me as researcher: the intense emotionality of the Play Centre and the ever present threat of violence. These are aspects of playwork that have had little attention in the literature.

Lefebvre's (1991) theorising on the production of space, and particularly his dialectical triad of conceived, perceived and lived space, emerged as a fitting basis for analysing and interpreting the data. Much playwork literature, particularly that with a campaigning and advocacy role, resides firmly within conceived space, the abstract Euclidean space of designers, planners and cartographers where content is named (for example the quiet corner or the fire pit) and affordances thereby implied and promoted. Spatial practice (perceived space) is often described similarly (for example, in the National Occupational Standards and in funding bids), in ways that assume instrumental outcomes. Alongside conceived and perceived space, and in a dialectical relationship with them, is lived space, and this is the space of escape from the humdrum of daily life, the space of exuberance,

playfulness and also violent displays. The dialectic here is that the official articulations of playwork's value reside in conceived and perceived space, and necessarily so, because lived space defies representation in this way and cannot be planned in any precise or predictable way. Nonetheless, this analysis allows an appreciation of how space is co-produced through assemblages of people, histories, contexts and material and symbolic artefacts and, through this, an appreciation of the contingent and situated nature of each moment and encounter. This helps to move the analysis and eventually the discourse beyond simple cause-and-effect in terms of planning, intent, intervention and value articulations. And yet this is not an either/or binary: conceived and perceived space are not the opposites of lived space. Homogenising playwork through universal statements closes down the opportunity for exploring the situated and contingent nature of playwork, and yet these are necessary in order to convey both its use and exchange value.

What emerges as an overall theme is recognition that what happens in playwork settings is as a result of particular opportunistic combinations of material and symbolic artefacts, people, histories, weather, desires and more. Points of the CHAT triangle become fluid: the spatial object becomes entangled with the process of production, consumption and distribution; Lefebvre's triad becomes a mediating artefact. Rules of funding agencies are at times mediating artefacts and at others become the object of the activity; this process moves play from object to mediating artefact, reifying it and commodifying it as a tool to help achieve instrumental outcomes, alienating both children and playworkers in the process. This fluidity was an accepted aspect of the work. While space and activities can be planned, the playworkers clearly understood that the ways these would be used were only predictable up to a point. What was also apparent is the significance of small moments and perhaps these, in combination over time, might make a significant contribution to the outcomes that funders seek and playworkers report, although there is little guarantee. This supports Beunderman's (2010) finding that although playworkers navigate the tension triangle of intrinsic, institutional and instrumental value, without intrinsic value the other two will be moot.

The other key theme to emerge from the analyses of space, emotion and violence was that of politics. Class became a central theme as the analysis developed, allowing the formation of an alternative perspective on the 'challenging behaviour' that the Children's Fund project intended to address that moves away from individual psychological approaches towards acknowledgement of the importance of ecological issues. The spatial and political

analysis of structural violence discussed in Chapter 10 counters the dominant tendency to individualise and pathologise social problems such as violence and hyperkinetic disorders thereby placing blame on children and families themselves, with interventions aimed at 'fixing' dysfunctional individuals and families (Communities and Local Government, 2012; Mooney, 2010). All the playworkers in the study felt a strong sense of injustice at the living conditions for the children using their projects, reflected in the three kinds of hope discussed in Chapter 9, and hoped that what they offer could make life a little better in the here-and-now. Playworkers often felt they were the only adults who were positive towards the children, as many faced neglect or violence at home and were often in trouble with school or other authorities. This can be understood as a form of minor political activism (Horton and Kraftl, 2009). In their eyes, their value was clear, as Gareth said in one post-session debrief: 'Where would these kids be without the Play Centre? ... if we weren't around the time bomb would go off'. Although much of what the playworkers did and spoke of was about supporting the children to develop social skills ('moving them on'), from the tight controls and sanctions to the conversation they had with the children about their behaviour, they were also playful and supported the small moments of nonsense and near hope. What this shows is that their discourse was dominated by far hope and interventions to normalise individual children; what the analysis offered here does is raise the profile of the playful encounters and caring approach that build a culture where those kinds of conversations could mean something.

In summary, this analysis of playwork offers an articulation of both use and exchange value. Although the dominant discourse is embedded in conceived and perceived space, the practice also leaves space open for moments in lived space, and although this is harder to articulate and impossible to plan (although it is possible to plan *for*), any instrumental value stems from this openness and it should form the basis for an ethics of playwork, together with other dispositions of playfulness, humility, patience and restraint.

This section ends with a fairly lengthy extract from my fieldnotes, offered here because it gives a flavour of the nature of the space and the power of storytelling, and because it brings together many of the key analytical themes. The Play Centre has a tradition of celebrating Hallowe'en and the children are particularly ghoulish in their play. The October half term also coincided with both Eid and Diwali, and the Play Centre neighbourhood has a large Muslim and a smaller Sikh community.

Tuesday 24 October 2006

Staff on: Verda, Carla, Tanith, Jem, Gareth

[Today] I spent almost all of the morning inside ... One craft table has bird feeders as an activity, another has the materials to make a mummy, another has henna and associated resources. The mummy idea gave rise to so many different play episodes throughout the whole morning. To begin with, Verda shows a small group of children how to make the bird feeders – smear peanut butter on a pine cone and then cover it in bird seed, then put string on it. She keeps up a constant conversation with the children, but speaks quietly. I can hear if I listen but it is easy for me to become distracted by the louder children and playworkers. She is generally very upbeat, constructive and genuinely interested in the children and what they are doing. Her patience astounds me.

A mother comes in with two daughters and explains one has a chest infection so will need her inhaler (she can administer this herself) and to take her off the list for swimming tomorrow. Both Jem and Verda hear her say this. Later, Verda tells Carla.

Tyrone is the first to finish a bird feeder. Verda labels it and then comes into the kitchen looking for some way of keeping the feeders safe until the children want to take them home. She finds a tube and I say I'll sort it so she can get back to the children. Tyrone is standing up at the bar. He asks me if I have found any information for the balloon debate [at school he is working on a balloon debate for Black History month and needs to research key people]. I say yes and hand him the sheets I have downloaded on all four people. I tell him I haven't read them yet. Gareth comes up and Tyrone tells him about the balloon debate. It has turned into a balloon debate happening at the Play Centre. Tyrone wants to make a big balloon for it, but not just now – in about three weeks he says.

Verda has moved to the mummy table and is starting to work on this with a group of 8-10 children. There are several bags of shredded paper ... The idea is to stuff the clothes with the shredded paper. The children start this, and inevitably, one child (6-year-old boy) decides to throw the shredded paper up in the air. Verda goes over to him and says something quietly, I can't hear what, but he carries on throwing the paper and Verda is smiling. Gareth comes in from outside and comments 'It's going to be a messy day.' ... Before long a paper fight has started, with Gareth and Carla joining in. I missed how it started, but it is short-lived, with quite a few children following Gareth outside when he leaves and some carrying on with Carla for a little while. Throughout this brief moment of mayhem, Verda and Tanith continue with the mummy quietly in the

background. Pauline and Jess (11-13 years old) have stuffed shredded paper up their jumpers and are walking around showing their bumps. They come up to me and I say, 'My. Have you suddenly got fat or are you having a baby?' They reply, 'No, it's paper,' and show me. Pauline and Caitlin are now stuffing shredded paper into Tyrone's clothes and he looks like a dummy. They dance off outside singing 'Dingle, Dangle Scarecrow.' Tyrone is smiling, very happy to be the centre of attention. They come back inside and suddenly there is a whole crowd singing the song with Carla. They must range in age from 6/7 up to 13 years old and they are spontaneously singing 'Dingle, Dangle Scarecrow.' Tyrone now stuffs paper down his back to give him a hunchback, as does Caitlin and they ask for sticks. Carla gives Tyrone a yellow plastic hockey stick, asking him not to bend it or it will break; Caitlin gets a blue stump out of a cricket set. They go off hobbling. The mummy making continues. ...

Verda has got out the nuclay and there is a small group making things on the craft table. Tanith has taken the mummy and is sewing the socks to the trousers to the jumper. She surveys the scene – all surfaces are covered with shredded paper – and she wonders if it is worth sweeping up at this stage. I say I will. It takes half an hour because a number of games ensue including pretending to sweep up staff and children, and a small paper fight starting again. Then Moby (5 and very small) decides to sweep up. The wide institutional broom is much bigger than he is, but he is determined. After a while he wants to sweep up outside so I give him the outdoor brush. I go outside to make sure this is OK, and I notice that the hosepipe is running from the toilet window into the (covered) sandpit. Pauline, Jess, Caitlin, Tyrone and a few others are in their bare feet, squirting each other with the hose ...Later, children bring sodden clothes in and Carla wrings them out as much as she can. Caitlin finds something else to wear from the clothing left behind on the clothes pegs (there are so many clothes here!)

Tanith is still sitting quietly with a group of girls on the floor sewing up the mummy. I admire the girls' mendhi – it is Eid and they are all henna'd up. She has been sitting with them for quite a while and there is a gentle conversation going on about families and places they have visited. They need to turn the mummy over and sew up the back, so they lift it on to the table and Tanith continues there. The girls are making the head and Verda has helped others make the hands using gloves. It has taken most of the morning to get to this point, with a core of children sticking with the project itself and the others dipping in and out and using the resources to spark off other ways of playing.

Now they start to wrap the mummy in bandages. There are a couple of enormous reels of white fabric (from the local scrapstore) about 15cms wide that look just like bandages. This new material sparks attention from Caitlin, Jess and Pauline and Tyrone. They start to wrap each other in the bandages and act as mummies. There are a lot of mummy jokes flying around at this stage too. ... I end up getting involved in wrapping the children in the bandages to make them mummies. With Tyrone, I stand still, holding the bandages taught while he spins round and round and makes himself dizzy. They then use red felt tip pens to give themselves bloody headwounds. Sometime later I look again at the main mummy and see a group of girls painting henna patterns onto the mummy's bandaged hands.

As we are clearing up, Gareth tells everyone that Jenny from the nursery next door had told him she had seen Leo and Max throwing clay and stones at the little ones. She had gone to ask them to stop and they had run off down the road. She had seen them throwing clay and stones at the tram. One of the difficulties is that Max's mum will not be too bothered by this. Tanith says she knows Max's aunt and she could talk to her and she would then talk to Max's mum and be listened to.

The point about Lefebvre's triad is not that these are separate kinds of space but they combine to produce spaces that have a history, are reflections of fluid power relations, and acknowledge the place of emotions. So, the kinds of planning that take place in conceived space are necessary AND there needs to be awareness that space can still be left open for moments in lived space. The series of playful moments of paper fights, scarecrows, singing, banter, hunchbacks and mummies would not have taken place in the manner described here without the main 'activity' being loosely planned and without the culture of the centre being as it was, open to whatever might emerge. It is an excellent example of the dialectical co-existence of moments in conceived, perceived and lived space. It shows how the space is open enough to allow for these different moments and play forms to erupt and die away. Alongside these moments are hundreds of others that combine to co-produce the conditions in which playfulness thrives. Some of this may have been predictable, but largely, the approach is one of creating a situation and then feeling comfortable in just seeing what arises from it.

Alongside the playfulness and openness of the space is much else besides. Much of playwork theorising has, quite rightly, focused on play, as it is this that makes playwork unique. No other sector within the children's workforce has such potential for working with

children on their terms. Yet much of what happens in playwork settings is not play, and these moments are also important in the co-production of a space that supports playfulness. This is illustrated in the extract through the interweaving of mundane bureaucratic matters, quiet chats about this and that, community relations, dealing with anti-social behaviour. These elements are all part of the day-to-day work and they can happen in the way they do because of the history of relationships and expectations. The playworkers can have the more didactic conversations with children at times about 'kicking off' because they have shared these moments of playfulness. Their relationships with the children are caring and they are open to the children's alterity much of the time, being comfortable with a level of uncertainty and also sensitive to slight changes in the atmosphere.

In summary, what the analysis presented in this study contributes is the acknowledgement of small moments in lived space, the importance of caring and openness, of being comfortable with uncertainty, alongside (and often in a dialectical relationship with) the bigger instrumental and universal assertions of the value of play and playwork. Playwork's instrumental value can be articulated in terms of its ability to offer the children the conditions for playful experiences they would not have elsewhere, and all the benefits this has for children both in the here and now and in the future. It can also be articulated in terms of addressing social policy agendas such as anti-social behaviour, skills development, physical activity and so on. Yet, these instrumental outcomes can only be achieved if they are understood as a part of the overall assemblage that is a playwork setting: the combination of relationships, tradition, playfulness and caring that constitutes what is unique about this very special way of working with children.

12.4 Methodological reflections

It is not unusual that inductive and ethnographic research evolves in response to changing conditions over time. In the event, this study did not use Development Work Research to explore the usefulness of Brawgs Continuum as a mediating artefact (Chapter 7). Instead the rich data gathered and produced from the fieldnotes, post-session debriefs and interviews with contemporary and pre-1990 playworkers were used in an iterative process of 'systematic combining', an approach that involves a back and forth process between the data, theory and the analytical framework through both matching and redirecting (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Multiple sources of data can create paradoxes and contradictions, and

this was the case for the interplay between how playworkers articulated their work in interview, what happened during and after sessions and the core mediating artefacts of playwork theory and other instruments such as the National Occupational Standards. This does not imply that the playworkers were inauthentic, but acknowledges the gap between espoused theory and theory-in-use (Argyris and Schön, 1978). The latter is informed by different ways of knowing alongside propositional or received knowledge, including intuition and values (Belenky *et al.*, 1997). The analytical framework of CHAT, together with the spatial analysis, both of which were dialectical, allowed for a deeper consideration of these contradictions through the analysis of stories, small moments, dispositions and other situated aspects of the work alongside the more universal statements about what playworkers do and their value. Lester (2007, p. 10) illustrates the importance of playwork stories for the development of a constructed voice (Belenky *et al.*, 1997):

Such a voice arises from the ability to align our subjective narratives, based largely on feelings, insights and memories, with relevant theory and to analyse critically the significance of this for our practice encounters.

Until recently, such stories rarely formed part of the formal and public playwork discourse, finding their voice more often in the pub after work. The importance of this informal storytelling was recognised by both the pre-1990 and contemporary playworkers, as illustrated by Carol (PP), who told how after work almost every night they would:

sit in the pub and just chew the fat, basically, with other playworkers ... topics would be particular children, particular behaviours, particular events, yeah, it would sort of be a bit about the exotic ... flamboyant behaviour or, you know, what had gone down.

Recently, there has been a move towards a more narrative approach (for example, Nuttall, 2012) and with the growth in playwork blogging, particularly via the Playwork Bloggers Network, described thus:

We are a group of playworkers who blog. We open up the processes of reflective practice, share our experiences and tell stories which may be funny, frightening or surprising, and which explore what it means to be an adult supporting children's play.

In summary, the use of ethnography and the case study of the Play Centre, together with *bricolage* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) and systematic matching (Dubois and Gadde, 2002), has allowed an analysis of small moments of 'ordinary magic' (a term adapted from

Masten, 2001) of playwork to be offered that sets it within a cultural, temporal and political context.

12.5 Further research

This research study has offered a spatial, emotional, political and ethical analysis of open access playwork in deprived areas, but there is more to be done here. Throughout the period of the study, I have presented on each of the discussion chapters, as well as the methodology, at playwork conferences and seminars and there is interest in this approach. There are three specific areas for further research that I feel would develop this perspective and help to build a narrative articulation of playwork. The first is to work more closely with playworkers themselves to develop these ideas through action research. This is beginning with a small project on an adventure playground in London, where the focus has shifted slightly to consider the flows and forces, the movements and rhythms of the space as discussed earlier.

The second is to explore further the gendered nature of both play and playwork from this spatial and political perspective, one that moves away from the dominant psychological discourse of gender socialisation and towards a more Butlerian and geographic analysis of gender as performative and situated.

The third is to explore the current socio-political context. It is this that I feel is perhaps the most urgent given the current political and economic crisis facing local authorities as main funders for playwork services. The fieldwork for this study was carried out at a time of high investment in children's services and, despite criticisms of the risk and prevention paradigm and 'waste management' policies (Katz, 2011), this did provide funding for playwork services where the dialectic of meeting policy agendas and creating the conditions for play could co-exist. Since this time, the political landscape has changed radically. The LGA (2013) projects that local authorities' income (from all sources including Revenue Support Grant) will fall by 32 per cent in real terms by 2019-2020. Local authority response so far in terms of support for play services has been varied, and has included cutting, scaling back, reorganising and commissioning out provision (Martin, 2013).

The children who use urban open access play provision are among those who have been hardest hit by the Coalition Government's austerity measures. Tax and welfare reforms and cuts in public services mean less income, increased uncertainty and conditionality, fewer

services to mitigate this, and higher unemployment as public sector jobs are cut (Ridge, 2013). Despite the Child Poverty Act 2010, child poverty is predicted to rise to roughly 1 in 4 by 2020 (Browne, Hood and Joyce, 2013). Political rhetoric has intentionally shifted from poverty as a structural issue to something that resides in deficient poor families, with a return to a managed media narrative of the moral underclass (Ridge, 2013). In addition, the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill 2013-14 (part 1, para. 1.2) defines anti-social behaviour as ‘conduct capable of causing nuisance and annoyance to any person’, a definition which might easily encompass children playing, or parents who allow their children to play on the streets (Play England, Play Wales *et al.*, 2013).

Alongside this, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child published a General Comment on article 31 in April 2013 (UNCRC, 2013). Para 49 recognises that children living in poverty require particular attention to realise their rights under article 31. The Comment outlines a number of obligations at central and local government level. In particular, paragraph 58b states:

Data collection and research: ... States need to collect population-based data, disaggregated by age, sex, ethnicity and disability, to gain an understanding of the extent and nature of children’s engagement in play, recreation and cultural and artistic life. Such information should inform planning processes, and provide the basis for measuring progress in implementation. *Research is also needed into the daily lives of children and their caregivers and the impact of housing and neighbourhood conditions in order to understand how they use local environments; the barriers they encounter in enjoying the rights under article 31; the approaches they adopt to surmount those barriers and the action needed to achieve greater realization of those rights. Such research must actively involve children themselves, including children from the most marginalized communities* (emphasis added).

This offers many opportunities for research, but what may be of interest in extending this study would be to explore the meso level through work with selected local authorities (including the one in this study) to research the play patterns of children living within catchment areas of staffed play provision in order to explore the contribution they make to children’s play lives alongside whatever else is accessed in the local environment. A Lefebvrian analysis of neighbourhood spaces will take into account the relationship between urban design, spatial practices, the impact of poverty and the opportunities for finding moments in lived space.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Playwork Principles, 2005

These Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

Appendix 2: Themes and prompts for semi-structured interviews

Appendix 2.1: Contemporary playworker prompt sheet

Background:

How long been in playwork?

Where have you worked?

Philosophy:

What do you think the purpose of playwork is?

What is the role of the playworker?

What do you use to help you make decisions?

Reality

Tell me what you actually do during a typical session?

How would you describe the children you work with?

What do you think children want from a playworker?

Which bits of the job do you like/are you good at?

Which bits don't you like/are you not so good at?

How do you think the job affects you emotionally?

How would you describe your playwork style?

What do you want from me in this process?

Appendix 2.2: Pre-1990 playworker prompt sheet

Tell me when and where you worked as a playworker. Tell me a bit about the settings.

Are there particular children that have stayed in your mind? Tell me about them.

What bits of the job did you enjoy/dislike?

How would you describe what a playworker was then – what was the purpose of playwork?

How did you know how to do your job? Training? Books? Your understanding of play and children? Values?

Did you have staff meetings? What kinds of things did you discuss in them?

How was it managed?

Did you meet up with other playworkers – formal/informal? What sorts of things were discussed?

Incidents/stories/anecdotes.

Are you happy for me to contact you again if necessary?

Appendix 3: Information sheet for research participants

The Dialectics of Playwork: An Ethnographic Study of Playworkers Information sheet for participants

I am currently undertaking research toward my PhD at the University of Gloucestershire. I am carrying out an in depth study of playworkers in order to show what it is that makes playwork unique, what makes it different from other work with children and young people.

Playworkers work with a number of contradictions. For example, a lively debate in playwork at the moment is around when, why and how (or even whether) to intervene in children's play – how much to direct and control, how much to support, how much to leave alone. Some of the contradictions are due to the nature of the work itself, others are because playwork has to conform to the expectations of outside agencies (for example, Ofsted, funding requirements, Every Child Matters, etc.). For me, one of the difficulties faced by playworkers is that there is not really a clear understanding (either within or outside the sector) about what playwork is. There are statements of principle, there are theories, but there has been very little academic research looking at how these principles and theories relate to practice.

Playworkers use a number of different 'tools' to guide them in their work (things like theories, national occupational standards, personal beliefs and values, and so on). I am interested to see what those tools are and how they are used.

My primary research will take two forms: one is an intensive period of observation and discussion with playworkers on a play project in an East Midlands city, the other is interviewing people who were playworkers prior to 1990.

Observations of contemporary playwork:

I want to observe playwork as it is – the real thing. I also want to talk to playworkers about what they do (having seen them do it), how they make decisions about their work, what 'tools' they use to help them in this. In the jargon of social research, this is an **ethnographic study of playworkers** – a study of the culture and norms of the playwork sector.

I will be watching playworkers at work, but not in order to make any judgement about the *quality* of their work. Rather, it is to find out what actually goes on, to see how far any of what playworkers do actually fits with any of the principles and theorising.

I will be doing an intensive period of observation and will then feedback what I have seen. I'd like to discuss the tools used, and whether new tools (for example, the simple idea of play profiles that were introduced in the study just done on working with children with challenging behaviour) would make things easier/better for playworkers and the children and young people. It's not about assessing or judging, although I accept there will be feelings of that around.

Historical interviews

One way of analysing and understanding the tools that playworkers use in their work is to find out how they evolved historically. I will be interviewing people who were playworkers in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The interviews will be aimed at trying to find out what 'tools' playworkers used in the past, what the ethos of the work was, what contradictions playworkers worked with then. I have chosen the introduction of the Children Act 1989 as a key turning point in the development of contemporary playwork, so will be talking to those who were playworkers prior to this. The interviews will be semi-structured and conversational and will be audio recorded.

Ethics

The University has guidelines on research ethics and each research proposal has to say how issues of research ethics have been addressed, particularly if 'vulnerable groups' are involved. Regarding the observations of contemporary playwork, I have discussed ethics issues with the Service Manager for play in the City Council and she is happy with my suggestions for addressing this. I do have a current CRB enhanced disclosure certificate.

The key issues are:

1. *Voluntary informed consent:*

Research ethics demand that consent is **voluntary** (it is your decision and your decision alone) and that it is **informed** (that is, you understand what the proposal is). If you agree at the beginning and then decide half way through that you are no longer comfortable with it, you can withdraw your consent at any time during the research.

For the **historical interviews**, I will need to obtain the voluntary informed consent of participants. Please feel free to ask any questions so that you are clear before signing the consent form.

For the **observational research**, the focus will be playworkers (not children and young people). As participants in the observational research, each playwork team will help shape the detail of the research design within the broad parameters described above. I will need to obtain the voluntary informed consent of **every** playworker and will be aware of the difficulties that being observed (and feelings of being judged) may bring. If one playworker in the team does not give consent, then I can't do the research on that project. I have tried to find a way that means that each playworker can say whether or not they agree, minimising any feelings of pressure from others in the team. **The decision is yours – if you don't feel comfortable with it, don't agree to it.**

The issue of voluntary informed consent of **children and young people** and their **parents/carers** will need to be discussed further with each project. My recommendation would be that parents/carers are informed of the research, stressing that I will be researching the staff and not the children, and explaining how issues of confidentiality and data protection will be addressed. I would also recommend that my presence on the project be explained to the children, making it clear that I am watching the playworkers. There is the potential for discussions with the children about their experiences of the projects, but this is unlikely to be a formal aspect of the research design.

There may well be others who you feel need to be informed, or whose consent I need to obtain. Any sessional staff will need to understand the research and sign a consent form. For others, such as volunteers and management committee members, this needs to be agreed with the playwork team in advance of the start of the observation period.

2. ***Confidentiality and data protection:***

Interviews and group discussions will be audio recorded. Observations will be written up as field notes. These will be stored securely and not be accessible to anyone else.

All playworkers and children will be given codes or pseudonyms in field notes, transcripts and in the thesis or any other publication (journal articles, books, reports, etc.); however, they may be identifiable to those with local knowledge.

3. ***Guilty knowledge:***

This refers to anything I might observe that would need further action, for example illegal or unprofessional conduct on the part of the playworkers or suspected child abuse. I will need to agree procedures in advance with the City Council and each project.

Publication

The main publication from this research will be the PhD thesis. This will be published through the University. I will also lodge a copy with the Children's Play Information Service at the Children's Play Council. I would very much want to make the thesis (and perhaps a less academic publication) available to a wider audience, and to publish articles and papers in journals and conference proceedings. As stated earlier, playworkers and children will not be named in this or any other publication.

Appendix 4: Consent form for participants



RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Dialectics of Playwork: an ethnographic study of playworkers using Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Name of researcher: Wendy Russell (wrussell@glos.ac.uk)

Please **initial** boxes.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet ☐
2. I understand that observations will be written up as field notes and stored securely (contemporary playworkers only). ☐
3. I understand that interviews may be audio recorded and that I will be provided with a transcript of the interview for confirmation of accuracy. ☐
4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. If I decide to withdraw, I understand that my personal information will be destroyed, and no quotes from the interview will be included in any material. ☐
5. I understand that my anonymity is guaranteed. I agree that quotations from the interview or excerpts from field notes may be included in the final report, and that pseudonyms will be used. ☐
6. I understand that I will be provided with a report on the completed research project. ☐
7. I agree to take part in the research. ☐

.....
Name of participant Date Signature

.....
Name of researcher Date Signature

Appendix 5: A Charter for Training for Play Work

This charter was adopted by the JNCTP at its General Meeting in Bristol, held on Thursday 19th September 1985. It summarises the main recommendations contained in the publication 'Recommendations on Training for Play Work, October 1985'.

1. A Licence to Practice: A Play Work Qualification should confer a licence to practice work with children and young people. It should be in accordance with professional codes and standards to be established by the Endorsement Panel.
2. A Play Work Qualification Specific to Play Work: A Play Work Qualification should be Play specific, discrete from other related 'people-work' qualifications. It should be at a standard sufficient to confer a status equivalent to these allied, but separate disciplines.
3. Endorsement by the Field: Agencies offering Training opportunities leading to a Play Work qualification should be subject to an Endorsement process which has been developed in consultation with representatives of the Play Work field, and which involves Play Work field representatives in the Endorsement process.
4. Equal Opportunity Principles: Real equality of opportunity should characterise the nature and resourcing of the whole process leading to a Play Work qualification. Positive action to alleviate the present differential access to Play, Play Work and Training for Play Work because of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, sexuality, disability, class and religion should be promoted.
5. Access to a Range of Routes to a Play Work Qualification: There should be open access to a range of Routes to a Play Work Qualification. These Routes should particularly meet the interests and needs of voluntary, temporary and part-time Play Workers.
6. Pre-Training Play Work Experience: All those entering Qualifying Training should have direct practical experience of Play Work under appropriately supervised circumstances. They should also have a broad life experience and should normally be 21 or over.
7. The Ethos of Play: A Play Work Qualification should embrace the ethos of the process of play. The Training should be flexible, adaptive and reflective of existing good Practice in Play Work. It should involve periods of supervised field placement, and

should promote both the professional and personal development of those seeking the Qualification.

8. Self-Managed Learning: All routes to a Play Work Qualification (whether by full or part-time study, Modular Training or Accreditation of Practice) should use the self-managed learning style, and include both individual and group programming.
9. Collaborative Assessment: Assessment of learners' progress towards Play Work Qualification should be conducted collaboratively and include the learners, peers, tutors and Field Supervisors.
10. Evolution of Routes to Play Work Qualification: The different Routes to a Play Work Qualification, and particular course or module design, should be kept under constant review. This should involve internal and external appraisal, and the sharing of ideas between practising field workers and those responsible for Training provision.

Appendix 6: The New JNCTP Charter for Playwork Education, Training and Qualifications, 2002

JNCTP first adopted a Charter for Training for Playwork in 1985. Then in 1993/94 JNCTP took a lead in the major consultation 'Getting Recognition' on the question of peer-led endorsement. Again in 2000, JNCTP provided the impetus for another major national consultation through 'Having Your Say'.

JNCTP, as a member based organisation can take an independent position and as such is uniquely placed to publish this Charter. This Charter draws from and updates the original Charter, Getting Recognition and Having Your Say and has itself been subject to consultation with JNCTP members.

This Charter sets out JNCTP's vision for playwork education, training and qualifications. Organisations responsible for the development of playwork education, training and qualifications at local, regional and national levels are invited to sign up to the Charter as a public commitment to the principles within it. It will provide a platform for Executive Committee members when representing JNCTP on national organisations.

The following definitions form the starting point for the Statement of Principles:

PLAY is an innate drive and is essential for human development. It is manifested as behaviour that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. The value of play derives from the play process itself, not from any extrinsic goal, reward or end product. Play is often spontaneous and unpredictable. Through play children experience their world and their relationship with it.

PLAYWORKERS appreciate the fundamental importance of the play process. The key purpose of playwork is to support, rather than direct or control, this process. This support is effected through the creation, operation and modification of rich physical and social environments that maximise opportunities for children to engage in a wide variety of play types. Such play experiences include make believe, risk, contact with the natural environment, experimenting with identity, ideas and objects.

The development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance processes of playwork education, training and qualifications should reflect the definitions and principles of this Charter.

1. **Knowledge of play and playwork:** The core of playwork education, training and qualifications should be the agreed values and core knowledge covering a range of theories concerning the nature and importance of play and the role of the playworker. This encompasses theoretical, practice and personal knowledge.
2. **Consultation:** The development of, or subsequent changes to, core knowledge, occupational standards or criteria for endorsement should be subject to rigorous and inclusive consultation across the whole playwork sector.
3. **Variety of routes to qualification:** There should be a variety of routes to qualification such as full and part time study, vocational and academic routes, self-managed learning, modular routes, distance learning, accreditation of prior experience and learning and assessment of practice. Each route should be of equal value to other routes at the same level.
4. **Recognition and Continuous Professional Development:** Employers should recognise the full range of routes to qualification and should reflect this in the pay and conditions of paid employees. Employers should be proactive in supporting Continuous Professional Development for their playwork employees and volunteers.
5. **Qualified status at Level 4:** Whilst it is recognised that qualifications exist at a variety of levels, fully qualified Playwork Practitioner Status should be conferred at Level 2 of Higher Education (Dip HE) or Level 4 as defined by the QCA framework, so providing parity with related professions.
6. **Peer-led endorsement:** Playwork education, training and qualifications should be subject to an endorsement process that is owned and controlled by the playwork sector. The criteria for endorsement of playwork education, training and qualifications should be based upon agreed definitions of play and playwork and should not constrain innovation and new thinking. The framework for peer-led endorsement for playwork training should enable geographic transferability.

7. **Equality of opportunity:** Playwork education, training and qualifications should be available and delivered in a way that ensures all potential and practising playworkers can access and benefit from them. All playwork education, training and qualifications should be responsive to the needs of participants and should value the diverse experiences of learners and their individual learning styles.
8. **Playwork practice:** Playwork education and training leading to qualification should involve periods of supervised playwork practice and should promote and support both personal and professional development.
9. **Reflective practice:** Playwork education, training and qualifications should be based upon reflective practice and continuous learning.
10. **Assessment:** All playwork education and training leading to a qualification should include assessment of knowledge and practice that values independent and critical thinking.

Appendix 7: Playwork Assumptions and Values, 1992

Standards

Even though the standards focus on and describe work functions, they are based on a number of assumptions and values that underpin good practice in Playwork.

Assumptions

The first assumption is that:

children's play is freely chosen, personally directed behaviour, motivated from within; through play, the child explores the world and her or his relationship with it, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges she or he encounters; by playing, the child learns and develops as an individual.

The second is that:

whereas children may play without encouragement or help, adults can, through the provision of an appropriate human and physical environment, significantly enhance opportunities for the child to play creatively and thus develop through play.

In this way the competent Playworker always aims to provide opportunities for the individual child to achieve her or his full potential while being careful not to control the child's direction or choice.

Values

1. Play opportunities are provided in a number of settings (for example Local Authority, Voluntary or Commercial) for children with a variety of needs, in a complex society diverse in culture and belief; nevertheless, Competent Playwork always has the following underlying values:
2. The child must be at the centre of the process; the opportunities provided and the organisation which supports, co-ordinates and manages these should always start with the child's needs and offer sufficient flexibility to meet these.
3. Play should empower children, affirm and support their right to make choices, discover their own solutions, to play and develop at their own pace and in their own way.

4. Whereas play may sometimes be enriched by the playworker's participation, adults should always be sensitive to children's needs and never try to control a child's play so long as it remains within safe and acceptable boundaries.
5. Every child has a right to a play environment which stimulates and provides opportunities for risk, challenge and the growth of confidence and self-esteem.
6. The contemporary environment in which many children grow up does not lend itself to safe and creative play; all children have the right to a play environment which is free from hazard, one which ensures physical and personal safety, a setting within which the child ultimately feels physically and personally safe.
7. Every child is an individual and has the right to be respected as such; each child should feel confident that individuality and diversity are valued by the adults who work and play with them.
8. A considerate and caring attitude to individual children and their families is essential to competent playwork and should be displayed at all times.
9. Prejudice against people with disabilities or who suffer social and economic disadvantage, racism and sexism have no place in an environment which seeks to enhance development through play; adults involved in play should always promote equality of opportunity and access for all children, and seek to develop anti-discriminatory practice and positive attitudes to those who are disadvantaged.
10. Play should offer the child opportunities to extend her or his exploration and understanding of the wider world and therefore physical, social and cultural settings beyond their immediate experience.
11. Play is essentially a co-operative activity for children both individually and in groups; playworkers should always encourage children to be sensitive to the needs of others; in providing play opportunities, they should always seek to work together with children, their parents, colleagues and other professionals and, where possible, make their own expertise available to the wider community.
12. Play opportunities should always be provided within the current legislative framework relevant to children's rights, health, safety and well-being.

13. Every child has a right to an environment for play, and such environments must be made accessible to children.

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