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Understanding Childhood and Play in the Post-Digital Age

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Abstract

This qualitative study utilises novel methodologies that draw on the history of childhood, children's literature and play to make visible children's experiences of contemporary childhood. Formulating a hybrid paradigm that draws on the social sciences and the humanities through new materialist perspectives of entanglement and "more-than-human" approaches, the study questions how children are producing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age, to examine the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today. Central to the project is the examination of children's experiences of childhood and their part in *produsing* (producing and using [Bruns, 2009]) their own experiences and "texts" of childhood in the post-digital age. The approach builds on the work of British folklorists and anthologists of children's playground games over the past 125 years (Gomme, 1894/8; Opie and Opie, 1959; and Roud, 2011). These field-defining anthologies serve as a both a foundation for the research design and a starting place from which to understand and recognize children's play in the post-digital age.

Working with 18 children aged 6-13 years old in two schools and one afterschool care centre, I use creative methods of filmmaking to examine how children perform and produce their experiences of childhood in play. The children in the study playfully interacted with introduced digital technologies (digital tablets and cameras) in response to the invitation to "play and make videos". The resultant children's video productions, which I term *video-play-texts,* reveal the multiple, layered meanings and performances illustrated through the creation of these "texts of childhood". My analysis draws on historical and literary descriptions of play and childhood to read the children's performances as *games, lore* and *mischief*. I take up Bernstein's (2011) concept of a "scriptive thing" to examine how environment, materials and people prompt performances of play in which children work to agentively *rescript* their experiences of the "research playgrounds". My study found that engaging new materialist understandings with a "more than words" approach to the children's performances of play highlighted the complex and layered literacies and funds of knowledge the children bring to their practice of *produsing* and *rescripting* in play. Further, I found that positioning children as both "beings" and "becomings" resulted in shining critical light onto how my participants agentively make meaning and negotiate identities across a multitude of spaces (including "schooled" environments, the playground and digital platforms).

A documentary composed of the participants' *play-video-texts* and my observational videos accompanies the thesis and will be an integral part of its dissemination in academic and public forums.

Figure 1. Example of "warp" and "weft" threads (LaFleur, 2020).

Weaving is a motif employed throughout the thesis. To aid the reader, the above image provides an example of "weft" and "warp" threads: the white vertical lines are the structural "warp" threads, and the colourful horizontally woven threads are the "weft" threads.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Accompanying Material

A short documentary of 7:05 minutes entitled, "Childhood and Play in the Post-Digital Age" accompanies this thesis. There is link embedded at the beginning of Chapter Six and the physical copy will be accompanied by a USB containing the file.

Documentary Link: https://vimeo.com/502564282

Password: Childlore

Acknowledgements

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature: ____ _____

Printed Name: Elizabeth Lucy Nelson

Chapter One: Introduction

> *The general held opinion, both inside and outside academic circles, was that*
> *children no longer cherished their traditional lore. We were told that the young had*
> *lost the power of entertaining themselves; that first the cinema, and now television*
> *had become the focus of their attention; and that we had started our investigation*
> *fifty years too late (Opie and Opie, 1959, p. 5).*

The quotation above was written 62 years ago and yet, with the inclusion of "the digital" or perhaps something more specific, like PlayStation, Xbox or mobile phones, it could very well have been written today. Technology and "progress" have often been positioned in opposition to play and play cultures, with past anthologies of play voicing societal fears over such things as the introduction of trains (Udal, 1889, p.205), compulsory national school (Thompson, 1939 in Roud, 2011, p.252) and, as cited above, cinema and television (Opie and Opie, 1959, p.5). Digital technologies, of course, are not excluded and social anxieties relating to children's engagement with the digital are often couched in terms of the potential negative effects of screen time (Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2016; Stiglic and Viner, 2019) and issues of safety and well-being in children's online engagement (Livingstone, 2009; RPC, 2020). In this context, children's traditional games and lore are seen as occurring only when disconnected or "unplugged" from the digital, a panacea to the modern digital state. It was against this backdrop of understandings that I began my study in 2016 to investigate children's experiences of childhood, folkloric play and the digital.

Understandings of children's folkloric play cultures that shape the discourse and journey of the thesis are drawn from an analysis of play anthologies published over the last 125 years, predominantly in the United Kingdom (Gomme, 1894/8; Opie and Opie, 1959; and Roud, 2011). This research project worked with 18 children from two schools and one afterschool care centre to find out whether or not children's play today is a continuation of past play and what role the digital has in current performances of folkloric play. I examined historical and innovative forms of play in children's play today through devising creative methods of interaction and data generation that involved video-watching and video-making in order to answer my two research questions:

1. How are children producing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age?

2. What are the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today?

In this chapter, I briefly chart the formation of the study, introduce the theories and methodologies developed and actualised in the thesis, and conclude with the structure of the thesis, briefly outlining each chapter.

Children's Literature - a textual beginning

My journey as a researcher of childhood, play and the digital began during my Masters in Children's Literature where I first encountered Jaqueline Rose's (1984/1993) provocation that children's literature is "impossible" due to adult control over almost all aspects of production of children's texts. While the field of children's literature has in many ways moved beyond this argument, my first encounter with it in 2015 was paradigm shifting. It led me to reconsider the texts I was working with, beginning a focus on children as authors and agentive creators of texts, and children as "produsers" – both producers and users of texts (Bruns, 2009) – became a central focus of my work[1]. It was through this journey that I came to focus on children's playground games as texts that are performed, produced and disseminated by children for children. Children are the produsers of their *games*, *lore* and *mischief* – three forms of folkloric play derived from my analysis of the play anthologies that are central to this thesis. My recognition of children's folkloric play as children's texts is continued and expanded in this thesis when, in Chapter Three, I introduce my theory that construes children's play episodes as "texts of childhood". I argue that through the process of production and performance, children's play-texts become unique to a particular experience and moment of play, to that experience in childhood, thereby rendering them texts of childhood.

For me, recognising that children's folkloric play is consonant with children's literature was a lightbulb moment as it connected my academic work to my work as an English Language teacher. Having worked with children in a number of non-English speaking countries (Brazil, China and Italy), I have often used playground games and songs to connect with my pupils. Children would teach me their songs, games and play and I would share translations of similar play. While language was always part of the interaction, due to my limited vocabulary in the students' languages, the primary forms of communication were by gesture, expression, laughter and play. As a result, I deeply connected with Julia Bishop's (2014) understanding that,

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[1] To help differentiate the similar "produser" from "producer", the former will have the "s" italicised throughout the text to become: "produ*s*er".

> Like all play, clapping games are multimodal. Most obviously, they incorporate verbal text, music, movement and touch but other modes, such as proxemics and gaze, are also important (p.54).

In this thesis, I continue to recognise the multimodal aspects of folkloric play, acknowledging the "more than words" aspects of play. I use digital technologies to record play and, as outlined in Chapter Four, my analysis pays attention to five forms of responses to prompts of play (movement, bodies, sounds, silence and words). In the thesis, I call the children's video productions their *video-play-texts* to represent the multiple, layered meanings and performances brought into the creation of these texts of childhood.

In my Masters dissertation, I began my exploration of play through an analysis of anthologies of children's games and lore, with a focus on the collections created by Alice B. Gomme (1894), Iona and Peter Opie (1959) and Steve Roud (2011). While reading the annotated versions of games in these anthologies, I stumbled across YouTube versions of play that appeared to have been created and uploaded – produ*s*ed – by children. My dissertation as a result examined children's agentive role in creating and disseminating singing games over three distinct times and places: from the parlours of 1894 to the playground in 1959 to the internet today. My dissertation postulated that YouTube could be considered an archive for play authored and uploaded by and for children. This connection between traditional play anthologies and the agentive authoring of digital texts of play by children today became the basis of my doctoral project.

Chapter Two of this thesis offers a comprehensive overview of the role of these anthologies in the current thesis as they serve as not only the basis for the study, but also to scaffold the research encounters and inform the analysis. Play anthologies are critically woven into each step of the research project. My initial project aim was to connect with children to explore their opinions on traditional play and the sharing of games and lore on YouTube. This connection was designed through creative methods that invited the participants to make their own video-play-text responses to prompts of traditional play (which included discussions and YouTube videos of traditional forms of play). Working from this concept of traditional play, the school playground, which has been the location of game anthologies for decades (Opie and Opie, 1959; Roud, 2011), seemed the sensible place to begin.

A Perspective on Education

Drawing on the work of play anthologies of the past, I determined to undertake my study in the "traditional" space of school playgrounds. As a result, the data generation took place across three sites: two schools and one afterschool care centre. I worked with the sites to find a time and a space that suited the staff and students and recruited a small number of children aged at each site aged between 6-13 years, reflecting the age bracket of the traditional players of playground games over the last 30 years (Cliff, 1992, p.133; Opie and Opie, 1985, p. 2; Roud, 2011, p.254). I aimed to be flexible in my research approach; therefore, during the data generation period of January to March 2018, when the "Beast from the East" brought snowstorms and cold weather, I was happy when the three research sites offered my groups a choice of indoor and outdoor locations. However, the movement between the traditional spaces of play and importantly, play research, to indoor classrooms, quiet rooms, nurture rooms, libraries, gymnasiums, etc. resulted in a pivotal refocus in the work.

There is a great amount of important work examining the ways that play is written into the playground, explored through concepts such as the palimpsest and play-lines (Marsh et al., 2019; Richards, 2014; Seath, 2018). At the same time, there is a large body of important literacy-based work on play in the classroom and kindergarten as it functions to facilitate learning (Bailey, 2016; Wohlwend, 2011a). However, the transition from the playground to the classroom, while still focusing on how children perform folkloric play, meant creating an environment of play within educational contexts, without the focus on learning – something I had not encountered in other research. Playgrounds suggest and help facilitate play through their design and history, while schools and other "schooled spaces", such as the afterschool centre, prescribe school-like behaviour to encourage the "disciplined [and] docile, student body" (Leander, 2010). Even in the welcoming, nurturing spaces of my three research sites, the schooled body is part of the complex set of literacies children learn, informing how to act inside a school building. In the educational contexts of the study – the two formal primary schools and non-formal afterschool location – educational policy and practices, the design of the space and the presence of staff and other children became influencing factors on the children's productions and performances of play. Therefore, in order to continue investigating children's everyday experiences of childhood through play in these educational contexts, I needed to re-situate my focus. As a result, the study shifted to examine the *potential* for "traditional" play in these traditionally non-play spaces, and in doing so, I quickly found that play was, in fact, everywhere. Play was

performed across all the spaces of the research sites, prompting me to rename them my "research playgrounds". This directly influenced the creation of a new theory of play, outlined in Chapter Three, that defines folkloric play as performances of games, lore and mischief across multiple contexts, including the digital.

Education is a theme woven throughout the body of the thesis, implicated in and impacting the understandings derived from the research process. The focus on "more than words" allows for an understanding of the motion and becoming that occur in learning through processes (such as play) that are often difficult and sometimes impossible to articulate in words. Play, in this thesis, is the "experience in the making" of learning (Ellsworth, 2004, p.4). Each chapter, in its own way, touches on areas of education, from the literature review to theories of play to devising a method of research to finally analysing children's performances and productions within the schooled spaces. I came to understand education through research and, in this way, I strongly lean on the areas of commonality between the two as spaces of inquiry, community and representation of knowledge. The literacies, the connection, community and relations between the participants, environments, materials and other people in their performances and productions of play are the moments where learning occurs.

My approach to education through understanding play as a pedagogy *supports* a huge field of educational practice, from national educational policy such as the *Play Strategy for Scotland* (The Scottish Government, 2013) to approaches to learning in early years settings (Lillard, 2013; Wohlwend, 2008) to educational psychology building on the work of Piaget (1951) and Vygotsky (1978) and now incorporating arguments regarding brain development (Sutton-Smith, 2008; Yogman, et al., 2018). However, at the same time, this approach also *conflicts* with conventional notions of educational practice (based increasingly in pre-determined standards and sanctioned behaviours). The transition of my research setting from the playground into the schooled spaces of the three sites meant my research came into interaction with these tensions. My work holds these tensions as I foreground children's experiences of childhood to examine how they agentively produse and rescript their play texts across these sites and spaces.

The Digital in the Post-Digital Age

The original title of the thesis was "Understanding Online and Offline Playground Culture and Lore in the Digital Age". The "digital age" referred to the tools and technology

available to the children in their everyday lives at home, school and other spaces, such as handheld devices used to create YouTube videos. I devised workshops that first introduced the idea of traditional games and lore, then showed the children videos that appeared to be child-prodused YouTube videos of folkloric play. As a group, we watched videos and discussed them using the tools of critical digital literacy (Pangrazio, 2016), then the participants created their own video-play-texts with digital tablets and cameras that I introduced into the space. These video-play-texts were designed as both "raw data" and also as a tool to generate discussion to unearth participants' ideas and opinions about what online and offline play means to them.

At the beginning of my study there were a number of projects starting to explore children's traditional play with digital tools (Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Burn and Richards, 2014), which have since developed into further studies (Burn, et al., 2018; Potter and Cowan, 2020). However, my approach of watching YouTube videos of play with the children to then invite playful responses in the form of video-play-texts is unique. Furthermore, my study places the technology in the hands of the players, asking them to become produsers of texts, and the participants were often out of sight while creating their video-play-texts. The variety of environments across the research playgrounds also meant that the children's texts are diverse and exciting performances of play. In order to make sense of the videos in the analysis stage, I turned to my children's literature roots. My theory of play draws on Robin Bernstein's (2011) concept of a "scriptive thing", which is

> a set of invitations that necessarily remain open to resistance, interpretation and improvisation… [in ways that] …broadly structures a performance while allowing for agency and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable (p.12).

From the beginning, my introduction of digital recording equipment (cameras and tablets) into the research playgrounds was an identifiable "scriptive thing", a play-script that influenced and "broadly structured" the play performances of the children. Furthermore, the YouTube videos I showed the children scripted forms of folkloric play that were interwoven with digital language and references. In the children's video-play-texts, these digital scripts are prodused in their play, in a process I call "rescripting". The act of *rescripting* involves interaction with a script in a way that influences the play – this is the case regardless of the form of interaction, whether the script is taken up, ignored, resisted or sought. Whatever the interaction with the script involves, it is children's agentive performances of produsing scripts in rescripting play that I examine.

Following Bernstein's original employment of the theory, my initial attention was on the materials in the playground (focusing on the digital) to examine how these introduced materials (videos and technology) scripted the children's play. However, as I examined the video-play-texts and my observational videos, it quickly became clear that the digital was simply one of many other materials scripting playful performances. Across the research sites, books, instruments, toys, Pokémon cards, music and playground equipment all functioned to script the performances of play. Therefore, I widened my scope, only to find that immaterial elements of the environment, (the sounds, wind, tarmac, space and schooled aspects) also provided the children with scripts for play. In addition, my own presence, as well as the presence and absences of other people including staff, children and fellow participants, all functioned as scriptive things within the research playgrounds. For instance, often, midway through a game, participants would see my protruding pregnant belly and turn their full attention to my unborn child. Scriptive things in the form of people, materials, and environments were woven throughout all the research encounters, therefore I focused my attention on when these scriptive things resulted in performances of folkloric play, first in the forms of *games* and *lore*, and then I later also included *mischief* as an agentive, and in many ways traditional, playful response.

In order to make sense of this widened focus, I turned to theories of new materialism, drawing my understanding from Hackett and Somerville (2017) and De Freitas and Curinga's (2015) work on play, language and identity. In these theories, my focus on the "more than words" aspect of play found an easy home. The shift in my attention on the digital to include people, materials and environment meant that I had to rethink my initial tie to the "digital age" and, as a result, re-examine whether *offline* and *online* were useful terms to describe play. Happily, over the period of the research project, there has been a shift across digital humanities, education and literacies to recognise that we are now in a time considered post-digital, where digital interaction and mediation is simply part of everyday life, interwoven into all our activities (Nelson, Perry and Rogers, 2020). Therefore, I position my study in the post-digital age, understanding the digital as one of the many material and immaterial scriptive things in play.

A Brief Point on Childhood

Within all these theories and narratives regarding the digital, post-digital, new materialism and education is the central focus on the figure of the child. This is because understanding

children's experiences of childhood is the principal aim of this study. In many of the theories of the thesis, movement, becoming and motion are highlighted to explain the ways in which the world is shaped and shaping encounters. Childhood, too, is often understood, valued and characterised by the child's potential: what they will become, rather than what they are in the moment. As a result, children's experiences of childhood are often overlooked and ignored. A study on children's play in any time period does not assume that adults do not play, but rather that there is something intrinsic to the very nature of childhood that scripts a playful response. Play is a protected right of childhood according to Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In naming the children's play performances "texts of childhood", I am first establishing the link between play and childhood, and second claiming that experiences of both play and childhood are produ*s*ed by children themselves.

This thesis examines how children are producing and performing their play in the post-digital age in order to understand the lived experience of childhood today. These playful acts of rescripting and produ*s*ing are used to examine and interpret the children's play. However, they do not exist solely as a tool for analytical use but are understood as an engagement and practice of meaning-making with the world. My theory of play, while used as an analytical tool in the thesis, is also applied as a theory and method to the production of the research as a whole. The thesis is a creative endeavour and, importantly, a text-making enterprise. The thesis design offers scripts of what literature reviews, theoretical chapters and methods and methodological chapters *can* look like, but they are, like the "scriptive things" in the playground, open to resistance or acceptance. I am aware of the academic conventions, and the reader, for the most part, will also be aware of these scripts. Therefore, I invite the reader to join my quest, to notice where I am playfully accepting or rejecting scripts, such as inserting findings throughout the thesis and including a documentary to be viewed alongside this written work, all while recognising and conforming to other various aspects of the thesis structure. This thesis applies the playful onto-epistemological stance of new materialism, seeing and recognising the need for structure while also playfully examining how it can be rescripted and produ*s*ed, to give me ownership of the study, just as the players produ*s*e ownership over their play.

The Structure of the Thesis

In the thesis, I call the children's video productions their *video-play-texts* to represent the multiple, layered meanings and performances brought into the creation of these texts of

childhood. The thesis, then, including the documentary that is embedded into my findings, could be described as my own research-writing-video-play-text. The text is playful, at times perhaps bordering on cheeky, while still respecting and meeting all the requirements of a standard thesis. I have found the process of creating and conducting a large research project, from design to encounter to analysis to writing, to be a joyful journey of discovery that has, at all stages, continued to inform and develop my understanding of children's experiences of childhood in the post-digital age.

Chapter Two maps a review of the literature based on three areas of scholarly attention and research. The first section maps out the field of children's play anthologies collected and collated in the United Kingdom over the last 125 years and their role in the preservation (and adult-mediated selection) of traditional games, lore and language. The second section focuses on everyday texts in children's lives and how these have been examined and accounted for across the work of literacy, culture and folklore (childlore). The third and final section presents an overview of work examining digital childhoods in the digital and post-digital age, highlighting the positioning and representation of children in relation to the digital.

Chapter Three presents a theorisation of play as text, outlining the paradigms and epistemological stances taken in relation to children's folkloric play. Beginning with a short background on theories of play and play as it is represented in Scottish schools today, this chapter outlines a theoretical approach to play, first presenting the relationship between children and play as their "texts of childhood", then defining folkloric play as performances of *games, lore* and *mischief*. This chapter offers the reader an insight into how play is understood in the thesis as a form of production and performance of children's everyday experiences of childhood.

Chapter Four is presented in two parts. The first is broken into three sections: the design, the encounters and the researcher. The aim of this chapter is to outline the logistical aspects of the research endeavour while demonstrating how each decision is theoretically grounded. The design section includes the research questions and rationale, limitations of the study, tools of observation and ethics procedures. The encounters section outlines the context of the study, including the sites and participants, the materials introduced in the research encounter (the digital tablets and cameras and the YouTube videos, with an explanation of the process of video selection and safeguarding practices), and then explains the three stages of the data generation: Watching Videos, Making video-play-texts and the

Film Festivals. The role of the researcher section concludes this first part of the chapter, bringing in "small findings" from the research journey that influenced the research process and my interactions with the participants.

This is followed by a brief *Intermission* which acts as a positioning statement midway through the research journey. This is because, exactly halfway into my planned three-year doctoral program, I took a year's maternity leave. I had just finished data generation with my participants and had not yet reviewed the "raw data". While I had initially assumed maternity leave would be simply an act of pressing "pause" on the research process, I found that throughout the year, the findings came back to me and that there was a slow processing of the research experience that was further impacted by my experience of becoming a mother for the first time. Upon returning to the research a year later, I saw in my writing that my thinking had developed, my positioning had shifted and as a result, the thesis pays tribute to this slow process that was part of my "becoming" as a researcher.

Chapter Four (continued) is presented in two sections: the analysis and methods of the documentary. The analysis section outlines my five-stage process in detail to demonstrate how the theories and theoretical framework of the thesis are part of each stage of analysis. In the design of my analysis, theory and writing are placed on a common hierarchical plane with the data as I take up the influencing theories as data. The final section of this chapter outlines the process of creating and including a documentary text as part of the study, reflecting on the meanings made in creating and including a visual accompanying text.

Chapter Five is the first of three chapters discussing my findings. It focuses on the first of the three "scriptive thing[s]" in my research encounters: environment, materials and people. This chapter examines how the environment played a crucial role in the performances of games, lore and mischief that occurred in the encounters and was subsequently a part of the video-play-texts the children produced. In the first section, I introduce the three research sites as "research playgrounds". I then examine how these spaces affected the forms and geographies of the children's play, including the children's ability and attempts to negotiate. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the effect of creating a research environment in "schooled" spaces.

A note on the documentary:
Included in the submission of the thesis, is a short documentary (07:05 minutes long). The thesis focuses on the "more than words" aspect of play, so the inclusion of the

documentary serves to represent the multimodal nature of play and to offer the reader an audio-visual experience of my participants' performances and productions of play. The second part of Chapter Four further justifies and explores the methodological implications of the documentary in this study. Before reading Chapter Six, I invite the reader to watch the accompanying documentary. There is a link embedded in the text at the beginning of the chapter and print versions should be accompanied by a copy of the documentary on a USB. In accordance with the theoretical framework of the thesis, the creation and submission of the documentary alongside the written text is an act of rescripting the "scripts" of a standard social science doctoral thesis, producing a piece of work that is uniquely mine.

Chapter Six addresses the second scriptive thing in the research environment: materials. The chapter uses the accompanying documentary as a scriptive thing, with each section discussing sections of the short film. Beginning with a discussion of "traditional" games in the post-digital age, the chapter then puts forward a theory of "playing YouTube", examining how the language and performances of play respond to a particular genre of selfie videos on the site. The third and final section examines what happens in the video-play-texts when "materials and bodies meet" taking up theories of new materialism to analyse and understand interactions and performances in the participants' video-play-texts and in relation to a particular object (the couch) in the research environments.

Chapter Seven is the third and final discussion chapter of my findings, focusing on the third scriptive thing: people. Considering the new materialist and "more-than-human" paradigm of this study, a chapter dedicated to "people" might seem surprising. However, as explained in my theoretical framework, I am looking at how the children's creative agency emerges through the intra-action and "constant engagement" (Bernstein, 2011, p.12) with and between environment, materials and people. In this chapter, I offer a close reading of three performances and productions of play in the research encounters. The first two performances are in the form of the children's video-play-texts, both with only one child featured, allowing for a step-by-step analysis of these texts of childhood. The third play example is taken from my observational videos and examines the participants produsing new meanings of friendship within the research playground through their creative and somewhat parodic use of language. Throughout the three findings chapters, the discussion highlights the children's agential processes of rescripting elements of the environment, materials and people in the play space to produse texts of identity and texts of childhood.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by examining what childhood and play in the post-digital age means through an overview of the theories, methodologies and findings that make up this work. I further use this space to reflect on the doctoral journey and to look towards further possible research avenues that will build on the theorisation of play (*produsing* and *re-scripting*) and understandings of children's experience of play and childhood with respect to the extraordinary events that occurred during the last few months of the writing of this thesis. The first was Covid-19, which was important for this project as, along with the interruptions it wrought, there was an enormous and quick shift in attitudes in relation to the digital that occurred in this time and its subsequent effect on the outcomes of this study. The second event was the worldwide movement of Black Lives Matter protests that asked everyone to reconsider their lives and work in relation to race.

Chapter Two. Children's Play, Everyday Texts, and Childhood: A Literature Review

The study broadly draws on discussions regarding childhood, children's culture, play and everyday technologies to understand children's experiences in the post-digital age. The research project grew from my Masters dissertation, which focused on historical and contemporary folklore records of children's play in game and lore anthologies. While these texts are foundational to the ideas and design of the thesis, much of the discussion in this chapter originates in education and literacy studies because these disciplines are at the forefront of a large part of children's everyday experiences both in and outside of school spaces. This study further crosses disciplinary boundaries, drawing on children's literature studies, the anthropology and sociology of childhood, digital humanities, new media studies, and childhood and youth studies in order to address the two fundamental research questions:

1. How are children producing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age?
2. What are the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today?

The three sections of the following literature review examine three distinct forms of literature: the first draws on print books – specifically play anthologies; the second focuses on academic peer reviewed articles; and part three utilises reports, online sources and news media. These three distinct forms of literature are all reflective of the relationship between form, time, space and content, demonstrating the breadth of the inquiry into multiple spaces and forms of writing that explore children's experiences of play, childhood and the post-digital world. In light of the interdisciplinary character of this study, the literature review is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather seeks to map the vibrant intersecting discussions of childhood, play and the digital to demonstrate how this specific project contributes to and extends understandings of children's everyday experiences of childhood in Scotland today. This is a key factor in its claim to originality.

I. Play Anthologies: key texts of the thesis

A large corpus of literature drawn on throughout all the stages of this project are the folkloric texts of children's play: the anthologies of children's games, lore and language[2]. The three primary texts I refer to throughout the thesis are Alice B. Gomme's (1894/8) *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland* (in two parts), Iona and Peter Opie's (1959) *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, and Steve Roud's (2011) *The Lore of the Playground*. Further play anthologies reviewed include various smaller scale studies from around the turn of the 20th century (Allen, 1882; Ford, 1904; Newell, 1884; Nicholson, 1897; and Udal, 1889); the mid-20th century (Kelsey, 1981; Opie and Opie, 1959/1985/1997; Ritchie, 1964/5; and Slukin, 1981), and the 21st century (Arleo, 2001; Burn and Richards, 2014; Gaunt, 2006; Kelsey, 2019; Soileau, 2016; and Willett, 2011/2015a/b).

Weaving is a motif employed throughout this thesis. As demonstrated in the woven pattern on page three, in weaving you use a structure to which you attach the "warp thread": these are the vertical threads through which the horizontal "weft" threads are woven. The warp threads are both structurally necessary and appear in the end product, woven through as part of the pattern. The anthologies form the "warp threads" of the thesis: entangled, interwoven and implicated in each decision made throughout the research process. The anthologies played a generative role in the inception and development of the research design and were a crucial feature of the analysis. These texts function as a base onto which the research design has been constructed and play two specific roles in the final argument. First, as key texts of children's games, lore and language, they define the field and provide a starting place for understanding and recognising children's play. Second, these texts form the basis for the development of a theory of play which is then actualised in the analysis. However, it is important to emphasise from the outset that this thesis itself is not an anthology and is not participating in the collection or collation of children's games, lore or language. Rather, it is an examination of children's culture in the post-digital age drawing upon the anthologies as representations of the development of children's everyday play culture as it has been recorded by adults across the United Kingdom over the last 127 years.

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[2] In this thesis, these anthologies are referred to as both "play anthologies" and "anthologies of games, lore and language" interchangeably, as play in this study is understood as being made up of children's games, lore and language.

The Evolution of Play Anthologies: from traditional culture to agentive play

Children's play in the folklore tradition has been systematically collected and collated since the late 19th century by sociologists and folklorists through successive anthologies of games, lore and language. Each of the anthologies considered here serves as both a collection of play *and* scholarly analysis of it. These edited anthologies have become the official discourse of what we know as the field of children's games, lore and language, and in so doing, they have come to define what counts as "traditional" forms of play. The anthologies, therefore, play a vital role in how we constitute and understand play in the folklore tradition and, further, how we understand childhood through play. My prime area of interest, however, is not the descriptions of games in the anthologies, but the exegesis around the games. Across the span of 126 years of children's play anthologies in the United Kingdom, we see the changing nature of adult and child relations in discussions of how and why children play, create, curate and disseminate their own games, lore and language.

Historical approaches to the study of children's folkloric play generally present a sequential overview of the evolution of game and lore anthologies, agreeing that serious, academic attention to children's play culture in the United Kingdom began with Lady Alice Bertha Gomme (Boyes, 1990; Kelsey, 1981; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Opie and Opie, 1959; and Roud, 2014). Gomme's landmark *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland with Tunes, Singing-Rhymes, and Methods of Playing According to the Variants Extant and Recorded in Different Parts of the Kingdom* (herein referred to as *Traditional Games*) was published in two volumes in 1894 and 1898. Gomme's ground-breaking children's games anthologies are considered "the first major theoretical work by a woman folklorist" (Boyes, 2001, para. 14), leading her to be referred to as "the real founding mother of childlore studies in Britain" (Roud, 2014, p.349).

After introducing, problematising and then contextualising Gomme's work, overviews of the evolution of games and lore studies generally then pass over the 65 turbulent years that include the First and Second World Wars, the Spanish Influenza and the Great Depression to arrive at the ground-breaking 1959 publication of *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* by Iona and Peter Opie, famed as the first systematic, nation-wide survey of children's current play (Bishop, 2018; Grider, 1980; Marsh and Bishop 2014; Roud, 2011; and Sutton-Smith, 1999). Subsequent publications by the Opies continue to dominate the field up until the end of the 20th century when the focus shifts to smaller, more nuanced, "deep dive" studies of children's culture and play, often with a focus on

media and digital effects on play (Bishop, 2014; Gaunt, 2006; Marsh and Bishop 2014; Merrill-Mirsky, 1986; Soileau, 2016; and Willett, 2011; 2015a and 2015b). Further, detailed bibliographies of British play studies appear in the anthologies of Roud (2011, pp.517-526) and Kelsey (Alton and Widdowson (*eds*.), 2019, pp.779-793). For readers unfamiliar with play anthologies of the past, I have created a bibliography of works examined and cited for this study, sorted by country and order of publication (see Appendix A). The majority of texts are from Scotland and England, with a small amount also covering games and lore from Wales and Northern Ireland. There are also a number of works consulted from the United States, Australia and New Zealand. While there are many anthropological records of play from around the world, I have not encountered play anthologies in this form from countries outside those I have listed here.

The practice of collecting and collating children's games by adult folklorists and hobbyists is a current, exciting practice with a long tradition. Notable recent examples include Steve Roud's (2011) *The Lore of the Playground: The Children's World – Then and Now* which is a large and detailed anthology drawing on "the wealth of previous publications…along with unpublished collections in public repositories" and his "own collecting efforts, from adults and children over the past forty years" (2011, p. xv). More recent still is Nigel Kelsey's (2019) *Games, Rhymes, and Wordplay of London Children*, which was posthumously edited and annotated by Alton and Widdowson. The editors present schoolteacher and collector Kelsey's compilations of childlore in London collected between 1960 and 1986. Central to the practice of collecting, collating and publishing playground anthologies is demonstrating an awareness of other anthologies and linking the games, lore and language between anthologies, creating an interdependent network of compilations of children's play. As demonstrated in my Masters thesis (2015) this inter-referencing establishes the games as collectable, valuable texts. In the early years, for example,

> Miss Allen (1882) references Halliwell's (1842) *Nursery Rhymes*, while Halliwell (1884) references Chamber's (1842) *Popular Rhymes*. Nicholson (1897) then goes on to compare his version to other current folklorist versions including Chambers, Jackson and Burne, Newell, Udal, Northall, and Gomme. Udal (1889) also references Halliwell (1842) and Newell (1884). Udal (1889) quotes Newell as evidence of the international popularity of the game and Newell's attempt to understand the roots of the game (Udal, 1889:224) (Nelson, 2015, pp.21-22).

These anthologies function to collect and collate children's play, recognising particular forms of play and determining what is "traditional" versus "innovative" through this self-

reinforcing tradition of citation. Such presentation of children's games, lore and language forms part of a self-conscious tradition where one folklorist cites another to demonstrate the geographical and historical evidence of the games. This tradition is continued in contemporary publications such as Kelsey's (2019) edited anthology, in which the editors acknowledge the role these citations play by stating,

> The references set the London examples in the wider context of the British Isles and other parts of the English-speaking world, and demonstrate the wide distribution both of genres and individual items of play over time and space (Alton and Widdowson, 2019, p.xiv).

Another recent study is *Playing the Archive* (2017 to 2019), which brings this citational practice together with children's current play. As the name suggests, the project brought together archival examples of play from the Opie Collection at the Bodleian Library to children in schools. The researchers worked with children as co-researchers to examine, experience and "play" the archive while also investigating their own play practices (Burn, et al., 2018; Potter and Cowan, 2020). *Playing the Archive* built on the previous work by members of the team whose research focuses on children's play today within historic and folkloric contexts of past play (Burn and Richards, 2014; Marsh and Bishop, 2014). Understanding children's contemporary play through the lens of children's play of the past brings to the fore questions regarding the role and influence of children's heritage and traditional play on children's creative play today, with scholars finding over time that to paint play as both traditional *and* innovative creates a paradox.

In North American contexts, the paradox has come to be named after William Wells Newell in reference to his 1883 play anthology *Games and Songs of American Children*, which is prefaced with an extended introduction offering two chapters on this issue: the first on children's inventiveness and the second on their conservatism. In his own words, children are endowed with "the free air of creative fancy" as "inventor[s] of legend" (Newell, 1883, p.23). He argued that,

> It would be strange if children who exhibit so much inventive talent did not contrive new games; and we find accordingly that in many families a great part of the amusements of the children are of their own devising (Newell, 1883, p.26).

However, Newell at the same time represents inventiveness in play as "corruption", reprising the loss and nostalgia often associated with childhood in the late Victorian years, when "vulgarity [in play was] modern" and "accidental" rather than by design (1883, p.11). He directly blames the children of the day for "forgetting" the "happy" traditions of play (1883, p.11). For Newell, it is not that children are unable to invent, but rather that

their modes and forms of play are nothing in comparison to what he considers to be play of the past.

Like Newell, Gomme (1898) is also clear in her account of children's role as preservers of tradition, frankly stating, "Children do not invent, but imitate largely" (1894, p.xvi). Gomme also looks for "pure" versions of games, stating that in her analysis of children's play she methodologically looks for "preserved methods of acting and detail…as given in an early or childish period" (1898, p.24). The Opies (1959), too, are aligned in many ways with Gomme's view, maintaining that "for the type of person who is a preserver is rarely also creative" (p.12). While keen to demonstrate the richness of play activities and represent children as the owners of games, lore and language, the Opies' focus is chiefly on the lineage of play traditions. According to Marsh and Bishop (2014), this is evident in their "emphasis on continuity" of games, lore and language and positioning of "children as 'preservers'" of traditions (p.27). The Opies (1985) impress upon the reader,

> What we have tried to show is that these games, now enjoyed by children, are the final flowing of a tradition known since antiquity (p. v).

The Opies' consistent and conscientious recognition of children "today" allows them a perspective of "adaptation to new circumstances" (Marsh and Bishop, 2014, p.27). Texts are updated and adapted; however, they do not acknowledge this work as a form of children's "creativity or inventiveness" (Marsh and Bishop, 2014, p.27). Marsh and Bishop argue that this view needs to be contextualised by the Opies' reaction to a lack of "evidence" of invention and "the recurrent claim among children that they have 'made up' these songs and rhymes" (2014, p.27). Newell similarly argues for adaptation as means for the cultural survival of games, however whereas the Opies' text is a testament to the continued tradition of childlore, Newell claims the contemporaneous culture of children in 1883 is in "general ruin" (1883, p.27).

One hundred years after Newell's publication, American folklorist Gary A. Fine (1980) dubbed the contradiction "Newell's Paradox", summarising the predicament thusly:

> Children are said to differ from adults in *inventiveness* (creating and modifying folk traditions) and *conservatism* (showing reluctance to change or to alter folk traditions) (p.170).

Mechling (1997) later encapsulated the paradox: "children cling rather rigidly to the familiar forms of their folklore, but they constantly bring to those conservative forms new

content" (p.140). The paradox is often addressed in contemporary writing about folkloric play in the "media age" (Marsh, 2008; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Soileau, 2016).

This thesis looks at play in the post-digital age, where technological play is an everyday part of playground culture, integrated with and informed by traditional forms of play. When looking at what counts as "traditional" children's culture, we see the self-conscious claims by folklorists to "know" and collect culture. In the very title of her anthology *Traditional Games*, Gomme (1894) determines what "tradition" means, drawing boundaries around which games and songs are traditional and, subsequently, which may be forgotten. Since the work of the Opies (1959), there has been a conscious change in how play anthologies position the child. Kathryn Marsh (2008), for instance, focuses on growth, rather than decay, arguing that "the many influences on the transmission and performance of playground games can be seen as regenerative rather than degenerative" (p.195). There is also now an emphasis on the necessity of creative play, with academics and folklorists championing the agentive role of children in play (Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Opie and Opie, 1959; Potter and Cowan, 2020; Ritchie, 1964/5; Roud, 2011; and Soileau, 2016). These shifts follow broader changes in direction regarding how we understand and position children in our society.

Childlore is children's folklore, made up of their everyday play of games, lore and language, which is interwoven with a pastiche of media knowledge. Recently, this understanding has been theorised as a process of "bricolage" (Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Willett, 2015b). Children's play draws readily upon available culture, and children are understood as being "enculturated" into their play and music traditions (Willett, 2011, p.348). Childlore pivots between tradition and innovation, often meshing the two in a single form of play. While Thompson (2013) proposes a definition of tradition as "a mode of action that re-presents the past" (p.155), numerous studies describe children's uptake of new media into their play as part of that self-same tradition of play (Burn and Richards, 2014; Gaunt, 2006; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Opie and Opie, 1959; Roud, 2011; and Soileau, 2016). As Bishop and Curtis (2001) explain,

> Contemporary folklorists have tried to construct a notion of tradition as a dialectical process within culture… a process of both continuity and change, stability and variation, dynamism and conservatism, both through time and across space (p.10).

As an enabling concept, then, childlore has seamlessly integrated digital technologies, noting that new and old lore alike are today produced, performed and disseminated across social media and gaming sites. In her 2011 study, Willett concludes that the playground

games she witnessed were part of a continued tradition of remixing available culture into childlore, where "new pop songs emerge as supplements to (rather than replacements for) other games" (p.347). Willett further argues that "this hybrid form of play with specific social goals demonstrates the creative engagement with the various resources at [the children's] disposal" (2011, p.347). Innovative ways of playing are not replacing, but rather supplementing and embellishing, the enduring cultural scripts of children's play. Children's folkloric productions of play involve the play and production of/with everyday cultural texts – whether these are objects and/or ideas from popular and/or traditional culture repositories. Play is central here, since,

> [P]lay episodes of children are multi-layered as they draw in popular cultural interests, family practices and experiences from everyday lives. Play permeates the nooks and crannies of children's lives and the play tours of homes conducted in the UK demonstrated that every single room in homes reflected something about children's play, even if this was limited to a few non-digital toys, such as in bathrooms (Marsh, et al., 2020, p.92).

Play is thus an everyday activity, woven into the cultural fabric of children's lives.

The second part of the literature review now turns to a discussion of how children's "popular cultural interests, family practices and experiences of everyday lives" have been examined across disciplinary boundaries, particularly in the forms of literacies, culture and childlore.

II. Children's Everyday Texts as Literacies, Culture and Childlore

This section focuses on how children's everyday texts are conceived and represented in academic literature in areas of literacy, culture and folklore. "Texts"[3] here is understood in the broadest sense, but essentially refers to both the physical and digital materials that are available to children. In the research project, these everyday materials are examined for the ways they rescript (and are rescripted in) children's performances of play. The concept of "everyday" appears in education and folklore studies in such terms as "everyday literacies", "everyday culture" and "everyday technologies". These disciplinary approaches are shown to converge in their examination of "everyday" children's activities, allowing the study to draw on both literacy and cultural understandings in their attention to

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[3] For a good discussion of the evolving conceptualisation of "texts" in literacy research, see Burnett and Merchant, 2020a.

children's play to offer a fruitful and exciting space for examining children's everyday experiences in the post-digital age.

In the United Kingdom, an early example of folkloric interest in the everyday is Joseph Strutt's 1801 loquaciously titled *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England from the Earliest Period, Including the Rural and Domestic Recreations, May Games, Mummeries, Pageants, Processions and Pompous Spectacles, Illustrated by Reproductions from Ancient Paintings in Which are Represented Most of the Popular Diversions*. The benefit of citing the title in full is to give the reader a comprehensive summary of the everyday activities that Strutt considered worthy of attention, many of which are collected and presented as part of children's folklore in subsequent anthologies of games, lore and language (Gomme, 1894 and 1898; Opie and Opie, 1959; Roud, 2011). Earlier studies of games focused more broadly on teaching the mechanics of play[4], but Parlett (2017) argues that Strutt "does not delight in the rules of games but rather in the delight that people have found in creative recreation since the earliest known times" (para. 2). Strutt's landmark publication offers more general descriptions of games and everyday pastimes, detailing the "activities of the ordinary people who played games" (Parlett, 2017, para. 2). Strutt's collection is thus considered to be the first "major historical study of play" (Marsh and Bishop, 2014, p.12), and unlike previous publications on games, Strutt includes a small selection of children's games, making him in many ways "a 100-year precursor of Alice Gomme" (Parlett, 2016). The everyday culture is here defined as "pastimes of play", and while children's everyday culture can be broadly and diversely situated, within the remits of this specific study the focus is on the childlore dimension of that culture.

The term "everyday literacies" is often pluralised to recognise the various scope and variety of literacy forms (Alvermann and Xu, 2003). The plurality of literacy is important for its recognition that literacies are "multiple" and "diverse" (Burnett and Merchant, 2014). As Wohlwend (2011a) explains,

> The notion of *literacies* reflects the diverse ways we make meaning, in cooperation with others, often coordinating multifunctional tools, across networks and global sites. Moreover, the move from literacy to literacies expands the ways we think about

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[4] Notable games works include (listed chronologically): Charles Cotton's (1674) *The Compleat Gamester*; Thomas Hyde's (1694) *De Ludis Orientalibus Libri II*; John Cotgrave's (1695) *Wits Interpreter*; Francis Willughby's late-17th century posthumously printed *Book of Games* (Cram, Forgeng and Johnston, 2003); and Edmond Hoyle's (1743) *A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist*.

familiar nondigital events such as play enactments, drawings, commercial toys, classroom layouts, and so on (p.2).

The study of everyday texts in the area of literacy was in many ways pioneered by Shirley Brice Heath (1983) in her classic study that looked at the various ways language was used in the home, school and communities to theorise what she termed "out-of-school" literacy practices. The original focus carried a wide but traditional understanding of texts, and as the concept of text has diversified, so have the practices of examining these texts as literacies. A related early foundational work that aimed to bridge the gap in learning between home and school was Moll, et al.'s (1992) study, which theorises the concept of "funds of knowledge" to refer to the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge" (p. 133) that exist in children's everyday lives outside of school. The study positions children as competent people in the world with valuable experiences from their home lives – a foundational factor in recognising the value of out-of-school literacies for in-school learning. Studies traversing the space between home and school to represent children and their lived experiences became popular at this time, such as the work on the New Sociology of Childhood. Childhood scholar Berry Mayall (1994) examines the shifting powers of negotiation available to children across environments in their lives, arguing that,

> [W]hilst children undoubtedly view themselves and may be viewed as actors in both settings [home and school], their ability to negotiate an acceptable daily experience is heavily dependent on the adults' understandings of childhood and of appropriate activities by and for children in the two settings (p.114).

The three studies outlined above all demonstrate a focus on the child outside of the school space as a functioning, agentive whole being who is, however, restricted in their ability to represent themselves equally across environments of home, school and community. These studies have led to a plethora of research today influencing how we think about and teach literacy in schools and how we value home activities. As a result, more and more studies now recognise that literacies are "embedded in the everyday interactions and circumstances in which young people participate" (Vasudevan and Rodriguez Kerr, 2016, p.366). Vasudevan and Rodriguez Kerr (2016) demonstrate this understanding in their research, finding through their analysis that,

> Young people's everyday, out-of-school lives are replete with demonstrations of their literacy practices, including participation in continually expanding communicative landscapes that involve composing abbreviated messages and nonverbal semiotic forms, audiovisual artifacts, and storytelling for authentic purposes (p.363).

Current studies in everyday literacies are wide-ranging in their examination of what constitutes literacy and textual practices in children's everyday activities, including written compositions (Dyson, 1989), Pokémon (Vasquez, 2005), picturebooks (Arizpe, 2006; Arizpe and Styles, 2004), everyday objects (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010), wrestling (Collier, 2013b), Telenovas and Disney Princesses (Medina and Wohlwend, 2014), "found" texts (McAdam, et al., 2014), Minecraft (Bailey, 2016 and 2017; Hollett and Ehret, 2014; Lewis Ellison, 2017), SIMs (Lewis Ellison and Solomon, 2017), and playground games (Marsh and Bishop, 2014).

In the above examples, the language of literacies encompasses more than reading and writing, becoming an examination of children's everyday culture and activities. The New London Group (1996) demonstrates the breadth of children's everyday culture, stating that,

> Childhood cultures are made up of interwoven narratives and commodities that cross TV, toys, fast-food packaging, video games, T-shirts, shoes, bed linen, pencil cases, and lunch boxes... (p. 70).

These listed elements and more are the materials that make up children's everyday "lifeworlds"; they are the "artefacts, texts and practices drawn from [children's] experience of contemporary culture" (Potter and Cowan, 2020, p.12). Children's culture does not exist in a vacuum, but draws on both adult- and child-made objects and texts that are used by children, predominantly (but not exclusively) in peer-to-peer relations (Marsh, 2008). Corsaro (2005) defines "children's peer culture" as "a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers (p.110). Adults and adult culture interact with and shape much of what is then recycled, reproduced and performed as children's culture, and vice versa, as studies have found that children's culture often shapes adult culture as well (Soileau, 2016). Gaunt (2006) illustrates this interplay between adult and child culture in her work on children's songs sampled in rap and other genres of music which are then (re)played by children in the playground. As Boyes (1995) argues, "Children's traditional culture is an expression of their own beliefs and values, not isolated from contact with the adult world, but specific to themselves" (p.138 in Bishop and Curtis, 2001, p.8). These shared forms of media are part of what Dyson (1989) calls the "social worlds of children", which are made up of children's everyday peer culture.

Everyday culture does not necessarily equate to popular culture. Alvermann and Xu (2003) express the "slippery" (p.4) nature of defining popular culture, arguing instead for the use

of "everyday culture" and contending that "[t]hose who favor this definition…reject notions of mass media producing mindless audiences" (p.6). They express dissatisfaction with the term "folk culture" owing to their judgement that it offers a "too simple" and "unhelpful" "view of young children's use of media-produced popular culture" (Alvermann and Xu, 2003, p.5). This conversation plays into what Détrez and Perronnet (2020) describe as "the difficulties encountered" by the fact "that the sociology of culture and the sociology of childhood defined themselves somewhat against each other, notably around clear-cut definitions of the child's place and autonomy" (p.103). "Childlore" offers a bridge between studies of culture and childhood, allowing children to have their own defined everyday culture that is both contemporary and historical. This study thus focuses on childlore as a form of folklore that predates the above concepts of everyday literacies and out-of-school literacies to pay attention to the everyday in people's (particularly children's) lives.

It is important here to note that the historical and contemporary recording of children's literacies, culture and pastimes is a political act. It is the act of privileging certain forms of being and behaviour in schools and outside of schools, and this act occurs both intergenerationally and amongst peers. As Wohlwend (2011a) observes,

> The school culture valued reading and writing with print, evident through the prominence of literacy in teachers' classroom schedules and curriculum standards set by the community school district and federal educational policy…In peer culture, play practices with toys and dolls and design practices with paper, markers, and tape were highly valued by children (p.9).

This observation recognises how acts of everyday literacies, culture and childlore are part of a wider, conflicted cultural politics in which concepts of culture and lore are always situated and implicated. The politics that surround these everyday cultural texts is the focus of Marcus' (1986) historical work, which examines the various promotions and suppressions of rituals and culture as determined by the politics and holders of power over time. Marcus (1986) argues that there is "nothing fundamentally frivolous about the… politics of mirth" (p.23). We see this politics at work in the written accounts of childlore, for example, where play anthologies are collected *by* adults *for* adults, with very few exceptions. The positioning of children and childhood in these texts has shifted throughout their history and how innovation and tradition are portrayed in these anthologies of play shines critical light on the changing conceptions of childhood over time. Further, in terms of everyday literacies, all populations are not treated equally. As Ellison and Solomon (2017) highlight, African American children, particularly African American boys, are

widely misrepresented in literacy research "because of ongoing, unequal stereotypical statistics" about these young people in both "schools and society" (p.495). The question of who studies whom and what literacies, culture and childlore get represented is one that needs to be at the forefront of all research endeavours.

The final section of the literature review focuses on childhood today in the post-digital age in relation to the everyday digital texts in children's lives and the controversies and tensions that surround children's varying degrees of access to these "everyday" texts.

III: Digital Childhoods in the Post-Digital Age

Children's digital childhoods are to various extents mediated, experienced and performed across digitally connected platforms by both children and adults in children's lives (Danby, et al., 2018). These platforms are both public (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook) and private (e.g., WhatsApp, Snapchat and IM [instant messaging]). There is a plethora of information available regarding the safeguarding of children's activities online provided by websites that offer adults advice on how to help children protect their personal information (Internet Matters [www.internetmatters.org], Family Online Safety Institute [www.fosi.org] and UK Safer Internet Centre [www.saferinternet.org.uk]). However, the everyday lived experiences of children are often posted online by parents and other adults sharing their children's lives, often beginning even before the child is born through pregnancy announcements and sonogram images. This phenomenon – termed "sharenting" (Steinberg, 2017) – has challenged the conversation around digital childhoods, with specific reference to who has the right to determine what is actually and rightfully shared and what is not. The *EU Kids Online 2020* study found that "up to a third" of children in most countries reported that their parents published something about them online without their consent. They further observed that in many cases the children "asked their parents to remove things they have published from the internet" (Smahel, et al., 2020, p.8). The debate regarding parents' uses of images made popular news media in March 2019, when actress Gwyneth Paltrow posted an image of herself and her then 14-year old daughter, Apple Martin, to her more than seven million followers on Instagram. Under the photo Martin commented, "Mom we have discussed this. You may not post anything without my consent" (2019 as cited in Becker, 2019). This exchange was taken up by a number of news media sites that all used the photo in their publications; *The Daily Mail* referred to Martin's comment as "a sassy public scolding from a teenage daughter" (Becker, 2019). Steinberg (2017) addresses the "conflict inherent between a parent's right to share online

and a child's interest in privacy" (p.839). She argues that the question at the "crux of the argument" is,

> Should parents have unfettered discretion to control the upbringing of children, even when such control will eventually dictate children's ability to create their own identity apart from the parent? (Steinberg, 2017, p.874).

Steinberg analyses the legal ramifications of "sharenting" with a perspective that focuses on children as "becomings": children as future-adults who will challenge their parents' sharing of their images, but she also advises that, from the age of four, children ought to be a part of the conversation regarding their digital childhoods (2017, p.881). This background context of adults' role in constructing children's digital childhoods demonstrates the complex interplay between child agency and adult power. Discussions of children's agentive performances of childhood in the post-digital age are set within a society of digital connections and histories complicated by family practices, corporate and government surveillance technologies and child safety.

The experience of digital childhoods is described by Marsh et al. (2020) in their account of contemporary British childhoods, in which "technology is embedded in most children's lives, albeit in different ways, and they spend time playing with both digital and non-digital devices and toys" (p.89). As discussed above, children and childhoods are culturally integrated into adult cultures and in consequence,

> digital childhoods are embedded through children's agendas and in daily family life where children experience, see and participate in the use of digital technologies as central to the many mundane activities that constitute "doing" everyday life (Danby, et al., 2018, p.3).

That "doing" of "everyday life" is performed with everyday technologies such as phones, iPads and computers. Studies examining children's use of technologies and the role that the digital is playing at home and school in young people's lives have recently proliferated, building on and connecting with the work of literacy and culture experts of everyday texts (Collier, 2013a; Livingstone, 2009; Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016). In recent years, numerous publications from new media studies have represented children and young people as connected and engaged digital media users who are confidently and creatively interacting with peers online (boyd, 2014; Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2016; Buckingham, 2000; Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2015). In these texts, young people are positioned as agentively engaged in online peer/interest-driven communities, acting as users, consumers and producers of culture. In Australia and the United Kingdom, this is often expressed using Bruns' (2009) portmanteau of producer and user, *produser*, while in

North America the favoured term is *prosumer*, derived from Toffler's 1980 term *prosumption*: the combination of production and consumption (Ritzer, Dean and Jurgenson, 2012). The thesis takes up the term "produ*s*er" as the focus is on children's performances and productions of text, which feels more aligned with the concept of "use" than "consume".

Dichotomous Discourses of Childhood: the natural child or the digital child

Discourses of childhood have permeated almost all facets of society, determining how we treat and understand the actions and relationships of young people over time. This study on childhood, play and the digital began in 2016 against a backdrop of two distinct approaches to the role of new technologies in children's lives: *the natural child* and *the digital child*. Drawing on findings from the *EU Kids Online* (2010) project, Livingstone and Helsper outline dichotomous representations of childhood in terms of risks and opportunities that the digital offers young people:

> On the one hand, young people are seen as enthusiastic pioneers of the ever-changing media landscape. On the other, adults worry that they are peculiarly vulnerable to the intensified exposure it affords to the wider world, often without protection from parents and teachers (2013, p.1).

This judgement demonstrates the dual approach in action: where children and young people are positioned as either innately digital – essentially connected and knowledgeable of devices and software – or as natural, i.e., best kept away from devices and screens, which are dangerous and risky. These conceptions of childhood take an almost Panglossian view of what childhood could be when framed as ontologically "natural" – Rousseavian, innocent and pure – over and against the framing of the "digital" as agentive, experienced and "networked" (boyd, 2014). Prensky (2001) characterises the "digital native" as one at home with screens, digital interfaces and connected living in a way that those born outside of the digital landscape – "digital immigrants" – could never be. These two approaches (natural and digital), while conceived in response to current societal changes and emerging technologies, can be broadly considered as drawing upon two classical and opposing representations of the figure of the child as either innocent *or* experienced (Bazalgette and Buckingham, 1995; Wohlwend, 2010). This is not to suggest that the natural or digital approaches to childhood are direct antecedents of Romanticism, but rather that they play into an existing Western tradition that imagines childhood along dualistic lines.

A second set of binary terminology that functions to frame how children are positioned in society are as either themselves now ("beings") or as future-adults ("becomings")

(O'Donnell, 2018; Uprichard, 2008). Childhood is often seen as a space of movement, so play and the digital are often understood in terms of the usefulness they can provide the imagined-future-adult; how schools and society can equip the *becoming*-adult with the correct tools to be their best future self. Wohlwend (2011b) calls the "becoming" child "the developing organism", arguing that these ideas come from developmental discourse, which has constructed a "universal sequence of becoming" (p.2) that we see play out in young people's lives: the child is understood through their potential, always going to be something more than they currently are. The understanding of the child as a becoming, rather than a being, is often understood in terms of power imbalance between adults and children in the field of children's literature, represented through the terms "childist/adultist" perspectives (Hunt, 1984) and, more recently, "aetonormativity" (Nikolajeva, 2009). The opposite view, of children as whole, fully actualised *beings* now, recognises the today-child, one that is a whole being with rights, needs and experiences that matter today. The discussion of beings and becomings is further complicated by the fact that not all children are socially constructed equally. In particular, gender and race, along with the environment, body, language ability and other such influencing factors determine whether a child is understood as a child-as-a-being, an adult-as-a-being or a child-as-a-becoming. We see such examples play out in different interpretations of sexuality in young girls' dances in comparison to young boys' dances (Gaunt, 2006; Renold and Ringrose, 2011) and in such instances as the tragic murder of Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old African American boy killed by police for playing with a toy gun (Lewis Ellison and Solomon, 2017; Vasudevan, 2019).

David Buckingham (2000) addresses the tensions between what he describes as "contradictory" "cultural representations of childhood" (p.9), stating that these tensions,

> frequently say much more about adults' and children's fantasy investments in the *idea* of childhood than they do about the realities of children's lives; and they are often imbued with nostalgia for a past Golden Age of freedom and play (p.9 original italicisation).

According to Buckingham, therefore, the "nostalgic" representations of childhood along dichotomous lines (i.e., natural/digital) say more about the adults (and children) who envision them than the children who actually live them. However, these representations are not simply theoretical, but determine and define children's experiences when they are enacted into the policies, both official and informal, that determine children's access to materials, resources, education and play.

The constructions of childhoods as natural/digital, innocent/experienced, beings/becomings outlined above are of course extremes. In numerous articles, books, reports and white papers published by leading academics over the last decade, binary narratives such as these are presented in order to be dismissed in favour of more complex, critical representations of children's lives and lived realities (Bazalgette and Buckingham, 1995; Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2016; Buckingham, 2000; Livingstone, 2009; Livingstone and Helsper, 2013; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Marsh et al., 2020; and Smahel et al., 2020). As Kraftl (2020) suggests,

> many societies have become attached to ways of imagining childhoods and (in)directly dealing with children that, upon taking a step back, appear at least questionable, if not ridiculous" (p.209).

In fact, children's everyday experiences are more often subtle spaces of negotiations between adults and children regarding the child's rights, responsibilities and protection (Mayall, 1994). Dichotomies are collapsed in the post-digital age, and children and adults are understood to exist both online and offline to various degrees at all times (Nelson, Perry and Rogers, 2020). Children are more than innocent *or* experienced, and are in fact, as this study's findings will demonstrate, simultaneously both. Even the child, in this posthuman collapse of definitions, is understood as "a mangle",

> constituted by concepts *and* material forces, where the social, the political, the biological, as well as its observing, measuring, and controlling machines (e.g., camera, videos) are interwoven and entwined (Murris, 2017, p.194).

Recent examples of this approach to research with children in action include Wargo's (2018) study examining children's creative productions made in/with nature while using "wearables", i.e., wearable technology such as Go-Pro cameras, and Hohti's (2016) study looking at the concept of material and temporal entanglements, also in the classroom context. The child as "mangle" speaks more generally to research that examines the interplay between children, spaces, bodies, algorithms, childhood and capitalism and how this is represented in the creative, parodic, ludic play of children themselves. Remixing, replaying and "re-produsing" cultural scripts in this way is *all* part of play; hence this is how childlore is created and then fed back today into the cycle of producing further scripts and multiplying cultural meanings (Gaunt, 2006; Kelsey, 2019; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Soileau, 2016; and Willett, 2015a).

Livingstone and Helsper report that their 2010 *EU Kids Online* survey both addresses and rebuts what they term the "optimistic hyperbole about 'digital natives' along with the media's pessimistic moral panics about online risks" (2013, p.2). Whether in relation to risk, harm or opportunities, it is the fundamental understandings of children and childhood that determine how adults respond to the emerging landscape of digital childhoods. The role of children as "self-curators" (Potter, 2012) of their digital identities is increasingly challenged by what the internet and the "internet of things" (Marsh, 2017) bring to the conversation – that while individuals are making and unmaking their realities, there are larger influences that dictate much of what occurs online (e.g., marketing metrics and site design).

These larger influences determine what is shown to children, which is then recycled into the experiences of children at play, in the same way that marketing jingles are evidenced in children's games (Opie and Opie, 1959 and 1985). Studies that look at children's media use in the digital age also address the related fears of the "McDonaldization" (Ritzer, 1992) of children's culture and interests – the argument that due to our increasingly homogenous, globalised world, local and interstitial culture is lost. Studies that have examined children's "remix" culture in particular argue that children's play naturally interacts with and takes up bits and pieces of their surrounding culture, but that this is a continuation of tradition, not an interruption (Gaunt, 2006; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Soileau, 2016; Willett, 2011 and 2015). Marsh and Millard (2000) articulate how this works, stating that,

> [C]hildren are agents in the construction of their own culture at the same time as being subject to hegemonic discourses of profit and consumerism. They both accept and reject the products offered to them (p.21).

There is a strong push, particularly in new media and education studies, to demonstrate that children and young people are agentive users of new media (boyd, 2014; Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2015). While these studies are responding to arguments that children are passive and innocent media users, we are here reminded of Buckingham's (1994) warning that replacing the narrative of children's interaction with media as one of innocence with one of experience is insufficient at best, harmful at worst.

In their 2016 report, Blum-Ross and Livingstone present discussions of children's relationships with the digital. While their analysis offers a nuanced approach to digital childhoods, the report's findings demonstrate that adult gatekeepers (parents, guardians, schools) respond to children's use of the digital along lines that feed into these enduring

binary imaginings of childhood as natural/innocent *or* digital/experienced. Representations of the natural and innocent child are particularly evidenced when children are positioned as at risk of potentially harmful interactions online with people and material, which is coupled with "the possible adverse health and developmental effects of increased 'screen time'" (2016, p.6). On the other hand, the concept of the digital child emerges strongly when new technologies are embraced by families making "increased investments in digital technologies" to further "their children's education, maintaining social and familial connections, or simply facilitating and enjoying daily life" (2016, p.6). These rhetorical approaches to children's relationships to/with digital technologies offer two differing representations of childhood agency where technology is imagined as both a risk *to* and an opportunity *for* children.

These imaginings bring into question when "risk" becomes "harm", which as Livingstone attests, "remains difficult to ascertain, partly because harm is not easy to define" (2009, p.165). Michael Merry (2018) tackles the question of harm (chiefly in educational contexts) but approaches it from a position of moral realism that reframes "this ethical dilemma not in terms of harm versus non-harm, but in terms of different kinds and degrees of harm" (p.173). The discussion of "degrees of harm" or "relevant harms" plays into a wider philosophical debate regarding morality and action (Lefkowitz, 2008; Norcross, 2002). However, the concept "relevant harms" here offers a more nuanced, individual understanding of how harms are not equally experienced. Aware of the variegated experiences of young people, the recent *EU Kids Online 2020* places its discussion of risk and opportunities in the same category (Smahel et al., 2020). The report seeks to represent the digital as both a place of risk and opportunity for children, demonstrating a much-needed nuanced understanding of children's various experiences of childhood. The report found that in most countries, children go to their parents and friends for support and encouragement and that parents "focus more on encouraging safe use of the internet than on encouraging children to explore the opportunities that the internet offers" (Smahel et al., 2020, p.8). It is in encouraging safety versus exploration that we see that parents' having to navigate the various "relevant harms" the internet might expose children and young people to, and it is in this navigation that parents' duty of care comes into action.

The standard "duty of care" obligations of adults to children are evidenced in parental advice websites such as Internet Matters, Family Online Safety Institute and UK Safer Internet Centre, which offer legal and ethical guidelines for parents based on children's ages. The duty does not end with the parents, however, as demonstrated in the

controversial 2019 government *Online Harms White Paper*, which outlines how companies are "expected to take appropriate action to fulfil their duty of care" (RPC, 2020, p.22). The White Paper, as of June 2020, appointed Ofcom as the regulator who will in the future be able to impose fines and IP blocks on sites and platforms that do not meet their requirements (RPC, 2020). The White Paper also focuses on "age verification" and "transparency" in sites, demonstrating particular attention to children's usage of websites and platforms (RPC, 2020). This focus on age is already evident on many social media sites, such as those owned by the Alphabet Inc. (Google and YouTube) and Facebook (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), which all require children to be a certain age to participate. Scottish children fall under UK-wide rules that follow the default 13 years old rule, but schools and families make their own rules that determine whether they allow this minimum age or prefer an older age threshold before young people may officially have a social media account. In 2020, the Internet Matters website commissioned an online survey of 1,001 children aged 11-16, which reported that "62% of 11 year-olds and 69% of 12 year olds have a Facebook profile", despite Facebook's minimum age restrictions of 13 years old. Similarly, a report from 25 European countries found in 2011 that "[o]ne quarter (26%) of the 9-10 year olds report having their own profile, compared with half (49%) of 11-12 year olds" (Livingstone et al., 2011, p.36). What is clear is that unlike the responsive research that considers "relevant harms" through its approach to "opportunities *and* risks", this government *Online Harms White Paper* presents a rhetoric of harm that requires adults across the spectrum of business, institutions and homes to enact a duty of care. How Ofcom plan to regulate these rules in the near future will no doubt have an impact on the everyday lives and play of young people in a very real and immediate way.

Screen Time at Home

Despite the body of scholarly work, there is a persistent popular narrative in parenting manuals and online advice sites that "too much" exposure to screens and the digital is harmful (Dunckley, 2014). That harm is generally expressed either in relation to health problems associated with screens or the social aspects of digital connectedness. This section will look at how harm, risks and opportunities associated with the digital fall into the binary approaches to children's experiences outlined earlier in this chapter. The assumed ideal of the natural, innocent child flourishes in spaces that block, ban or limit the digital. These blocks and bans are seen as ways to encourage more natural engagement with the world in response to the often pejoratively spoken of "screen time". The popularity of the natural approach is evident in the very existence of the term screen time and its negative connotations, while there is no current equivalent for reading books, a

similar sedentary activity in which (acknowledging the above arguments) the reader is a receiver rather than a producer of information. Wohlwend (2011b) articulates the difference in common perceptions to reading books versus screens, stating,

> When schooled child discourse combines with the developing organism, the emphasis on print literacy reinforces a prohibition against exposure to screens, so that sitting just-so while working on paper and pencil tasks seems somehow more appropriate than sitting in front of a computer screen (p.5).

In fact, a 2019 review, *Effects of screentime on the health and well-being of children and adolescents*, found that many of the "associated…variety of health harms" (p.1) are those commonly associated with a sedentary lifestyle. However, the review also finds that "evidence to guide policy on safe CYP [children and young people] screentime exposure is limited" (2009, p.1). In the same vein, the February 2020 National Literacy Trust report of the Annual Literacy Survey found "an increasingly stark picture of children and young people's reading habits" (Clark and Teravainen-Goff, 2020, p.1). The report defines reading in broad but specific terms and includes attention to "six formats that can only be read on screen", which consist of "text messages", "instant messages", "websites", "social media posts", "emails" and "blogs" (Clark and Teravainen-Goff, 2020, p.8). There are no mentions in it of applications, games or digital books, and yet a "stark picture" of readers is reported. The report was further cited as evidence in an article in *The Guardian* newspaper of March 2020 entitled "How I managed to raise a little bookworm in the age of smartphones and tablets", which exemplifies the classic digital/natural binary with a heavy moral tone that favours books over screen time. In the article, Ferguson offers tips on encouraging reading based on her parenting style, which, in a bid to increase her daughter's love for reading, included at one point a period of banning "smartphones and tablets, except for audiobooks" (2020). Drawing on the National Literacy Trust report to evidence the declining rates of reading and the rise in screen use, Ferguson offers tips to encourage reading hardcopy books with the implicit assumption that her readers will agree that this form of reading books is a superior practice, while screens are bad. What the article demonstrates is that the natural child approach involves a particular relationship to the digital, and it can in consequence obscure what we count as reading and "healthy practices". At the same time, it still presumes what constitutes good or bad experiences of childhood.

The language of "screen time" thus exemplifies the disconnect between academic and non-academic discourses in relation to digital technologies and childhood. Blum-Ross and

Livingstone report in their 2016 media policy project "that the notion of 'screen time' itself is outmoded" (p.6). The continuing divide between academic notions of "good" technology and play for children is juxtaposed with parental fears about how their children spend their time (Neumann et al., 2018). This is further demonstrated in the recent major research report *Children, Technology and Play* (June 2020), which brings together experts from across the fields of education, technology and childhood to examine the relationship between children's play, the role of technology and opportunities for learning.

In the 200-page report, "screen time" is mentioned three times, always negatively in reporting parental fears regarding technology use. While allowing their children varying levels of access to the digital, parents articulate their fears that "watching videos is passive, limiting creativity" while "feel[ing] that outdoor play is valuable, although it is not as possible where the family lives currently" (Marsh et al., 2020, p.79). Another parent is "concerned about the influence of the digital and online media on her children, describing children who are exposed to lots of screen time as 'zombies'" (Marsh et al., 2020, p.83). This particular parent subscribes to the natural child approach because "[s]he has read articles on the risks of technology and would rather her family was outside exploring the world than looking at screens" (Marsh et al., 2020, p.83). While the report emphasises these and other parental concerns, the integrated nature of the digital with other objects is also highlighted and the motion between digital and non-digital toys is surveyed. The study hence positions the digital as another toy in the repertoire of play for children rather than a necessarily "bad" and inferior form of play. This approach to digital technologies as a tool for play and playful pedagogies that place technology in the hands of children is on the rise in literacy research (Marsh, 2017; Merchant; 2015; Neumann et al., 2018; Perry, Collier and Rowsell, 2019; Wohlwend et al, 2018).

The *Children, Technology and Play* report, alongside the work of Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2016), demonstrates that while the dualistic imaginings of children in play are repeatedly and anxiously articulated by parents and ought not to be ignored, the actual picture is more complex and nuanced, requiring a more subtle approach than a simple binary allows. Theories such as Prensky's (2001) "digital native" have been generally debunked in academia; nevertheless, as I contend with Perry and Rogers (2019), these labels "continue to pop up across scholarly publications and in popular media articulating what is widely understood as a generation gap" (p.103). This generation gap is less concerned with the question of when the digital was taken up by adults and children (as represented in the digital native/immigrant debate), instead concentrating more on existing

relationships between young people and the digital in the current post-digital age. Hence, while the (questionable) concept of "screen time" is still operationalised in apps and devices so that parents can monitor the number of minutes of their children's connection, the recent *EU Kids Online 2020* study found that across 19 European countries, "the majority of children [report] using their smartphones daily or almost all the time" (Smahel et al., 2020, p.6). The proportion of time young people are spending on the phone or digital device is less important, we can conclude, than their engagement in the activities themselves (Nelson, Perry, Rogers, 2020).

Addressing the (Harmful) Divide

In the forward to the OECD's (2015) *Students, Computers and Learning: Making the Connection*, which reports on the previous year's PISA results, the necessity of digital and technological skills for future success is again highlighted with the warning that "students unable to navigate through a complex digital landscape will no longer be able to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life around them" (2015, p.3). Schools are again positioned as gatekeepers to the harms and risks young people face online, and knowledge and use of new technologies are highlighted as central to equipping children with the right skills for success and wellbeing. However, Sonia Livingstone's (2009) book, *Children and the Internet*, argues that simply educating young people with digital skills is insufficient protection, stating that, "the translation from risk to harm remains difficult to ascertain, partly because harm is not easy to define" (p.165). The internet is not itself the creator of risk or harm, but rather a space for children and adults to explore; it is in this space that those more experienced internet users engage in risky conduct that flirts with actual harmful behaviour. Those more skilled are able to work around the basic bans; as Livingstone discovered, "being more skilled does not, it seems, provide a means to avoid the risks" (2009, p.171).

Those seen at most risk to online harms are often construed as young people left behind by the "digital divide", a term that originally articulated the gap between those with and those without regular digital access (Cullen, 2001; van Dijk, 2006). The term now refers to many forms of division in relation to the digital and critical progress that has been made in addressing the so-called "global divide" (Holderness, 2006) in digital access. Recent publications shine necessary light on the fact that discussions of digital access do not sufficiently address global digital inequality, particularly in relation to wider educational entitlements (Emejulu and McGregor, 2019; Valenzuela-Levi, 2020). However, the focus of this research project is the experiences of Scottish children, and therefore the discussion

of access will be focused here on the local situation, while drawing appropriately on the United Kingdom and elsewhere more broadly.

At the local level, Glasgow City Council in 2016 published *Enhancing Learning and Teaching: the use of digital technology*, which addresses such issues in the city of Glasgow, which in 2019 followed through with a roll-out of iPads and further technologies for all students in classrooms (Glasgow City Council, 2018). However, numerous studies have debunked this concept of "access" as the solution, arguing for more integrated practices that are responsive to both societal and individual technological needs (Dolan, 2016). As the internet and access to devices become more widespread in Scotland, the "digital divide" has become less about regular access and more about *use*. This is seen in the "ways the differing socioeconomic makeup of schools lead to students being consumers, rather than producers, of technology" (Dolan, 2016, p.16).

However, in light of the current Covid-19 global pandemic of 2020/1, which resulted in the swift and aggressive transfer to online schooling and interaction, discussions regarding the "digital divide" and digital inequality have become much more immediately salient, particularly regarding what is referred to as "digital exclusion": a presumed lack of basic access to internet connection and materials (internet, tablets and laptops, etc.). The Children's and Young People's Commissioner Scotland considers digital exclusion to be a question of children's "education rights" and therefore an issue that should be addressed directly by the government (2020). As children are placed in the position of having to produce digital work, we may therefore see changes in the landscape of the digital divide in the post-COVID era.

The Digital in the Post-Digital Age

The original title of this doctoral project was *Understanding Online and Offline Playground Games and Lore in the Digital Age*, and while the exploratory nature and focus on children's games and lore has continued throughout, the relationships between concepts of "online", "offline" and "the digital" have shifted considerably since the project's proposal was written in 2015. The dichotomous nature of the digital has been uprooted and we are now in what is called the "post-digital age". The "post-digital age" refers to a time of continuous (if variegated) engagement in the digital world. The "post-" in the reference highlights the shift in focus, where the digital has become a given and "identity is increasingly intertwined with digital spaces and networks" (Waugh, 2017, p.233). As Brown (2017) formulates it,

the prefix 'post' signifies a formation that is *temporally after but not over* that to which it is affixed. 'Post' indicates a very particular condition of afterness in which what is past is not left behind, but, on the contrary, relentlessly conditions, even dominates a present that nevertheless also breaks in some way with this past. In other words, we use the term 'post' only for a present whose past continues to capture and structure it (p.33, original italics).

As such, the post-digital age is mediated in many ways by the digital, but not in the way it once was. boyd (2014) testifies to these changes in her book *It's Complicated*, describing the difference between her youthful experiences where she would "go online or 'jack in'" (p.4) and young people's relationships to the internet today. Numerous studies demonstrate that the relationship between children and young people and the digital is less binary and more seamless: intertwined, complicated and sticky (Karoff and Johansen, 2009; Leander and McKim, 2003; Lewis and Fabos, 2005; Nelson, Perry, Rogers, 2020). The "seamless" (Bennett and Robards, 2014, p.2) integration of the digital into everyday life is the very everyday-ness to which "everyday technologies" above refers.

The concept of the post-digital age is geographically and, in many ways, temporally fixed. It assumes a Western model of internet access and does not make space for the "digital divide" addressed in the previous section. However, while accepting the base premise of the "everyday" post-digital age, there are still spaces within this Western world of access where connectivity is limited or unavailable. These are spaces, generally mediated by adult gatekeepers, where phones are not allowed, screen time is restricted and thus, in a time when the digital is understood as an everyday technology, children and young people are still living the binaries of online and offline connection. This enquiry examines digital childhoods within the context of this post-digital age, made possible at these adult-mediated spaces, including schools and homes, that restrict or allow young people various levels of access to digital tools and technologies.

Nevertheless, while children's access to everyday technologies is often limited during the school day, various studies have found that school relationships are still heavily mediated through digital technologies. Lewis and Fabos (2005), for example, found in their study that "being 'in the know' and knowing the inside jokes from the IM [instant messaging] session the night before were seen as essential for social relations at school" (p.486). They demonstrated this inter-web of relations, stating that the young people's "online social world was contingent upon the offline social world at school" and vice versa (Lewis and

Fabos, 2005, p.486). Similarly, Burnett and Merchant (2014) examine the online/offline interactions of children participating in simulated worlds in a classroom setting. They argue that "an analysis of [a student's] online/offline activity as binary or separate events is insufficient. Instead, we suggest it is helpful to see him as enacting a kind of 'layered presence', in space that is both online and offline, both schooled and not-schooled" (p.44). Furthermore, "[i]nspired by a Latourian perspective on flow", Leander and McKim (2003) claim that,

> [a]n analysis of flow across online and offline practices could productively contrast the relations of flow among, for example, school-based literacies and the online literacies that adolescents engage in for pleasure (p.227).

Similarly, studies that focus on children's games highlight the integration of digital mediated cultures, language and lore in the school playground (Bishop, 2014; Burn and Richards, 2014; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Marsh et al., 2020; Roud, 2011; Willett, 2011, 2015a and 2015b).

Children's and adults' play with everyday technologies at home affect children's everyday experiences at school, while their actions at school are part of their wider online performances: "One can become a member of a community online, and one's [offline] identity can be entwined with one's online performance" (Thompson, 2013, p.168). This demonstrates that, despite daily reinstatements of the online/offline binary in children's and young people's lives, they are in fact experiencing fully "digital childhoods" in the post-digital age. Children moreover play a vital role in fashioning their own digital identities, even in the simple creation of an online profile (Leander and McKim, 2003).

In the same vein, Potter (2012) has proposed that young people engage in what he calls "self curation": using digital media to exhibit and perform aspects of their everyday lives. The metaphor of "curating" is intended to convey a process that goes beyond "writing or producing" to incorporate "collecting, distributing, assembling, disassembling, and moving" media objects and content across different domains (Potter, 2012, p.5). Similar discoveries of these practices of self-curation exist across media platforms such as instant messenger (Lewis and Fabos, 2005), YouTube (Peters and Seier, 2009) and Snapchat (Handyside and Ringrose, 2017; Wargo, 2015). Studies of such sites examine the many ways in which children are creating spaces for their own identities and interests unmediated by their parents and other adult gatekeepers, and as a result are actively controlling at least part of the discourse around their own experiences of childhood. In his forward to Kelsey's edited anthology of play, Bronner (2019) demonstrates the power of

childlore, stating that through performances of lore, children are able to make claims and take ownership of their own experience, arguing that children "declare their own identity, and lore is their protected expression of cultural connection to one another" (p. viii).

Traditions are reproduced, reconfigured and remade online by adults and children, and these moments become part of children's everyday culture:

> The digital revolution has changed the rules of the game once again, allowing for a reemergence of participatory culture mediated through digital networks. The effects of this new technological revolution will likely be more profound than those of even the printing press…what will become of traditions and what will traditions become in this new age will be a central concern of our time (Thompson, 2013, p.151).

Conclusion

This chapter opened by presenting an introduction to children's play anthologies collected over the last 125 years, predominantly in the United Kingdom, which function as the "warp threads" of this thesis, interwoven into the structure of the design, encounters and analysis. The second section offered an overview of children's everyday texts and how children's interaction with these materials are understood in terms of literacies, culture and childlore. The final section then introduced depictions of childhood in relation to everyday technologies in terms of dichotomous representations of the child as either digital/natural, experienced/innocent, and beings/becomings to represent the various adult understanding of children's relationship to the digital in the post-digital age. The review has traversed the areas of children's play, everyday texts and childhood in order to collate and synthesise existing knowledge in the field, while critically identifying the main arguments and the gaps. This study builds on an extensive body of work from historical to current day anthologies of play, and novel methodologies of researching play with children and new technologies, all with a broad interdisciplinary outlook drawing on cultural studies including new media, film and television studies and children's literature. This diverse body of literature also includes text drawn from the immediate spaces children occupy such as education, and government policies on technology use and access both at school and home through explorations of screen time and technology access. The different areas of literature are distinct in their form and content, with part one focusing on books, part two on peer reviewed articles and chapters, and part three on reports, online sources and

news media – a variety of forms of literature that all respond to the everyday lived experiences of children in the past and today.

In the making and performing of their own childhoods, children are encouraged and shaped by popular perceptions such as the above discussed dichotomous imaginings of childhood. This is how these paradigms of childhood shape children's experiences of childhood today. Children, however, are not a homogenous group, and their acceptance of or resistance to these cultural scripts occur on collective and individual terms. Furthermore, the taking up and rejection of these scripts occur moment to moment, and we will see this unfold in the thesis' expansive account of children's play. This overall project positions children and young people as agentive produsers of their own culture, capable of harnessing their knowledge of their everyday technologies in performance, curation and identity construction in play. The next chapter takes the play anthologies here discussed alongside theories of play to develop a comprehensive theory of play that is then actualised in the research design and analysis in order to understand contemporary children's play within the folklore tradition. Drawing on work scrutinised in this literature review, the study places technology in the hands of the children, combined with an historical approach to understanding play, in order to create a new and innovative methodology that allows for fresh insight into the ways children produce and perform play in the post-digital age. This thesis, therefore, forges new ground through its fusion of traditional accounts of childlore and play with new, exciting everyday technologies that allow importantly for children to fashion their own stories of their everyday play. Hence, the examination of childhood today presents a picture of play in the post-digital age that is, literally, in the hands of children.

Chapter Three. A Theory of Play: Games, Lore and Mischief as Text

In *Imagining Childhood*, Erika Langmuir (2006) states that "making images of children presupposes an idea, or ideal, of a 'state of childhood' distinguishing children from adults" (p.2). In this study, that "state of childhood" is play. In this research project, performances of play are elicited, produced and analysed to gain an insight into children's everyday experiences of childhood. Play is understood as a form of base interaction between children, the world, its objects and other inhabitants, taken as a given element of life as fundamental as talking. In the research encounters, the capacity for play is understood as an element that is always and continuously possible. Therefore, in the design, encounters and analysis, play is employed as a method of interaction, a methodology, an epistemological stance and a unit of analysis.

The spectrum of what appears to be "playful activity" is based on both the performer's and the interpreter's understandings and recognition of what counts as play (a raised eyebrow, a cleverly worded response, crying, laughing, hitting, etc.). The forms of children's folkloric play on which this study focuses are the generationally produced and performed moments of play– play made *by* children *for* children (themselves and others). Yet this work involves *my* recognition of said play in children's actions: understanding and interpreting play from the perspective of an adult. In order to recognise what counts as play as a unit of analysis, in amongst the entangled encounters of people, materials and environments, I turned to representations of play in the folkloric tradition of children's play anthologies from the United Kingdom over the last 125 years. Taking up Bernstein's (2011) concept of "scripts" and "scriptive thing[s]", I am able to utilise these traditional play-scripts to recognise continuities and innovation in children's folkloric play in order to generate an understanding of how children are performing and producing folkloric play in the post-digital age.

This chapter first defines play in the folklore tradition, focusing on the meanings of games, lore and mischief as applied in this project. The second section is an explication of my theory of games, lore and mischief *as text* to explain that, through processes of produ*s*ing and re-scripting, children's performances and productions of games, lore and mischief become their "texts of childhood". Throughout the chapter, I examine the theories and meanings of play and childhood *produced* in this study in an onto-epistemological framework of new materialism and "more than words" approaches. The chapter's

theoretical interpretation of play in the folklore tradition is one of the key contributions this thesis offers to the study of play and childhood in the post-digital age.

Theories of Play

There are numerous definitions of play that are generally determined along disciplinary lines. The strong relationship between childhood and play has meant that many theories of play are based on the psychology of childhood, including developmental stages and education (Burghardt, 2011; Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Piaget, 1951; Rubin et al., 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). As well as this, recognition that play occurs across species, cultures and ages has led to numerous evolutionary theories of play (Bekoff and Byers, 1998; Fagen, 1981; Gray, 2009; Sutton-Smith, 2008). Across cultural play studies, Johan Huizinga's definition continues to loom large. In his 1938 publication *Homo Ludens: The Study of the Play Element in Culture* (first published in English in 1955), Huizinga defines play as:

> [A] free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means (1955, p.13).

Roger Caillois' (1961) *Man, Play and Games* was written as a response piece that critiqued and extended Huizinga's definition, for example addressing gambling to propose his own categorisation of play. These two works have had continuing impact on play studies and, alongside the more modern works of Henry Jenkins (2004) and Jesper Juul (2005), have also played a formative role in the theories that underpin the discipline of games studies (Kunzelman and Lutz, 2018).

Both Huizinga and Caillois' definitions, while focused on cultural aspects of play, do not sufficiently address *children's* play, especially play in the form of children's games, childlore and mischief. First and foremost, both Huizinga's statement that "no profit can be gained" (1955, p.13) and Caillois' clarification that "property is exchanged, but no goods are produced" (1961, p.5) ignore the creativity of children in play and the idea that children produce and perform their culture in play. As will be explicated below, this thesis conceives games as texts, specifically texts of childhood, that carry meaning and are performed and produced in play. Further, Huizinga and Callios' understandings offer no

insight on the creative *produsing* of YouTube videos of play and the "video-play-texts" the children made as part of this research project. The play-work the children performed and produced in my study, under my direction and suggestion, does not fit within the borders of their definitions.

The continuing influence of Huizinga's definition was made clear in Phillips Stevens Jr.'s 2014 keynote address at the 40th Anniversary meeting of the *Association for the Study of Play* in New York. While stressing the importance of Huizinga's definition to the early 1970s work of the association, Stevens complained that "far too much time and energy" has been spent on the continuous act of redefining play (2016, p.14). Stevens then advocated for a recognition of Huizinga's definition with the addition of the knowledge of "neuroscientists of today" (2016, p.14). Stevens here exemplifies the recent turn in much social science research to look at the molecular level of human interaction to understand the social. This research is increasingly popular in understanding children's interaction with the digital, particularly screen time (Dunckley, 2014). The vogue is now to look at brain responses to stimulants to understand how forms of play affect chemicals released in the brain. This trend of understanding children's experiences through brain imaging is growing in popularity across child development, child psychology and emotions studies and is increasingly being drawn upon in areas such as EDN (Evolved Developmental Niche) Parenting (Narvaez, 2015). There is much to learn through this harnessing of new brain imaging technologies that could further develop work done in the past which has combined childlore and psychology, most notably by Sutton-Smith (1970). However, this study on childhood and play is focused on the social production of play texts, valuing children's voices and their productions. The "sites" of interest are that of the everyday moments of play and creativity as presented and performed by children.

The project is framed by ludic, imaginative play. The key theory of play is woven into all stages of the research design and I draw on a number of play theorists including the works of Sutton-Smith, Gadamer, and Stetsenko and Ho's (2015) combination of Vygotsky's developmental theory and Bakhtin's dialogic approach to understand play's relationship between the individual and society. The thesis agrees with Wohlwend's (2011a) assertion that the materiality and embodied aspects of play are necessary in understanding the post-digital landscape of children's play. Drawing on a folkloric definition of play allows for the bringing together of bodies, culture and texts to create a layered and complex understanding of children's productive performances of play.

Scottish School Contexts of Play- in brief

Understandings of the theories, literacies and advantages of play determine the types of play that are valued in schools. In Scottish schools today, the *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) places play under the "Active" category in the *SHANARRI Wellbeing Wheel Framework for Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC), which states the importance of children having "opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community" (The Scottish Government, 2006). The CfE champions the use of play as a tool for learning, enjoyment, socialisation and active movement, all linked to the general wellbeing of the child. This posits an understanding of play as a purposeful activity that can be harnessed, assessed and quantified within the curriculum, and many forms of play can indeed meet these requirements. Thanks to the work of literacy experts, these forms of play are counted as productive and there are many movements in schools and extracurricular activities to promote these activities among children. Active Play has become the focus of a number of local charities and trusts for wellbeing and health that partner with schools to work alongside the CfE with students who need extra support. One such program is run by Inspiring Scotland, who work with partners across Scotland to bring play workers into schools to lead sessions of Active Play (Glasgow City Council, 2019). They recently ran a program from August 2016 to June 2019 in partnership with the Glasgow City Council's Education Department, as part of *Glasgow's Improvement Challenge* (2015-2020) (Glasgow City Council, n.d.). This form of play encourages a general turn away from the digital to embrace imaginative and physical play.

At the same time, in schools in Scotland and across the United Kingdom, the digital is situated as an integral skill for the future. In the Scottish Government's (2016) strategy plan for *Enhancing Learning and Teaching Through the Use of Digital Technology*, digital learning is positioned as "vital for learning, life and work", full of potential that can be "unlock[ed]…to the benefit of the individuals, Scottish economy and society as a whole" (p.1). However, there is no mention of digital-active play, such as the children perform in my study, nor forms of play that are not physically active. This lack of recognition of these post-digital forms of play are worrying in a context of increasing reports of free play time being replaced with active, learning play time (Bishop, 2016). Therefore, in order to understand children's agentive performances of folkloric play with digital technologies, I have determined my own theory of play, outlined in this chapter.

Defining Play in the Folklore Tradition: Games, Lore and Mischief

Folkloric play is ludic, imaginative, physical and embodied activity that occurs across playgrounds, homes, streets, etc. as a part of children's everyday activities. Brian Sutton-Smith (1997/2001) refers to this type of play as "unorganised games". Peter and Iona Opie (1959) appreciated similar play, which they referred to as "unsupervised play". However, the play in my project was neither unorganised nor unsupervised. I organised and scaffolded forms of play by showing specific videos and supplying a range of materials from digital tablets to marshmallows. I requested the children create videos and, throughout the project, play was organised by the children's interaction with each other, the space, the cameras, the occasional staff member and me. The prompts I offered the children materially scripted the video-play-texts they created, but the scripting was intended as a suggestion rather than a directive. The materials and discussion about YouTube and video-watching functioned as "a set of invitations that necessarily remain[ed] open to resistance, interpretation and improvisation" (Bernstein, 2011, p.12). I also "supervised" the play throughout the study, alongside the staff at the facilities, other children and the many cameras. Within this environment of organisation and supervision, the play the children performed in their video-play-texts and in my observations was at times apparently unstructured, often imaginative and creative, occasionally parodic, sometimes unruly, other times disciplined, but always ludic. While this ludic play appears in multiple forms, this thesis focuses on three performances of play in the folklore tradition – *games, lore* and *mischief* – which will be discussed below. It is important to note that the definitions I offer distinguishing folklore, childlore and lore are not intended to be universal, but function to provide clarity within context of the thesis.

Games and Interpretive Communities

The definition of *game* often relates to rules and structure, while folkloric play[5] is more associated with freedom and ludic activity as expressed above. Definitions of games, like definitions of play discussed in the literature review, are more often than not context- and material-specific. In an important paper that analyses various definitions of games, Arjoranta (2014) argues for an understanding of the category of games according to Wittgenstein's concept of "language-games" – which is the grouping of things together based on their similar attributes, their "family resemblances", rather than by exclusive, conditional criteria. Stanley Fish's "interpretive communities" is another way of looking at

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[5] Unless otherwise specified, "folkloric play" will henceforth refer to children's games, lore and mischief.

a similar concept. Fish (1976) argues that interpretive communities develop strategies for reading a text in a certain way. He argues that understanding readings through interpretive communities means that agreements are possible, "not because of a stability in texts, but because of a stability in the makeup of interpretive communities" (Fish, 1976/2004, p.220).

I draw on two interpretive communities to understand what constitute games and lore in this study. The first is the still active community of folklorists and game anthologists who have collected and collated versions of games and lore over the last 125 years. The second community is one that these folklorists have always turned to in order to learn the games and lore being shared: the children. In discussions and observations regarding the adaptations and changes of children's folkloric play over time, we see what Fish recognises as the instability of these (play-)texts. However, through the publications of the folklore community, there is a consensus regarding what constitutes folkloric play based on historical representations of games, lore and mischief that continue to be relevant to play today, despite the continuous changes in people (players), environments (playgrounds) and materials (toys). The flexibility with which folklorists and children approach play (the former group recognising the latter's ability to adapt old games, invent new games and draw on materials, people and environments around them) demonstrates how the interpretive community of folklorists and play experts are responsive to changing ideas of children and childhood in society. For example, while we can agree with Gomme (1894) that "Singing Games" are a genre of children's games that are recognisable and worthy of collection and research, we also position the children as agentive, creative *produsers* of their own play rather than "corrupt" (Newell, 1884, p.40) forces destroying the "pure" (Gomme, 1898, p.13) games of the past. In recognising and appreciating these differences, current work is placed in relation with existing work as we learn from past experts (both adult collectors and the child-players represented) to continue to extend the field.

Further, my inclusion of digital games in play is demonstrative of the interpretive community of play in which I exist. This interpretation is not simply modern, suggesting a progressive narrative of understanding, but exists in juxtaposition to other contemporary interpretive communities who voice Rousseuavian and sometimes even Luddite positions regarding technology in the hands of children. As my study is grounded in the concept of play within the historical tradition of games and lore, I returned to the anthologies' categories and examples of earlier children at play to understand how modern forms of play are reflected and reinvigorated in today's children's play, where, for example, the Fortnite videogame, as a contemporary material component of play, involves an assortment

of folkloric play including, but not limited to, dancing, running, group play and play with things.

Lore: Stories and Scripts

The second form of folkloric play is *lore*. In the context of this thesis, *folklore* is used as a general term for everyday culture, while *childlore* is specific unto children. *Lore*, on the other hand, refers to two distinct aspects of play: stories and scripts. *Stories* are understood as performances of folkloric tales by the children, while *scripts* refer to the rules of the games.

The stories the children told were distinct from the games they played and were playful performances in their own right. Stories are folkloric tales or narratives passed between peers, friends and family. These small groups are referred to as "folk groups", which are made up of "two or more individuals" with a common feature such as "[a]ge, religion, ethnicity, occupation, and interests" (Tucker, 2008, p.20). Children have been recognised as a distinct group with their own folklore (childlore) since the 1880s (Tucker, 2008). The lore in the form of stories includes the oral, communally told stories of the teller's lives interlaced with real and imagined experiences of encounters and entanglements of people, materials and environments. These are the stories that are,

> so commonplace as to be often overlooked or unremarked by adults, especially in literate societies where the supremacy of the written and especially the printed word is taken for granted (Bishop and Curtis, 2001, p. 5).

These narratives have taken on new life in the post-digital age, often in written or video forms and shared across online platforms. The stories, new and old, analogue and digital, form an essential part of the fabric of the playground (Bishop, 2014; Potter and Cowan, 2020). The digital landscape has disrupted and broadened the possibilities of what constitutes folk stories. Written words have become malleable and changeable in the post-digital age, giving texts life and vibrancy that challenge previous definitions of folklore such those articulated by Ben-Amos (1971) when he stated that,

> "unlike written literature, music, and fine art, folklore forms and texts are performed repeatedly by different people on various occasions" (p.5).

Video streaming platforms, live interaction through gaming, chats, etc. allows for an instability of online texts in a way that echoes traditional folklore materials, as "mobile, manipulative, and transcultural" texts (Ben-Amos, 1971, p.4). The children seamlessly integrated stories they had heard in person with stories they had read online, building on each other's narratives as they collectively told stories (Perry and Nelson, 2019).

With regard to lore as "scripts", I am referring to the implicit rules of many of the games the children play. These rules are made up of "[t]hat which is learned" and is "applied to the body of traditional facts, anecdotes, or beliefs relating to some particular subject" in the sense of "animal lore, bird lore, fairy lore" ("lore", 2020, para. 5a). Lore is understood as a set of scripts that determine the "right" or "wrong" ways to play – the rules of football, words of a song, ways to clap out a rhythm. My use of the term "script" here draws on Bernstein's (2011) theory of "scriptive thing[s]" which is, in essence,

> a set of invitations that necessarily remain open to resistance, interpretation and improvisation… [in ways that] …broadly structures a performance while allowing for agency and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable (2011, p.12).

For example, if we think about a child playing with a doll, we can imagine how the doll might offer scripted play that takes up (accepts) the suggested scripted play, such as playing house, baby or with a pram. The game here is "playing with a doll", but the lore is the scripts that determine *how* the doll is played with. However, one can also imagine the rejection of obvious scripts (or lore), such as when the doll might become a solider, a rocket or even a brick. While the game is still "playing with a doll", the "lore of playing with a doll" has been re-scripted, and, subsequently, the game is prodused to become something different. This theory of folkloric play recognises both acceptance and rejection of scripts through the process of re-scripting, because whether or not scripts are accepted, there is a creative relationship between the player and the object. The lore of the games played (such as the "lore of playing with a doll") is established as part of the entangled intra-relations of toy-culture-play-bodies-environment. The language scripts, such as calling the doll "baby", the maternal scripts of cradling the toy, or the rejection of such scripts to use the doll as a stepladder, are not separate from the scriptive things of material, environment and people, but are examples of how the "rules" or lore is enacted and interlaced into encounters and assemblages of folkloric play.

The prompts and scriptive things invite, entice and suggest performances of play that, though extended, remain true to Bernstein's concept of emergent agencies:

> To describe elements of material culture as 'scripting' actions is not to suggest that things possess agency or that people lack it, but instead to propose that agency emerges through constant engagement with the stuff of our lives (Bernstein, 2011, p. 12).

Bernstein's (2011) focus is material culture; she looks at the object, the "artifact" (p.72) in the interaction to see what meanings are produced in interaction with the child. My application, on the other hand, is to the examination of the play itself: the performance play-text that is produced in interaction with the scriptive thing. For this reason, taking up new materialist understandings of the "more-than-human world" (Hackett and Somerville, 2017), I am encouraged to extend the range of my theory beyond what is strictly "material", to includes scripts of environment and people that are both real and imagined. I am focused, not on the plural "artifacts of play", but the singular, textual artifact that is folkloric play. Anthologies of children's games, lore and language have paid attention to the more-than-words since the beginning. Actions, interactions, relationships and movement have always been key to understanding, representing and analysing traditional forms of play. While I am not proposing that historical play anthologies approached play from a "more-than-human" perspective, there has been persistent and sustained importance placed on the role of objects and environments in play from the earliest collections (Gomme, 1894; Opie and Opie, 1959; Roud, 2011). Hence, the inclusion of new materialist perspectives on lore (games and mischief) in this work is understood as a theoretical language through which to articulate much of what goes on in play in a way that is complementary to previous records of children's play.

Mischievous Resistance

> Children's play is simultaneously compliant and unruly. It is not simplistically resistant; rather, it is creative, symptomatic, anarchic, ritualistic, reiterative, and most of all, culturally productive (Bernstein, 2013, p.460).

What Bernstein is here calling "unruly", I call "mischief" to connect back to the Opies' (1959) categories of play. While Bernstein focuses on the "more than" aspect of play and the fact that it is both "compliant *and* unruly" (my emphasis), I argue that we should not lose sight of these performances of mischief in our investigations of folkloric play. I consider this third category to be as important as the more "traditional" forms of folkloric play (games and lore). I justify this position by drawing on Sipe's (2002) recognition of resistance as a productive and playful performance of literacies. Sipe (2002) argues that when reading children's literature to children, stories are "invitations to participate and perform" (p.479). He proposes that children, as creative, agentive beings, have the ability to "change stories, resist them, critique them, even use them for [their] own purposes" … making stories their own" (p.479). In recognising this (mischievous) performance of produsing ownership through "making stories their own" (Sipe, 2002, p.479), we see mischief (resistance) as a form of autopoiesis. Stetsenko and Ho (2015) remind us that in

this "creative process of co-authoring the world through contributing to its collective dynamics, people are simultaneous co-authoring themselves and becoming individually unique" (p.227). It is through performances of play in the form of games, lore and mischief that this project sees and hears the participants making and remaking themselves and their worlds in their video-play-texts. In the following methodology chapter, I outline how the participants' playful responses to scripts are grouped into the three forms of performance of folkloric play (games, lore and mischief) to be read and analysed as *text*. However, it is important to first explicate how these diverse and embodied performances of folkloric play can be constituted as text.

Games, Lore and Mischief as Text

The thesis examines the social and cultural phenomenon of childhood through constituting productions and performances of children's folkloric play (specifically games, lore and mischief) *as text*. The use of the word *text* here does not mean focusing only on games, lore and mischief that are linguistically based or logocentric, but instead explores and extends meanings of *text* to highlight the multi-layered, multimodal and multi-spatial aspects of children's folkloric play. I recognise that conceiving of "play as text" is not a new concept, with play being framed in a number of recent studies as "action texts" (Wohlwend, 2017) and "embodied literacies" (Wohlwend, 2011a, p. 7; Thiel, 2015). However, in a research project that constitutes play so broadly across the design, encounter and analysis, the specific form of play that is utilised as a unit of analysis is the folkloric play performances of games, lore and mischief. These three forms of play further differ from general understandings of play as text through the argument that these folkloric play-texts are productions and performances of what I am calling the children's "texts of childhood".

Key to recognising these three forms of children's folkloric play as text is accepting the concept of text as something more fluid than "traditional notions of literacy and numeracy" (Wright, 2019, p.17). Wohlwend (2009) provides a two-step definition of toys as text, proposing that,

> [a] toy is (a) a text to be read, performed, and consumed with meanings suggested by its materials and its history of attached story lines and practices and (b) a text to be written, produced, and revised as children improvise new meanings through play (p.60).

Based on this theory, I argue that games, lore and mischief can be considered texts. These three forms of play can be "read, performed, and consumed with meanings" that I argue are scripted by three elements: *environment, materials* and *people*. Continuing to extend Wohlwend's (2009) above account, games, lore and mischief as a text can be "written, produced, and revised as children improvise new meanings" (p.60). Seeing the textuality of children's productions and performances of these forms of folkloric play means being able to *read* the scripting and, significantly, the re-scripting and produ*s*ing that occurs in children's folkloric play. Burnett and Merchant (2020a), while acknowledging the recent "move away from text" (p.2) in literacies studies, propose what they term the "sociomaterial perspective" of text (p.9). This perspective argues that something "becomes text when it is read as such" (Burnett and Merchant, 2020a, p.9). According to this understanding, then, through my reading of games, lore and mischief as text, these forms of play *become* text. I argue therefore that these multi-spatial, multi-layered and multimodal codified utterances of folkloric play *are* text. The act of making these forms of play text through this process of reading performance is an act of produ*s*ing and re-scripting on my part. This act is one that claims the theories of the thesis as my own, through creatively and agentively engaging the theoretical scripts offered to produce a concept that I elaborate and use in the thesis.

Metaphors of weaving are employed throughout the text to help the reader visualise the relationship between its theories, the literature and the research encounters. The weaving metaphors are imbedded in writing through the repeated use of the concepts of "entanglement", "interlacing" and "interweaving". Additionally, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymology of the word *text* is "that which is woven" from the "the participial stem of *texěre* to weave" ("Text", 2020, para. 1). Games, lore and mischief as text are therefore understood to be part of the woven fabric of the playground (or children's play spaces broadly construed). As we will see in this study, children's folkloric play-texts, woven into the "fabric of the playground", are an integral part of children's everyday experiences of childhood. The following section continues this theoretical produ*s*ing and re-scripting to argue that games, lore and mischief are children's own texts of childhood.

Games, Lore and Mischief as Texts of Childhood

Positioning children's games, lore and mischief as texts of childhood situates my study within a new materialist onto-epistemology as I re-script what constitutes text. I am interested in exploring how these texts are iterations of culture and what meanings are

created in their performances. The thesis positions these folkloric play texts as belonging to children as their texts of childhood. Essentially, through the process of production and performance, children's play-texts become unique to a particular experience and moment of play – rendering them the player's texts of childhood. Annie Dillard (1982) postulated what it might mean to explore the world from a textual, literary perspective, asking,

> Can we not loose the methods of literary criticism upon the raw world? May we not analyze the breadth of our experience? We can and may – but only if we first consider the raw world as a text, as a meaningful, purposefully fashioned creation, as a work of art (p.194).

The "raw world" of children's play is here understood as being made up of the texts of childhood in the form of games, lore and mischief. These are "meaningful, purposefully fashioned creation[s]" (Dillard, 1982, p.194) performed and prodused by children for children. The methods of literary criticism to be "loosed" on this thesis as part of its theoretical repertoire are primarily theories of children's literature, particularly in relation to the relationship between the adult, the child and their texts of childhood.

In my Masters dissertation, I argue that child-players are "multiple agents of construction whose agentive roles in creating, curating and sharing these texts continue centuries old traditions of childlore" (Nelson, 2015, p.3). Children's roles in creating, curating and disseminating these texts means that the texts belong to children in a way that other adult-produced texts cannot. These texts are utterances and oral fragments of children's culture that belong to children in a way that is distinct from adult-mediated cultural texts. Understanding these texts as being owned by children means looking for moments, productions and performances where the children *make* the texts their own; it means looking for particular prompts that elicit folkloric playful responses that are read as performances of creative and agentive play in the form of games, lore and/or resistance.

Centring on the agentive creativity of children might seem at odds with the new materialist paradigm of the thesis. This theory, along with posthumanism, focuses on "post-anthropocentrism" or the de-centring of people in order to emphasise "the vital and productive inextricability of the human from its material and environmental ecologies" (Bayne, 2018, p.4). However, to further utilise the weaving metaphors of the thesis, children's folkloric play is part of the fabric of the playground – the interlaced entanglement of environment, material and people across time and space. In this text, I focus on one thread of the fabric – the child – not to the exclusion of the other threads, but looking at how the children perform and produce their own childhoods through their

encounters with the other threads of people, materials and environments, imagined and actual, in time and space. The new materialist paradigm of the study articulates a relationship with posthumanist philosophy and conceptions of the child and education, through focusing on the "more-than-human" and "more than words" aspects of the encounters in order to challenge a humanist perspective of the child. De Freitas and Curinga (2015) discuss the issue of focusing on identity and agency in the posthuman paradigm to postulate that such a perspective offers the analysis of play and childhood a decentring of the agency *of* the child, to re-think it as agency *with* the child. Childlore is not produced in a vacuum. We know that adult culture scripts and influences children's culture (and vice-versa) (Gaunt, 2006; Kelsey, 2019; Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Soileau, 2016; Willett, 2015a). Children's culture, games, lore and mischief are part of the world, not separate. As Hackett and Somerville (2017) explain,

> The implication of posthuman readings of emergent literacy practices is that young children's literacies are seen not only as embodied sensory experiences but embedded in and inseparable from their entanglement with the world (p.388).

This thesis argues that through a process of produsing and re-scripting, children take ownership of their culture, regardless of where or how the scripts are created. In decentring the child, we are able to recognise the scriptive function of environment, people and material, and how production and performances of folkloric play are generated through the inter/ra-actions with these scriptive things.

New materialist theories are engaged throughout the thesis, particularly in the theoretical underpinnings of relation, space and structure. In order to make clear the transdisciplinary concepts and theoretical spaces in which I am working, the thesis borrows from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) vocabulary. The methodology chapter employs the concepts of the "rhizome" when describing the multiple, complex form of the data, while in the findings, I make use of the terms "rupture", "lines of flight" and "assemblage". In this thesis, "rupture" refers to the disruptions or breaks in the moment that create new openings and opportunities. The term "lines of flight" is used to describe the various directions and possibilities that occur due to the rupture, while "assemblage" is used to represent the coming together or assembling of matter (people, bodies, environment) to create a moment in time. In the research encounters, therefore, my study offered a rupture to the student's everyday schooling, and within the study, the children's performances and productions of their play (games, lore and mischief) functioned to create spaces of possibility, lines of flight and creative openings for something outside of the norm. The resulting coming together of people, materials and environment in play is sometimes represented in this

work as an assemblage. The borrowing of this language helps to make clear the concepts and theoretical spaces in which I am working as I formulate and actualise my theory of play.

In calling these games "texts of childhood", I recognise that childhood is experienced by multiple children in multiple ways and that these texts are not equally or uniformly experienced or known to all children. However, as game anthologies of children's folkloric play collected and collated over the last 125 years demonstrate, these texts of games, lore and mischief have a lasting cultural-specific appeal. That culture is one shared by children of similar ages who attend social spaces such as schools. In the 21st century, we recognise these games as playground games, but since the children's game anthologies pre-date the playground, it would be more precise to state that these games are shared in communities of children. Children's games, lore and mischief are linked geographically and contextually to times and spaces of play which have now been extended to include online spaces such as multi-player gaming sites. Folkloric iterations of play in the forms of games, lore and mischief are the texts of childhood for each set of child players. Every new generation of players become produsers. Acting as produsers, the players define understandings of play that are "correct" and in so doing define the opposite; thus constructions of the right and wrong ways to play are fashioned. These definitions continue to be updated as new generations of players become produsers. It is this ownership and produsing element of play that creates understandings of the lore of play so clearly for each community of players. This is how intergenerational understandings of play are formed: each generation's role as produsers signifies what play means, how to perform play and how a child therefore ought to play (Nelson, 2021).

It is important to note here that "performances" in this study are understood as action within a "literacy event" (Heath, 1983; Kendall and McDougall, 2013; Leander and Rowe, 2006), perhaps more closely aligned with Burnett and Merchant's (2020b) concept of "literacy-as-events". While "literacy events" are performed and focused around written literacies, the concept of "literacy-as-event" notes,

> From a relational perspective, however, the notion of literacy event is problematic, chiefly because of its boundedness in time and space…. Moreover, the idea of patterned, rule-bound literacy events sits uncomfortably with notions of liveliness, affect, fluidity, and emergence (Burnett and Merchant, 2020b, p.47).

The textual performances I am interested in as literacy-as-events are the productions of games, lore and mischief performed by the children. In positioning folkloric play as text, this study examines the ways in which play is produced in that text, looking at the deliberate performances enacted therein. As Leander and Rowe (2006) explain,

> [P]erformances offer particular genres of interaction, particular forms of embodied engagement, and particular kinds of access to texts and textual interpretation (p.428).

Therefore, while this study engages with children's performances in educational spaces, through the scripting of YouTube and other digital play, I examine the online genres of interaction, the language and lore that flows between the playground-online-home-play that is imagined into the actual educational contexts of the "research playground".

Conclusion

Children are makers, users and disseminators of their own culture, and through playing and produsing these texts, they become the owners of their cultural texts. However, it is important to remember that texts are not meaningful "in and of themselves" (Burnett and Merchant, 2020a, p.8). It is through "entanglements" of texts and bodies and texts-as-bodies that meaning is made (Burnett and Merchant, 2020a). As Sutton-Smith (1999) reminds us, there is an "underlying complexity of the folklorist's constantly shifting perspective between group and tradition, between 'context' and 'text'" (p.9). The shift in this case is between the children and their games, lore and mischief; between the environments, materials and people in their lives and their cultural products prodused and performed in play. It is in this process of entanglement that meaning is made in the sticky spaces of lived experienced.

Throughout this discussion of agentive performances of folkloric play, children are positioned as produsers who act to re-script lore and scripts they are given to creatively re-make the texts of the playground (games, lore and mischief) to become their own texts of childhood. In the next chapter, we take these textual performances of folkloric play to develop a method of analysis of productions and performances of children's play in the post-digital age.

Chapter Four. The Design, The Encounters and The Researcher

This chapter is presented in five sections: 1. research design, 2. encounters with participants, 3. researcher reflections, and then, after a short intermission, 4. analysis and 5. methods of the documentary. Part one outlines my preparations before meeting the participants, the research design, including research questions and rationale, and the logistical aspects of research, including my observational tools and ethics process. Part two focuses on the research encounters, introducing the participants (the players), their environments (research playgrounds) and the materials of play (the toys). This section also outlines the three data generation techniques: watching videos, making video-play-texts, and the film festivals. Part three offers an account of my role as a researcher in the spaces, drawing on preliminary findings that occurred in the research encounters which shaped subsequent sessions with participants. Following a short reflective intermission, part four details my five-stage analysis process, then part five concludes the chapter with a discussion of the methods of making a documentary to accompany the written text of the thesis.

Designing the Encounters

My project asked three small groups of students from three disparate sites across Glasgow to watch and discuss selected YouTube videos of children playing playground games, after which I encouraged my participants to go, play and create videos of themselves at play. I call the participants' videos "video-play-texts" as a reminder of the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis, where the descriptive video-play-text centres the interwoven modes, methods and textual nature of these "literacy artifacts" (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010). The label also functions to differentiate the participants' productions from my own observational videos. In the research design, play is used as a framework, a method of interaction, a tool for data generation and a unit of analysis. While this is particularly visible in the children's productions of video-play-texts, the encounters were based on a methodology of encouraging playful interaction and relationship-building throughout the sessions. Finally, in the analysis of the children's video-play-texts, I investigate how the participants performed and *prodused* their cultural texts of childhood through examining and comparing the moments of creation with my observational field notes, photos and videos.

Research Questions and Rationale

This study formulates a hybrid paradigm that draws on both the social sciences and the humanities through new materialist perspectives of entanglement and "more-than-human" approaches. However, the child's experience remains the central focus within these understandings of the world, resulting in two research questions:

1. How are children producing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age?
2. What are the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today?

Questions that make space for stability and movement

My two research questions come from an interlacing of theories in negotiation with readings, consultations with supervisors, discussion with colleagues and, crucially, the research encounter – meeting and working with the young people of my study. This transdisciplinary approach called for the use of intuitive and angular methods dictated by the encounter with the children, research questions and theoretical spaces. In the flexible and creative spirit of play, my research questions make space for "new and unpredictable directions" (Leander and Rowe, 2006, p.445). There is a focus on movement and "lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) in my first question exploring the children's performances and productions of play and childlore in the post-digital age. Yet, there is also a sense of situated understandings in my second question, "What are the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today?". I recognise this philosophical paradox between movement and situated understandings but believe that such spaces create rich areas of research and possibility. These two research questions address the representations of childhood discussed in the literature review, where children are imagined as *beings* (important now) and/or *becomings* (future-adults). By focusing on both stability and movement, I am able conceptualize childhood as an experience of both being and becoming (Uprichard, 2008).

Research Rationale

The research study looks at children's culture in the past and present *with* children by asking questions about their current culture and imagined futures. Through an epistemological framework that values more than just words, the focus is on the participants' productions and performances of play and children's culture (understood here as childlore). My analysis focuses on children's games and childlore as recognisable

moments of play and culture and also makes space for resistance, in the form of mischief. I knew from my Masters research that YouTube videos contain enormous amounts of data, and I planned for the children in this study to create their own YouTube-style videos. Therefore, I recruited a small number of participants in three separate spaces. I did not intend the research to be scalable, but rather to focus on the large themes brought out in the children's everyday, minute, playful interactions. Like previous play researchers, I centred the work in children's spaces, primarily the playground (Bishop, 2014; Opie and Opie, 1959; Willett, 2011). My methodology was to follow children into *their* spaces, and this meant not only going into the playground, but also into the digital spaces they discussed, such as their recommended YouTube videos and digital games including Minecraft and Plants Vs Zombies (Ptolomey and Nelson, 2020).

O'Donnell (2018) expounds upon the "chaos", "fun" and seriousness of working with children in an ontological framework that works with and values children's perspectives (p.9). My research aims and questions necessarily foreground children's lived experiences. In the development of the design, I was influenced by research with children such as the type exemplified by Gunther Kress, who examined children's experiences from a literacies perspective. Aware of his position as an adult-outsider, however still invested in understanding children's experiences, Kress articulates a methodology of close examination and an epistemology of trust. In his own words, Kress (1997) argues that,

> [C]hildren live in this multifaceted communicational world from the moment they are born; and they do seem to be able to make sense of it. They seem neither overwhelmed by the multitude of the most diverse messages coming to them, nor unable to absorb and transform them into what seems like a coherent, integrated sense. At least that is what I judge from their play, from their actions, and from the representations which they constantly make. In other words, my strategy is, as it has been for many others before me and now, to trust children; and to try to see by a close look at their actions what I might come to learn (p.3).

My study draws on children's performances of play in the forms of games, lore and mischief to examine how themes of childhood and imaginaries percolate through the children's productions and activities. Kress (1997) articulates this understanding that children are cultural beings, taking up the culture around them and integrating it into their lives. The epistemology of trust *in* children and examination for the purposes of learning *from* them were key concepts in the development of the research design.

(Re)Presenting the Entangled Child

When considering methods, I looked for ways to move beyond simply recording children's voices to (re)present children as whole beings in their interwoven relationships with materials, environments and people. I opted for a methodology of play that generated findings in the form of the children's produced video-play-texts and my observational notes, photos and videos. In my initial examination, I came across guides to qualitative research methods warning that "visual data collection techniques…are not commonly used methods in the broadly defined world of qualitative research" (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012, p.3). However, while recognising that these methods are considered "alternative" forms of data generation, I turned to studies that dealt with visual methodologies (Rose, 2016) and subsequently focused on those with diverse, tactile methods of interaction, as outlined in my literature review. In its approach, this study takes up Marsh et al.'s (2005) call for research with "experimental design", which she argues is necessary "in order to determine the impact of the introduction of culture, media and new technologies" (p.7). I argue that through using novel, innovative methodologies of scripting technology-home-play in educational settings, I am able to look at children's productions and performances of childhood in the post-digital age.

The focus on childhood

Childhood is the focus community of this study, where it is considered a sociological category of importance in and of itself. As a result, any child within the specified age-range (six to 13 years old) was invited to join regardless of their gender, ethnicity, ability, class, etc. The study employs Buckingham's (1994) position that,

> Cultural studies researchers have often taken a rather inflexible, and indeed deterministic, view of the role of social categories such as class and gender. Individuals are often seen to make sense of television in particular ways 'because' they are middle class, or female, or black… I have argued for a more dynamic view of individuals, which regards them as more active and creative in defining the meaning of their own social positions, and in assuming social power (p.82).

While Buckingham wrote this about audiencing television, it is equally true for adult perceptions of children's culture more generally. Such is the case when deterministic categories are taken to explain play choices without looking at the "active and creative" individuals and their abilities to produse, rescript and "defin[e] the meaning of their own social positions" (Buckingham, 1994, p.82). This argument does not assume that other sociological categories such as class, race and religion (and children's experiences and understandings of these things) are not filtered into and performed in their play. However,

it does place the focus on children as a community with their own culture and where age is an important factor that determines much of their social experience. Age as a factor of everyday culture has been shown to be more influential than class or any other sociological factors according to recent iterations of the French Cultural Participation Survey. Détrez and Perronnet (2020) argue that the inclusion of a category "entirely based on age… disturbs the bourdieusian theoretical framework by making the age criterion strong enough to override the class criterion and create a distinct group in the population" (p.103). In summary, age matters, as do peer-culture and childlore, and it is a social category that is itself worthy of investigation.

Tools of Observation

This section outlines the tools of observation brought into the research encounters, including: i) my research journal, ii) the stationary camera and hand-held tablet, iii) sound recordings, and iv) the site visits, including "hanging out" at LAC and the follow-up interviews with the two school Depute Heads.

i.   Research Journal

My research journal is made up of written notes taken before and after each session on my phone and emailed to myself. I have notes from the 21 sessions, two interviews, two "hang out" sessions, film festivals and space checks at all three locations. The purpose of these notes is to retain a sense of what happened and the theoretical lenses that I was applying as I went about data generation. These recordings "enabled me to be both within the data collection (as researcher) and yet remain outside of the data as self" (Glaze, 2002, p.161). The study is based on an ontology that does not look for objectivity in the research space, yet part of my aim with the research journal was to document as much as possible "factors which influenced me, and therefore by implication the study" (Glaze, 2002, p.161). Part III of this chapter examines the role of the researcher in more detail.

ii.   Stationary Camera and Handheld Tablet

The stationary camera was chiefly brought in to record the Video-Watching sections of the sessions so that I could have a record of what was happening while the participants were watching the videos. This camera was an inexpensive Stoga ST312P Digital Compact Video Camera. I also used a Huawei tablet to accompany my movements and gaze throughout the sessions. This was designed to "capture" what was happening in the room around the video-play-texts the children were creating from my perspective. I also recorded the film festivals at LAC and St Bobby's Primary (the school's pseudonym was selected by

the children and is discussed in Chapter Five). In the use of my observational recordings, the "stationary camera" and the "handheld device" proved to be excellent tools for recording the conversations, play and activities that occurred around the children's text making performances and productions of video-play-texts.

iii.   Sound Recordings

Each session was also sound recorded. This was to supplement any problems with sound on the other recording devices and was brought into the interviews and the final film festival at Bramble Primary when a camera seemed like it would disrupt and distract from the discussion. This was particularly useful in circumstances where sound was the only way to subtly, unobtrusively record the events, although as movement and visual cues are so valued in this study, the sound recordings were primarily intended and used as supplementary data.

iv.   Site Visits, "Hanging out" and Interviews with Gatekeepers

Before proceeding with the research encounters at the three locations, I met with the adult gatekeepers in charge. At the school spaces, this meeting occurred in the Depute Heads' offices and included a short tour of each space. In the afterschool care centre, this started with a meeting with the manager, but then turned into two sessions of "hanging out" time on the two Monday afternoons leading up to the research encounters. This form of being in the space – "hanging out" – is an established anthropological research method and one that I was using to accustom both myself and the centre to my presence (Geertz, 1998). In these "volunteering" sessions, I would go to the space for two hours to meet, chat and play with children who attended the space. This led to the recruitment method of pitching directly to the children (as outlined below). I also had an informal follow-up visit with my baby to introduce her to the participants, the staff and the other children at LAC (and they had kindly organised a gift for her). I also wanted to continue my connection with the other spaces and therefore had informal interviews with the Depute Heads of the two schools. While these visits and interviews may have shaped some of my perceptions about the research encounters, the focus of my analysis is on the children's video-play-texts and my observational videos, photos and notes from the research encounters.

Ethics

The research was approved by the University of Glasgow Social Science Ethics Board (see Appendices B and C). I required permission from the manager of LAC, the Head Teachers of both schools and the Local Council Authorities of both schools. Bramble Primary

required the school, local authority and university to sign off on the project, while St Bobby's Primary's Local Authority required their own ethics application forms to be submitted. I also sought permission from the students and tried to make clear my intentions with the videos. The children were excited to be involved in the study and happily signed consent forms. I tried to make them understand as clearly as possible that their videos would be later used in my documentary and the general response was one of excitement.

As this project recognises children's agency in the production of these videos, each space was given a pen drive with a compilation video I had created and the children's selected video-play-texts, and the children were made aware that they own the videos. Due to age and ethical restrictions, the children and their parents/guardians were advised not to place these videos on YouTube (as all participants are under 13 and thus cannot technically have a YouTube account and the videos were taken on school/afterschool care property). I also offered the schools and LAC permission to use these videos in any way they see fit as long as they have permission from the individuals involved in the video and their parents/guardians. These videos belong to me as the researcher, but they also belong to the children as the creators.

The Encounters

The encounters were designed as multiple sessions that would take place over a number of weeks. They were cumulative and I expected the children to learn what the encounters consisted of as they became more familiar with the project. By the second session, the children were familiar with how the research encounters worked, and they had taken ownership of the research sessions, allocating favourite digital tablets, bringing in materials, and deciding what games they would play and with whom. Similar behaviour was seen across the three sites: children brought in cups for songs, basketballs, rugby balls and Pokémon cards to demonstrate their interests and skills in their video-play-texts. Games, lore and mischief were produced and performed across the sessions, and scripts for certain forms of interaction were taken up or left off across the three sites. Although the common factor was myself and the materials I introduced, there were many other commonalities and differences that wove together a fabric of play across the entire project. I refer to the data generation period of the study as a singular, interwoven, interlaced event of interrelations: "The Encounter". However, this one encounter comprised multiple, simultaneous encounters that I draw upon to learn and understand how these children performed and produced their childhoods through play.

The People (Players), Environments (Playgrounds) and Materials (Toys)

In the following section, I will outline the context for my study, focusing on elements that are important in relation to the research questions and design, including the ages and genders of my participants, methods of recruitment and access to the space. I will then outline the materials brought into the research spaces, including my research tools and the YouTube videos, detailing my video criteria, method of engagement and data generation. In my findings chapters, I outline individual details of the players, playgrounds and toys in more detail.

My research project involved 18 primary school aged children located at two schools and one afterschool care centre in and around Glasgow. I conducted three groups that ran for one to two hours per session over the course of the second term in 2018. Table 1 outlines the basic information, including the site pseudonyms, how many participants were at each site and their respective genders and ages (in brackets) and the number of sessions that took place at each site.

Table 1. Site pseudonyms, participant ages and genders and number of sessions

Site Pseudonyms	Players	Ages and Gender	Number of Sessions
Bramble Primary School	5	Boys (9, 9, 9, 10) Girl (8)	8 + 'Film festival'
St Bobby's Primary School	8	Boys (10, 10, 10, 10, 11) Girls (10, 11, 12)	5 + 'Film festival'
Ladybird Afterschool Centre	5	Boys (6, 7, 9, 9) Girl (11)	8 + 'Film Festival'

Players and Playgrounds

The environments of play, or "research playgrounds" of my study were two schools (Bramble Primary School and St Bobby's Primary School) and one afterschool care centre (Ladybird Afterschool Care- LAC). The "players" were children attending these schools.

As outlined in the literature review, common definitions of childhood focus on age, and the *National guidance for child protection in Scotland* states that childhood, in general, lasts up to the age of 18, while some laws (including certain marriage laws) indicate 16 years (The Scottish Government, 2014). However, at the time of the study, the age of criminal responsibility (the youngest age at which one can get a criminal record for life) is eight

years old in Scotland, the lowest in Europe, with plans to raise this age to 12 years old in the summer of 2020 (The Scottish Government, 2019). All this is to demonstrate that age, as a defining aspect of childhood, is not absolute or always clear.

The study engages young people in conversations and play that are in many ways mediated by the digital, particularly their participation on social media platforms. To use a social media account on sites owned by the Alphabet Inc. (Google and YouTube) and Facebook (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), the base age is 13 years old due to the American Children's Online Privacy Protection rule (COPPA) of 1998, which limits data collection on children under 13 years old. It is important to note that "access" is not wholly determined by age; YouTube allows people of all ages to view their content. However, UK users must be 13 years or older to sign in and participate as members of the community in commenting, subscribing, liking and uploading videos (Google Account Help, 2020). In the United Kingdom, the 5Rights Foundation are currently supporting the development of an "Age Appropriate Design Code" as an amendment to the Data Protection Act 2018 (5Rights, 2020). In the design of this project, I was interested in how young people's "literacies and social identities" (Lewis and Fabos, 2005, p.480) were or were not limited by the age-based access constraints to digital networking. I was therefore interested in working with children under the age of 13 years old. While discussing the digital with young people was a key aspect of the study, I was looking to explore how digital cultures have permeated the playground, particularly children's traditional games, lore and language. Therefore, my participants were not designed to be a select group of YouTube users; rather, I was looking for a group of "traditional" playground players. As a result, while 13 years old was my upper age limit for participants, I concentrated my efforts on recruiting children aged between seven and eleven years old as this is the age bracket of the traditional players of playground games over the last 30 years (Cliff, 1992, p.133; Opie and Opie, 1985, p. 2; Roud, 2011, p.254). I drew on these "traditional ages" of players to both limit my study and to question these age parameters, especially in relation to transitions, thresholds and boundaries and their weaknesses in relation to children's culture. As can be seen in Table 1 (above), the majority of participants were nine and ten years old, the oldest participant was 12 (and turned 13 during the project) and the youngest was six. Therefore, in general, my project involved "traditionally" aged playground-players who, for the majority, could not officially participate as account holders on social media sites.

In my Masters, I focused on "Singing Games" as a traditional category of play that had become a popular form of YouTube video. However, for my study I was interested to

examine play from across the categories represented by the play anthologies. Therefore, I attempted to design a project that would appeal to boys and/or girls and did not specify anything other than age for recruitment. However, as Table 1 (above) demonstrates, there were far more boys in each group than girls. LAC, in particular, only had a girl (Maidie) attend for two of the eight sessions.

An important note regarding gender is that I had not designed this study to focus on gender. I never asked the participants how they identified, so I rely on social cues such as dress and occasional verbal identification in assigning gender to the participants. The reason that gender is included here, and later in the themes and discussions of the encounters, is that it was clearly a very important aspect for the participants. As you will see in the findings, from choices in dress to friendship groups to the everyday texts the participants discussed or pointedly did not discuss, gender was a part of their identity performances.

Recruitment

The recruitment occurred differently at each space. At both schools, the Depute Head Teachers selected children whom they believed would benefit from the project in some way, from being able to demonstrate skills they have outside of the school space (video editing and YouTube knowledge) to gaining more play and socialisation, which they would get from the group play aspect of the activities. The teachers also chose some students they believed might benefit from discussions around online safety. The "motley crew" aspect of both groups was often commented on as we passed various teachers in the halls of both schools. Bramble Primary was the only group that did not change throughout the eight sessions. There were five players each week, all chosen by the Depute Head. At St Bobby's Primary, the Depute Head picked three students and allowed a snowballing recruitment of five additional friends over the course of the five sessions. During my "hangout" sessions at Ladybird Afterschool Centre (LAC), I was asked to present my study to the children, and the interested children took home forms. Of the 13 children who returned the forms, five students were available for the six sessions, which took place over half-term (school holidays). Once school term resumed, the core group widened for two after-school sessions and there was a greater flow of participants. The centre has permission for all children to be recorded by camera, so while the children were playing, I allowed anyone to join in, then afterwards sought permission from the children themselves and their parents to use their video-play-texts and my observations in my study. When asked not to include one child, I simply deleted any videos they appeared in. While

this meant I lost some interesting footage of participant creativity and interaction, I was a guest at the centre, and I believe this approach was the fairest way to ensure I was not excluding children from playing in their own space.

Access

Both schools invited me to visit on one afternoon per week. The Bramble Primary sessions occurred from 1:00pm to 3:00pm each Wednesday during assembly. St Bobby's used the "Golden Hour" of 1:30-3:00 on Friday afternoons, a time set aside for creative classroom play. At LAC, I met the children for three days of intensive data generation over the school midterm holidays, requiring two 1.5-hour sessions a day followed by two term-time afterschool-sessions of two hours each. The data generation days at all establishments were intense and fun and the children enjoyed the games and film-making play. As described below, I supplied the electronic tablets and other materials each week and the children simply needed to be present and ready to play and create. While I had limited control over who the participants were and where in the spaces the research would unfold, I had full control over what materials – or toys – I would introduce into these research playgrounds, as outlined in the next section.

Materials: Research Tools, Playground Toys

This section describes the materials I brought with me into the research playgrounds, both physical and digital texts, how they were selected and the thinking that went into that decision making. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, these materials scripted the research encounters and the participants took up these scripts at each encounter, taking charge of the "toys" and suggesting videos to me. In the process, the participants took part ownership of the research encounter through these acts of produsing and rescripting the research "toys".

However, in the planning stage, I had control over what materials I wanted to introduce to the research spaces, and I was determined to include handheld technologies based on my reading of previous descriptions of play. In reading the accounts of children playing contained in play anthologies, I was regularly unsatisfied with the representations of the games. While the anthologists often used the best tools and methods available to them, much of the feeling of play is lost through the process of transliteration. The descriptions of complicated motions and movement are difficult to follow, and the children's excited, noisy, embodied play is reduced to the words of the games, rhymes and songs. Therefore, I determined that in my study I would use video technology to generate the data. In doing so,

I kept in mind Margaret Mead's (1975) editorial plea for the use of cameras in anthropological research in the name of expanding our scope of understanding, stating that,

> As finer instruments have taught us more about the cosmos, so finer recordings of these precious materials can illuminate our growing knowledge and appreciation of mankind (p.10).

However, as discussed in the "Methods of the Documentary" section of this chapter, it is certainly the case that new technologies have their limitations. Due to the high-quality audio-visual recording functions, the availability, price and hand-held form, the Huawei tablets and iPad became my tools (or toys) of data generation. I liked the way that these technological toys work with the body. As Merchant (2017) states, "tablets are made to be held, to be carried, to be transported from a to b" (p.245). I also assumed that the students would be familiar with these tools, if not from home, then from school or media. The participants' familiarity with the technology, even just having seen others use it, was clear from the beginning as the players each week rushed to get "their" tablets (at each site, the students preferred to use the same tablets each week). Table 2 outlines the technological materials introduced into the three sites and shows how they are coded in quotations in the findings chapters.

Table 2. List of Digital Devices, Codes and Users

Devices	Codes	User
Little Huawei	LH	Researcher
Stationary Camera	SC	Researcher/Sometimes Participant
Big Huawei	V (for video) P (for photo)	Participant
iPad	V (for video) P (for photo)	Participant

Watching Videos

The concept of "traditional" play is often rooted in a post-war imaginary of freedom (Chudacoff, 2007), and in this study I wanted to see what prevalence this "traditional" aesthetic for play carried with children today. In order to understand the role of traditions of play in the social imaginary, I curated a set of YouTube videos that involved children playing games that are considered traditional based on anthologies of play and popular media (e.g., conkers) and more updated versions of similar games (e.g., fidget spinners) that roughly fell under the broad categories of the play anthology chapters (e.g., "games with objects", "running games", etc.; a full list can be found in the "Generating Data" section below). I wanted to see how children would respond to the video content in their own play and video-play-texts. Through these videos, I presented "traditional" forms of

play as a script that was "open to resistance, interpretation and improvisation" (Bernstein, 2011, p.12). I was opening the space to various forms of innovation in play within a framework of tradition.

The videos I showed the children were all from the platform YouTube (www.youtube.com), a video-streaming website founded in 2005 (Lange, 2014). In late 2017, just before the research encounters, the YouTube company website claimed that "their billion users were watching a billion hours of content each day" (Burgess and Green, 2018, p.4). In 2020, at the time of writing, YouTube's website states they have "2+ billion users…meaning almost one-third of the internet" (YouTube, 2020). This demonstrates that in 2020, YouTube remains a powerful and popular site often used by children. As Smahel et al., (2020) describe,

> Children's online experiences have changed considerably over the past decade, with YouTube becoming increasingly popular, and with national social networking sites giving way to Instagram and other prominent apps (p.6).

While YouTube continues to grow as a website, this study is not tied to the success of the site. The platform provided a useful tool to discuss technology with children to see how they incorporated popular content into their play through processes of rescripting and produsing. However, these theories and methodologies could be applied to any cultural medium popular with children, whether digital or not.

Text Selection

My search for videos was a small-scale investigation into videos related to playground games to see how my participants reacted to videos that met my criteria (outlined below). My search echoed the types of search my participants would perform based on the design of the site. I began with videos I was familiar with from my Masters dissertation and followed the suggestion panel for updated results, seeking videos with high numbers of views and videos that looked related to playground games. I then conducted a key word search for the six categories based on chapters from playground anthologies (Gomme, 1894; Opie and Opie, 1959; Roud, 2011) outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3. List of Categories of Traditional Games and Examples

No.	Category of Game	Example of Games
1.	Running Around	The Floor is Lava, Tig, Chain Tig and Marco Polo
2.	Games of Skill	Hopscotch, Hide and Seek, Grandmother's Footsteps, Skipping
3.	Games with Things	Conkers, Fidget Spinners, Magic Tricks and Marbles
4.	Singing and Clapping Games	Down, Down, Baby; The Cup Song; Ip Dip Do; Dusty Bluebells
5.	Just for Fun	Pranks, Nonsense Rhymes, Parodies
6.	Superstition and Tradition	Minecraft Halloween, Sister Costume Halloween, Valentine's Day

I searched each broad category (e.g., running games) and looked for trends of particularly popular games in these search categories (e.g., The Floor is Lava). Finally, I went to the channels of authors who had produced videos that met my requirements for further videos. Where possible, I tried to find a mix of traditional games (e.g., conkers) and newer playground trends (e.g., fidget spinners). When my participants suggested a channel, I ensured that it fell in line with my video criteria.

My video criteria:

1. Appropriate to show to children as per the "Appropriate Filtering and Monitoring" standards set by the UK Safer Internet Centre (2017).
2. Involve games linked to "traditional" playground games (Gomme, 1894; Opie and Opie, 1959; Roud, 2011).
3. Look user generated (this is generally difficult to determine but I went for a basic "amateur look" with low production values).
4. Involve children of my participants' age range (7-12) or at least who look within that age range (again difficult to determine).
5. Have a balance of gendered videos per category (not per video). This proved somewhat difficult in a couple of categories (e.g., singing games).
6. Have unclear adult involvement for the most part.
7. Under five minutes in length

My first criterion focuses on safety and what is deemed "inappropriate" viewing (any videos with swearing, nudity or violence). The second criterion relates to my attempt at reflecting the work of earlier play anthologists in my choice of games to highlight or script

the children's play as outlined above. Criteria 3-6 inclusive are there in order to create what could be understood in children's literature theory as "mirror" texts for my participants (Bishop, 1990) meaning the participants could recognise their own experiences in the actions of other children who are of the same age and/or gender and without adults in the frame. Last, I chose short videos (five minutes or less) to ensure that we could watch more videos and to fit normal YouTube viewing habits, since the average length of the "most popular YouTube videos" is reported to be approximately "4 minutes and 20 seconds" (Minimatters, 2014).

The Role of Critical Literacy

In a research paradigm that foregrounds an epistemology of trust (Kress, 1997), I employed elements of critical literacy in my design to scaffold discussion about the internet and digital tools in a safe and structured way. I chose critical literacy as it is said to acknowledge "young children as agentive rather than dependent" (Farrar, 2017, p.29). This approach was intended to scaffold the conversations with children, helping direct them from a position of critical consumption to become critical producers through drawing on critical literacy (Janks, 2000; Lewison, Flint and Sluys, 2002; Luke, 2000); digital literacy (Burnett and Merchant, 2014; Husbye et. al, 2012); children's literature theories and practices (Bishop, 1990; Farrar, 2017) and "digital design literacy" (Pangrazio, 2016, p. 163). Not knowing my participants before the encounters, I did not know how much scaffolding would be needed, if needed at all, but I built it into the design as a safeguard. Pangrazio's (2016) "digital design literacy" in particular focuses on elements that align closely with the intended research outcomes of this project, including "making, creating and producing" (p.166). At the same time, Pangrazio's framework "provides an avenue for individuals to express their ideas, values and beliefs and in this way can mobilise personal or affective responses to digital texts" (p.166). The research design takes seriously the need for a careful and trusting epistemology that values children and young people as producers and identity makers, heeding Janks' (2000) statement that "deconstruction without reconstruction or design reduces human agency" (p.178). Therefore, although the research findings are not focused on the discussions of critical literacy or the questions that scaffolded our chats around online safety, critical "digital design literacy" was built into all the encounters and interactions.

Generating Data: Neat Play Circles, Unruly Video-Watching and Exciting Video-Play-Texts

I initially designed the encounters according to my experience teaching young children (3-6-year-olds). In the design, I planned that we would begin by playing in "Play circles", then move on to video-watching and video-making in a linear progression. The concept of Play circles came from my watching documentaries such as the *Singing Street* (1950) and *One Potato, Two Potato* (1959). The children in this footage stand cleanly and primly and play the games clearly and quite slowly. They are lovely documentaries, but they are documenting the play of children through the eyes of adults, who edit out all the messy, loud and unruly aspects of play. In my inexperience, I imagined my Play circles would consist of this form of orderly play. My vision drew on the concept of "Literature circles" (Short, 1992; Souto-Manning, 2009), which are often used in literacy research to create a safe, discursive atmosphere as a "way of encouraging productive, student-centred talk" (Simpson, 2016, p.92). I hoped to be able to gauge their responses regarding their digital experiences of video creation and spark their interest from the outset. However, it turned out they were very interested and just wanted to get to playing and video-creating. They did not need a gentle warmup to the games each week, preferring instead to watch the videos and "go with the flow" of watching/playing/creating all at once rather than following a set timetable. The idea that I could borrow a method of reading books and simply apply it to play, a far more active and unpredictable activity, demonstrated one of a number of assumptions I had made about the research encounter (further reflections on this can be found in Part IV: Shifting Methods). Therefore, I quickly abandoned this orderly idea of play and opted instead to be led by the children's energy. My project then became a three-step process: watching videos, making video-play-texts, and the film festivals.

i.   *Watching Videos*

Each session began with my sharing carefully selected YouTube videos that involved playground games, lore and language that focused on a theme (as outlined in Table 3 of the Materials section above). This interaction involved sitting around a table and discussing videos and internet safety while watching downloaded videos. Discussions were informed by the *Online Safety Policy* and *Curriculum Planning* advice from the UK Safer Internet Centre (2017), supplemented by further research on internet safety (Ito et al., 2009; Jenkins, Ito, & boyd, 2015; Livingstone, 2009), and centred around a critical literacies framework (as discussed above). I allowed the conversation to flow naturally, such as when we departed from discussing the games to focus on internet safety and hackers. While the video-watching sections of the sessions were not designed as moments

of "play", there were still plenty of playful responses in the form of the playing out of games, supporting or competing with the children in the videos and also, simply, mischief. While mischief was hard to negotiate within a paradigm of play, I tried my best not to disturb other classes and ensure that all students felt safe while trying to create an encounter that valued the "promoting and permitting [of] dialogue, interruptions and digressions above the teacher-led talk that can often dominate" (Farrar, 2017, p.87).

My design was flexible, and I moved around the video-watching schedule to suit each groups' time and interests. In reference to the categories of games listed above in Table 3, while all groups watched "games of skill", "games with things", "clapping games/how to" and "YouTube Special", some of the groups had more time to edit and play freely (in ways that didn't always involve cameras). Bramble also requested a special session of collaborative "Moving making" where they all made storyboards for their movie ideas and each student got to play the role of director in the making of their own movie.

ii.   Making Video-Play-Texts

After watching videos, the participants were given devices (an iPad and Huawei Tablet, as outlined in Table 2 above) and invited to create their own YouTube-style videos. The creative video-making element of the project is based on the understanding that,

> [W]hen children learn to think as media producers and not just consumers, they begin to see multimedia texts as malleable and negotiable through their co-authoring experiences in 'collaborative productions' (Husbye, et al., 2012, p. 91).

For this reason, critical literacy as an aspect of digital design became a method of interaction to enable me to promote (rather than reduce) the participants' agency. Editing was useful as a tool of critical creation, allowing the students to see their own videos as created artefacts connected to the participatory culture of the internet. The students were all incredibly proud of their creations, especially once some music and editing had been applied to the videos. The students at Bramble Primary even suggested sending their videos to film festivals, although we did not have the time (nor ethics approval) as a group to follow through with the suggestion.

Physical play was the main method of group interaction when making the video-play-texts, seen in forms of running, fighting, dancing, football and "making movies". Other forms of folkloric play were also apparent in the vlog chats, makeup videos, building blocks, singing and eating. Children were invited to play the games they like to play and while

there was some scaffolding around the naming and watching of traditional games, these were always only *suggestions* for play. The overall purpose was to see what the participants would do when allowed/invited to play with materials (physical and digital) to see what performances and productions in the form of video-play-texts came out of these moments.

iii.   Film Festivals

The sessions all ended with "film festivals" set at each site, with the Depute Heads attending at both schools and parents, staff and siblings at LAC. Everyone watched the videos the children had filmed and edited (with help) and then watched a compilation video made up of their video-play-texts and music they had requested during the sessions. The film festivals were intended to give the participants a sense of achievement and pull together key moments to illustrate the fun side of the project for the children and their communities. I gifted each site a pen drive (USB) containing their edited videos, their selected video-play-texts and the compilation video. I also created certificates and at both schools the students requested that the group compilation video and certificates be shared with the wider schools at assemblies. The recordings of the film festivals also served to "witness" and remember the ways the children and their communities celebrated their creativity and to see how the children talked about their creative processes and the project in general.

My thesis is accompanied by a documentary created from my observational videos and the children's video-play-texts. There are a number of methodological and practical reasons behind choosing to create a documentary, including gaining a "hands on" understanding of the creative process, to represent the medium the children worked in, to be able to disseminate my findings to wider audiences (including the participants), and to recognise audio-visual forms of storytelling and knowledge that are lost in print. This is discussed in more detail in the findings in Chapter Six. Throughout the research design, I saw my role as curator of the YouTube video texts as being in tension with the agentive produser model of the research project. However, in order to meet the school and ethics board requirements and to determine the parameters of the study, I needed to make decisions about which videos to include or exclude. While my research frame has since shifted to incorporate adult-scripted moments as a natural part of children's play-scape, this was a difficult aspect of the project to reconcile with my philosophy of ethical relationships in research with children. In the next section, I reflect on the changing nature of the researcher role whilst still in the encounters.

Shifting Methods – Researcher Reflections

This section comes before the chapter outlining the analysis and writing process because the reflections discussed here occurred during the encounters and upon first watching the videos while still in the fieldwork stage. This space pays attention to the shifting relationships between ideas and the "adrenaline shot" the research is given when these concepts take form with real people. These are the moments that changed the research design *during* the process of the encounters, which is why I call these methods-altering findings "Shifting Methods". The moments described here first struck me as failures to anticipate how people behave, but after developing a greater appreciation for the process, I came to see these moments as integral parts of the research journey. I entered the research space with a number of assumptions about my participants that I believed would help me create the best atmosphere and space for data generation. My assumptions were based on my reading and personal experience working with and being around children. While many of my assumptions played out correctly to various extents, some of my expectations were not correct. My field notes demonstrate my shift in understandings as I went between the sessions and the spaces. Below I discuss two particular moments that "shifted" the methods of the encounter. The first was in the very first session at Bramble Primary School and the second, while echoing a sentiment expressed by the participants across all three sites, came to a point in session 6 of eight at Ladybird Afterschool Centre.

"No object-games!" (Researcher, Bramble: Session 1)

While I had read about the "messiness of research" (Law, 2004) and I believed my design was ready for a certain type of messiness, I was not prepared for my particular mess. I had organised the sessions according to categorisations laid out in British play anthologies of the past 125 years (Gomme, 1894/8; Opie and Opie,1959; Roud, 2011) for reasons explained in the second part of this chapter. I had designed the encounter in the hope that I would gain an initial understanding of the participants' attitudes towards play, both digital and in the playground. For the first session at Bramble, I followed my original plan, attempting to organise the session according to a strict time schedule and to keep the play focused on one "traditional" category of play per week. The first session was to be dedicated to "Running Games". Consequently, when one of the players, Rowan, finished his bottle of water and began a simple game of flipping and throwing it, I called out, "No object games!" Now, when I re-watch this moment in the recordings, I cringe. You can see Rowan's face as he tries to understand what this bizarre phrase could mean. I move the

bottle aside and request the participants continue to play "What's the Time Mr Wolf?". In that moment, I was prescribing a correct way to play – exactly what I had tried to avoid in my design. I had written about my preparedness for play and I had read about children's play being "simultaneously compliant and unruly" (Bernstein, 2013, p.460). Despite this, I had, in my planning, taken adult-created categories and tried to affix them onto real play. As Fiske (1994) explains in his discussion of different types of pleasure, "[t]hese categories are, like all categories, explanatory strategies, they exist for a heuristic purpose, not in their own right" (p.239). I had attempted to fit these spontaneous moments of play into my boxes – curbing the creative flow of play. While I had accounted for a number of possible issues in the research design, this was not one of them. Rowan's confusion at my outburst inspired a change in direction for the following sessions across the three groups. Realising my design flaw was a shock, but as this was only the first session, there was space and time to develop the project. I did not wholly abandon my categories. I continued to organise the videos we watched by the categories and then took a step back to see what my agentive and creative players would make of my suggestions *of* play, rather than my directive *to* play.

Missing the Point with my Questions

The second seismic shift in the design followed discussions across the three sites, when after the watching videos section of each session, I tried to get a sense of who they imagined the audiences of YouTube videos to be. After watching each video, I asked, "Who would watch this video?", scaffolding the questions to understand the children's digital interaction along lines of reader-response theories that look at the "transactions between author, audience and text" (Thomas and Stornaiuolo, 2016, p.315). However, the more I probed, the more I realised that I was asking the wrong question. The children were not interested. They politely answered my questions again and again that "anyone", as long as they wanted to, could be watching. Upon reflection, I was hoping they would answer in terms of communities based on categories of gender, age, interests or something equally easily defined. At all three sites they consistently stated, "I don't know" and "anyone" in answer to my question. When pushed to name specifics, their responses played into the broad internet language surrounding these videos such as "subs" (short for subscribers) and "fans", and more than once it was suggested that "nobody" would watch their videos.

In Session 6 at LAC, when missing the point and simply believing my questions needed to be clearer, I attempted to push these categories in order to set up these communities for them:

> Me: Who would watch this video?
>
> Quinn: Anyone can watch it.
>
> Sam: Anyone can watch it and I did!
>
> Me: Who do you think watches it? When you're making the videos, who do you imagine, like it… you're, like, doing makeup videos do you imagine boys watching it?
>
> Quinn: Anyone.
>
> Maidie: Mm-hm (in agreement). (7:49)

Sam, here, draws the focus back to the actual community: one that is engaged and responsive, rather than something more abstract that I was searching for. However, I changed my tactic, pushing Maidie, the only girl present, to try to catch her in a traditional gender bind asking her about boys and makeup videos. But Maidie, quite reasonably, is open to communities of boys that wear nails and makes the point that there is a popular genre of videos on YouTube of "My boyfriend did my makeup", showing boys' roles in makeup videos.

> Me: So, what do you think? When you make a video do you imagine the person that's gonna watch it or do you just want to do it for your video…don't care who watches it? (8:10)
>
> Maidie: Don't care who watches it. Cause sometimes you get boys who wear nails.
>
> Me: But when you make Minecraft videos? Do you think *I'm* gonna watch it?
>
> Michael: Yeaaah! (Chants) Watch it, watch it!
>
> Quinn: I dunno! Do you like Minecraft?
>
> Me: Your grandparents?
>
> Maidie: (mimes computer difficulty) Nah!
>
> Quinn: (Shrugging) Maybe? (8:30)
>
> (Disagreement on grandparents and chatter)
>
> Sam: (points to Quinn) I just imagine him watching it, cause he watched my other videos and I watched all his videos. (LAC, S6SC1 [8:51])

Here, Quinn's question to me, "Do you like Minecraft?", was in many ways what I was looking for. It responds to the idea that interested viewers watch the videos. It is interest-driven engagement, just as Maidie argues that boys might watch makeup videos. It is with some frustration that I watch myself going around in circles and not listening to the clear, unanimous response represented across the three sites. Their collective imagined audience is *anyone*. My difficulty with this answer lies in my assumption that these children are participating in peer culture (Bishop, 2014; boyd, 2014; and Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2015).

This participation necessitates that they are participating in performing and disseminating their culture online to *each other*. It represents my own bounded imaginary audiences for the children, expecting and attempting to lead them towards communities of players that are tied together by their interests, age, or another element that defines a folklore group (Ben-Amos, 1971). In many ways, Quinn and Maidie offered these responses to me: interested audiences who "like" the subject or are looking for such videos will watch it. However, during the encounters, I did not recognise these responses.

Sam's final response was the one I was looking for. I wanted to have a clear "implied reader" in mind, ignoring the general response in favour of the one that I wanted. However, once I achieved the response I was looking for, I finally saw that I had not been listening to the participants but seeking answers that fit my theoretical outlook. This was when I knew I had to change my strategy, so instead of having them name their audience, I focused on their performances, and in the encounters and analysis I found ways to highlight their play, as I had always intended – giving more time to unstructured play, focusing less on the discussions and more on encouraging their performances of play and productions of their video-play-texts. Adapting and "shifting" my strategy to ask less who they imagined and instead focus on their productions in the moment to gain a glimpse of the imagined communities they were performing into as they played, prodused and rescripted the scripts offered by the materials, environments and people around them.

Conclusion

My research moved away from common methods of collecting play such as soliciting play examples from children and observing children at play, building instead a design that focused on what the children thought of YouTube videos of play. I thought I had designed an encounter that encouraged the children to play freely with video cameras, but throughout the process of reflection and re-visiting the children's video-play-texts and my observational videos, photos and notes, I found myself continually attempting to script the encounter to fit my idea of play. This was done through my discussion of play, bringing in YouTube videos showing children "playing", asking the participants not to play the sports they requested and suggesting they instead make a YouTube-style video of their play. One of the hardest groups to convince to make videos were the boys at St Bobby's. They wanted to play football and basketball, but I asked them not to play football. I did not want 30-minute videos of football but wanted something more akin to the YouTube videos I was showing them of play. I wanted to be able to pinpoint exact moments of agency and creativity and struggled to see how I could do that with their videos of football.

However, despite my directions, play occurred. Despite my scripting, the children went "off script" to take ownership of how they performed and produced play in the study. They played football and other sports, sang, danced, made mischief and parody videos and created, prodused and enjoyed the research encounter, despite my more "teacherly" moments as a researcher (Labaree, 2003, p.15). My prompts, instead of supressing play, functioned as "scriptive thing[s]" to "broadly structure" the participants' performances and productions of games, childlore and mischief "while allowing for agency and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable" (Bernstein, 2011, p.12). Although I cringe while re-watching my attempts at prescribing play, I see that the scripts made up of environment, material and people (including myself and the tools I introduced) were necessary aspects of the research encounter that lead to the games, lore and mischief that were produced and performed. The children's agentive produsing comes into being through the inter/intra-actions with the scriptive things in their lives, through what I am calling the process of rescripting. The next chapter sets out my theory of play and how it is actualised into a five-stage analysis process, followed by a discussion of the documentary and its relationship to the written text of the thesis. But first there is a short intermission, so do take a break, grab a drink, stretch your legs and we'll see you shortly.

Intermission: Positioning Statement

Exactly one and a half years into my planned three-year doctoral project, I went on a year's maternity leave. This break occurred serendipitously between data generation and analysis. This meant that for a year the children's video-play-texts and my observational notes and videos sat on an external hard drive in a locked drawer in a filing cabinet in my new-born daughter's room. I mention this because, due to the placement of the cabinet, it meant that there were many long, quiet hours of breastfeeding during which the filing cabinet would be in view. In those hours, amongst other thoughts, I would reflect on the research videos, process and space. I found myself picturing moments from the research encounter bubbling up to me, small little bubbles coming together as bigger bubbles, "random" memories coming back to me, slowly creating a picture of my data before analysis had even begun. Bartlett (2000) articulates this experience with the same bubble metaphor in her article *Thinking Through Breasts: Writing Maternity*:

> I find bubbles of thoughts, of theory, erupting through the subterranean swarm of seconds during my maternity leave. Words aren't remote, they're tumbling over each other, just not very systematically. This especially happens while I am breastfeeding, while I am seated for hours, rocking, my daughter suckling and sleeping in my arms, my mind wandering between the profound and the trivial while engaged in this most profound and trivial of activities, this most corporeal of activities that insinuates itself into the most unimaginable places in my thinking (p.175).

This slow, bodily thinking that moved between profundity and triviality was an ongoing part of my research process. This pre-analysis was not subject to any rigorous framework or theory, although my supervisors were careful to ensure my subsequent analysis process was clearly theorised, structured and replicable. This process gave me a slow familiarity with the data that was later confirmed or disrupted through the analysis process. It brought to the project a new and (as a first-time mother) unexpected lens of slow, thoughtful processing and space that meant when I returned to the data, I was meeting an old familiar friend for the first time.

In my analysis, one key aspect is the bodies of the children and how these bodies move and interact through performances of games, lore and mischief. I look at how their bodies act and are acted upon by the environment, people and materials. My own body was large, pregnant and prominent during the research encounter. My pregnancy slowed me down, disrupted my designed playfulness and interrupted many moments. My experiences of

travel, play and being in the spaces changed in relation to my body. The children stopped mid-activity to ask questions prompted by my protruding belly, to tell stories about their own relationships to pregnancies and babies, and to move around, with and against my body as it took up more space than I am used to. I see this as I go through the videos. My pregnancy made me more visible in the research process and space than I had planned, yet at the same time, opened new lines of conversation, which allowed me to step back from the play to observe and changed the pace of my study.

This intermission disrupts the flow of the thesis as my maternity leave did, but it serves to bring into view an aspect of the project that affected many of the decisions and choices I made in the research planning, encounter and subsequent analysis.

Chapter Four (continued). Methodology

The Analysis

Actualising the Theory of Play: Produsers Rescripting Childlore

This chapter puts into effect the thesis' theory of play, drawing on and extending Bernstein's (2011) notion of "a scriptive thing", to examine children's agentive and creative performances and productions of play in order to understand how childhood is experienced and produced in the post-digital age. The analysis will outline the five-stage process which understands play as a *produserly* performance of rescripting, paying particular attention to how this occurs in performances of games, lore and mischief.

In the design of my analysis, the first three stages comprise what would commonly be understood as my "unit of analysis" (i.e., the data that I am applying my theory and writing to), while the fourth and fifth stages of "theory" and "writing" are normally distinct from this process. However, in my analysis process, the theory and writing are placed on a common hierarchical plane with the data. The theory and writing were necessary stages of the analytical process of understanding, in line with Ringrose and Coleman's (2013) methodological practice when they stated that,

> We take seriously Deleuze's disruption of there being any clear demarcation between theory and practice, and suggest that how data is made sense of – theorised – is a methodological practice (p.2).

This methodology adopts this theoretical process of produ*s*ing and rescripting and applies it to the project as a whole. This is how, through the unfolding process of writing, findings have found their way into the "Shifting Methods" section and it is also how the writing and theory became stages of the analysis. What is more, just as I argue that through these agentive, creatives processes of play, the children take ownership of their "texts of childhood", I believe that through my own process of produ*s*ing and rescripting, I take ownership of this thesis. This is the case for all authors and their relationship to texts (broadly construed) whether the authors accept, reject or play with the scripts of the genre. Through the process of produ*s*erly rescripting, all writers and players make decisions, perform and produce text and in the process take ownership of these texts, whether they are written, played or otherwise performed. The final part of this chapter provides a further demonstration of this process in its presentation and discussion of the documentary which accompanies the thesis.

Embroidery, Tubers and Scrolls: Picturing Analysis

Before beginning any formal analysis, but while thinking through memories of my data, I tried to picture my data, drawing on images that were non-hierarchical, interwoven and textured. I looked for a visual representation, trying on the popular image of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guttari, 1987), the literary concept of interlace (Leyerle, 1967) and lastly, the metaphor of the palimpsest (Marsh et al., 2019; Richards, 2014; Seath, 2018). All three metaphors were playful forms of imagery, all growing, lacing and scratching to resemble how the mesh of players, environments and materials all collided in the research encounter. They further all play into the historical underpinnings of this project through their respective relationships to time and space through inter- (and intra-) textualities.

In my initial playing around with the data, I created a number of representations of the fieldwork, including the image below (Figure 2, larger version in Appendix D). This image is based on my initial analysis of the video-watching section of the first session from St Bobby's Primary School. The image is colourful, growing from the centre and overlapping. It has patterns of colour that are interwoven with fine and thick lines across and through the entire structure. It also demonstrates a linking between earlier and later moments in the research encounter, where the connections are re-connections converging together over the same space and across time.
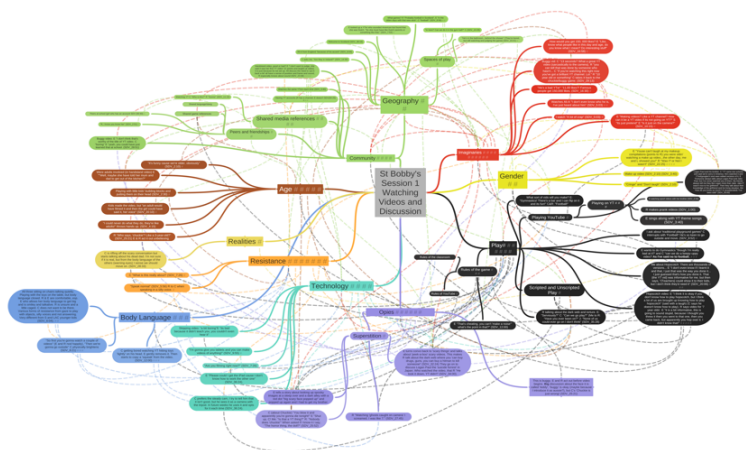
Figure 2. St Bobby's Session 1- Watching-Videos Discussion

For me, this image is an interlaced, rhizomatic palimpsest. However, as I continued to think through the process of analysis and as I wrote myself around and into these visual diagrams of my research, I kept having problems working through the model. Instead, I saw that it was the multiple, layered and scriptive moments in the encounters that should

be my focus. My data, for me, was in each moment a handful of stones thrown into water, and as I focus on one stone and its ripples, I see how those ripples touch other ripples from other stones, unsettling the narrative while adding to the story. This was how the five-stage process came to make sense as the best method of representing my analysis. The "ripples" in my analysis stage are represented through a diagram of concentric circles, which is presented in Figure 3 below.

The Five-Stage Analytical Approach

This study examines children's games, lore and mischief in their video-play-texts and my observational videos and notes in order to answer the research questions:

1. How are children producing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age?
2. What are the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today?

This chapter outlines in detail the role of each of the five stages of analysis:

prompt → response → performance → theory → writing

However, in brief, my analysis draws concentric circles that "ripple" out from "prompts" made up of people, environment and materials identified in the children's video-play-texts and my observational videos. These prompts lead to the second circle of "responses", which consist of a range of forms including sounds, bodies, silence, movement and words. These responses are then read as "performances" in the third circle, which focuses on three categories of play: games, lore and mischief. The penultimate layer of the circle brings in the theoretical lenses and themes (both a priori and induced in the analysis process) to ensure that the project, having been designed with theory, continues to "think with theory" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2011) in the analysis process. These four stages are further expanded and disrupted in the final stage, the writing stage. The following diagram (Figure 3, larger version in Appendix E) is an example of a working draft of my analysis tool. For clarity, I have included Table 4 (below) of the completed process, which outlines an example of the five-stage process.
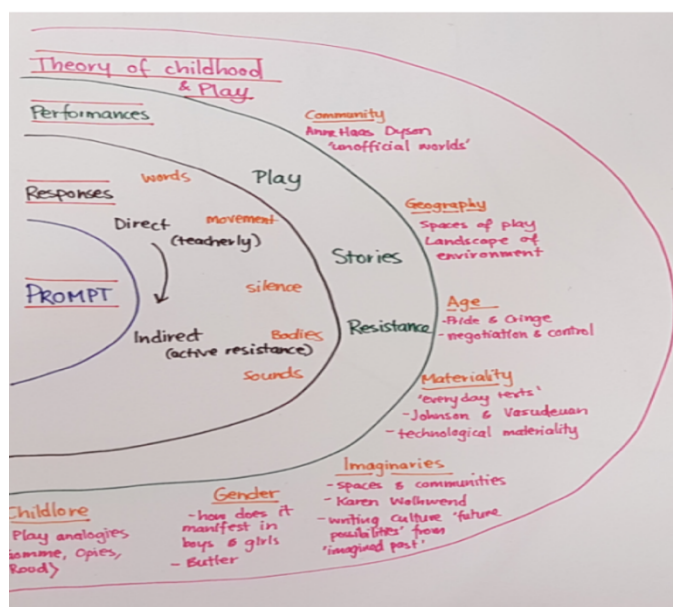
Figure 3. Illustrated Concentric Circle Diagram

In each session, I set up what I call the "Stationary Camera" on a tripod. This camera functioned as an observational camera placed at the periphery of the group discussion to record the conversations and video-watching sessions. The children in each group were interested in the camera's function, asking questions about its use and why I needed it, but also about the camera as an object. Olivia (Bramble), Peter (LAC) and Connor (St Bobby's) requested to use this camera to make their own videos, despite my insistence that the quality was not as good as the tablets. Across all three sites, the children ignored the camera for the bulk of the discussion and video-watching, but now and then each and every participant looked up at the camera, suddenly remembering it, or seeing it from the corners of their eyes. At this point they either looked away, or, far more commonly, they made a silly face or silently performed a little dance. The table below outlines my five-stage analysis process in relation to such a moment. The first row is the five stages of the process, the second row outlines the types or "codes" within each stage that I look for, and the third row is an example of the process. The five stages represent the outward rippling of concentric circles: 1. Taking the camera as the prompt; 2. Taking the actions as the response; 3. reading and coding the performance; 4. introducing base themes and theories; then 5. outlining how I would write about the moment.

Table 4. The five-stage "Concentric Circles" analysis process

1. Prompt	2. Response	3. Performance	4. Themes and Theories	5. Writing
People Materials Environment	Movement Silence Bodies Sounds Words	Games Lore Mischief	Age Gender Friendship Everyday Texts	Support Diverge Extend
Stationary Camera (***material***)	Participant makes a silly face and/or dance at the camera (***bodies, movement and silence***)	**Games** (play with technology, dancing and silly face play); and **Mischief** (acting against classroom codes of behaviour and expected silliness with the "serious" research stationary camera)	Playfulness (***age, play, agency, embodied literacies***); outside materials scripting response (***everyday texts, new materialism, "schooled spaces"***); and performing for peers (***friendship, performance, communities***).	***Support***: Situate the play in the site, in the study, historically and in relation to other works on play. ***Diverge***: Look at the role of the camera, the particular aspects of play that are different to other findings. ***Extend***: Demonstrate how these findings answer RQs and extend the field.

Table 4 above focuses on one example of play; however, this example is demonstrative of multiple similar performances of play. Throughout the findings chapters, I focus on specific examples which resonate across the entire data set to allow for a deep dive analysis of what is happening in the children's performances of play. This chapter outlines how the design of the analysis grew from the initial research design and research encounter. This project uses novel methodologies within a multidisciplinary approach that

led me to adopt my own five-stage "concentric circles" analysis approach, elucidated below.

Stage 1. Prompts or Scriptive Things

The analysis is structured around "prompts" based on Bernstein's (2011) aforementioned concept of "scriptive things". Scriptive things are essentially "a set of invitations that necessarily remain open to resistance, interpretation and improvisation" (Bernstein, 2011, p.12). These three elements of "resistance, interpretation and improvisation" are key when designing a study around the understanding of children as agential produsers of their own texts of childhood. This modern understanding of children and childhood requires space for invention and resistance, especially in relation to the digital and its effect on play. Bernstein's concept allows for this flexibility as it,

> [B]roadly structures a performance while allowing for agency and unleashing
> original, live variations that may not be individually predictable (2011, p.12).

Utilizing Bernstein's term in this study places agency in the hands of the children, moving away from ideas that "technology is a threat to play" (Udal, 1889, p.205; Ross, 1996, p.1) or reports of parental fears that screen-time is detrimental to imagination and play (Stiglic and Viner, 2019; Madigan, 2019) to instead allow for insight into how children are playing *with* technology (as part of a complex inter/ra-actions of the child, material and environment). My initial focus was on highlighting the special role of technology as a tool that extends the playground, allowing children to represent themselves in unique ways to each other and as a ground-breaking shift in how play is shaped, shared and enjoyed. As a result, I initially focused on discussion and use of "technology" (broadly understood as digital tools) in play. However, I soon found that I needed to open up the prompt as more and more materials played a similar role to technology in scripting the children's games and play. While digital technology remained central to my interaction with the children and in the form of the data production, in the analysis it became simply another toy in play. "Materials" was a much broader prompt to look for and it better reflected the actual use of the tablets, cameras and phones alongside other toys in the playground. However, I soon found this insufficient as the prompts for play were not only found in materials, but also in people and the environment. The "people" I refer to are not just the children, but also myself the researcher and the various other members of staff that were present or intersected the group in some way, as well as figures in the children's lives both personally and as part of their wider networks and mediascapes who were invited in through collective and individual imaginaries (e.g., Batman, mum, YouTube stars like the "Dobery

Twins"). The same is true of environments, as the playground elements were taken up in play in actual and imagined ways.

This understanding of "scriptive things" as more than just materials offers a new materialist understanding of materials, people and environments as all interconnected. Wargo's (2018) study about children and technology in creative, playful writing similarly explores the relationship between children, things and the environment, raising ontological questions of "how we imagine the 'subject' and/or 'author'" (p.505). While I have extended the possible prompts available in play, I argue that the "author" of play is always the children in the study, however, it is their interaction with things, spaces and people that creates the situation of play. The prompts and scriptive things invite, entice and suggest performances of play that, though extended, remain true to Bernstein's concept of emergent agencies,

> To describe elements of material culture as 'scripting' actions is not to suggest that things possess agency or that people lack it, but instead to propose that agency emerges through constant engagement with the stuff of our lives (Bernstein, 2011, p.12).

My analysis focuses on scriptive things across the research encounters made up of the environment, people and materials that prompt the agentive and creative moments of produsing and rescripting play by the children in the study. The focus on the agentive creativity of the children might seem at odds with the new materialist paradigm, but as is explicated in my theoretical framework chapter, it is from this "more-than-human" understanding that life is a jumble of intra-actions of environment, material and people that I argue agency emerges. In my findings, I focus on one element of the interwoven intra-actions, the child, not to the exclusion of the other elements, but to look at how the children perform and produce their own experiences of childhood through play.

Stage 2. Responses: Rescripting, Reacting, Responding

Often in the video-play-texts and in my observational videos and notes, it is the responses that are more obvious than the prompts. Responses are moments of play in the form of *movement, silence, bodies, sounds* and *words*. This section sets out what I have included as forms of data in this project, particularly in terms of "play", in order to define what is considered a "response". The rest of this section outlines my organisation of data in the initial spreadsheets and annotated transcription, explaining why these methods best fit my multimodal data.

What counts as data?

This project is built around *seeing* and *hearing* children at play, watching and observing and having them create audio-visual representations of their play. This double focus is vital as many of the children's videos are time-lapses without sound or with distorted sound and many videos are taken while the children run and hide – their laboured breath is almost all that can be heard on the audio track. Simple audio transcription was never an option for these texts as it ignores much of the actions in the videos. While a focus on the words is insufficient, equally a focus on the aesthetic visual materials (Rose, 2016) would not adequately meet the needs of the study. There are numerous videos in which the image is nothing of consequence – a wall, a chair – and all we have is the audio, often made up of broken bits of conversation or snippets of play, yet even this lack of video image is part of the text and part of the story I choose to tell. It is only when honouring both the audio and visual elements of the video-play-texts that I am able to regain a sense of the encounters, and even then, this sense is partial compared to being in the spaces of play.

The techniques used in data generation are novel techniques designed for this study. They include the analysis of anthologies of traditional play that scaffolded the session through the historical categories of play, bringing in YouTube videos of "traditional" play in order to script play, and giving the children the devices to record their own play (not as student researchers, but as creators of their own texts of play). Understanding folkloric play as a text, particularly as "texts of childhood", is also a novel understanding this study brings to the fields of folklore, childhood and youth studies, children's literature, new media and new literacies studies. There is, therefore, no precedent for how to go about analysing the participants' video-play-texts, which leads me to draw from a range of well-established processes in order to develop a thorough and systematic method of analysis.

When looking for an approach that diverges from a singular point of analysis to focus on the multi-faceted aspects of the play-video-texts, I turn to Leander and Rowe (2006) as they describe the "rhizomatic perspective on spatial relations" (p.451), which they argue,

> asserts the importance of materiality, of moving beyond an interpretation of literacy performance as 'voice' and considering the ways in which voices act with bodies, with material texts, and with objects; the coordination and contrast of multiple resources and modalities is more important than any single resource in use, including language (p.451).

The "moving beyond" a focus on voice and language to include other forms of action is needed in this project on play. The five interrelated actions I focus on are *movement,*

silence, bodies, sounds and *words*. These five actions, understood according to Leander and Rowe's (2006) "relational perspective", produce what they term "multispatiality" – a plurality of spaces, embedded in lived moments of performance. This plurality of spaces is created through what Bernstein (2011) describes as the "constant engagement with the stuff of our lives" (p.12). Marsh et al. (2019) address a similar plurality of spaces in relation to the playground and play through the metaphor of the palimpsest. They argue for the acknowledgement of persistent traces of play over time.

The texts that I analyse (both the participants' video-play-texts and my observational videos) depict children playing in familiar spaces; these environments are sedimented with memories and experiences of past play by the participants and by other children. The playground environments become palimpsests of play, inscribed and written over and over with each set of new players and new materials of play. The environments, materials and people are "laminated" (Marsh and Bishop, 2014, p.156) with play experiences of their own play and interlaced with the past and present play of others. This study links children's play today to children's play in the past to argue for a non-linear tradition of children's play. The concept of "multispatiality" and the metaphors of "interlace" and "palimpsest" recognise this link between past, present and possible future play. Play is central to each aspect of the analysis; therefore, it is the recognition of play that is important in understanding what counts as "data" in this study.

What counts as play?

The five types of responses (*movement, silence, bodies, sound* and *words*) broadly reflect forms of play related to games and lore annotated in play anthologies and game collections of the past. This reflection grounds the children's play within a recognisable tradition of games and lore. Game anthologies have traditionally focused on *words*, and many, especially collections of musical singing games, only annotated the *words* children used in play, but even in Gomme's 1894/8 opus, there are descriptions of the *movements* of the players – focusing on where they went and how they used their *bodies* (e.g., clapping, one person stands aside, skipping in a circle, touching hands, etc.). "Collecting" these moments of play is made easier by film, although there are still issues with this form of recording, discussed in the following section of this chapter, Methods of the Documentary.

Words and *sounds* of play were often annotated, although what counts as a playful sound was and is down to interpretation, though the video recording of sounds means careful analysis of each sound is possible, where in the past utterances of "oohs" and "aahs" might

have been lost. Lastly, I have added the "action" of *silence*. There were many silent videos of play (often taken in time-lapse mode), but there were also moments in which "scripts" and "prompts" of play were silently made or, quite often, were met with *silence* and not taken up. These moments were demonstrative of the complicated fabric of the playground and the players within and are therefore counted as moments of play. Just as "playing" the rests in music is integral in a piece, *silence* in play is part of the composition of the playground.

Organisation of data

As the research encounter garnered such great amounts of data, I needed to be careful in my organisation of the data to ensure I was thorough and systematic in my analysis process. This was a two-step process that involved first, categorising the videos through the use of spreadsheets (one for my observational videos and the other for the participant-made video-play-texts), and second, systematically going through each video and creating annotated "transcripts" of prompts and responses.

Spreadsheets

I began analysis by cataloguing the children's video-play-texts in an Excel spreadsheet divided into three pages, one per site: Ladybird Afterschool Care, Bramble Primary School and St Bobby's Primary School (see Appendix F for examples of two spreadsheets). My catalogue helped me gain a picture of the breadth of my data as I watched each of the videos from a new, fresh perspective a year after they had been created. There is a total of 58 hours and 36 minutes of footage, made up of 439 video-play-texts created by the children and 181 observational videos created by me.

Each spreadsheet page was separated into eight columns: 1. Number (assigned to the video); 2. Name (of original file [e.g., VID_20180212_112041]); 3. Type (video or photo); 4. Length (to the second); 5. Style (selfie, propped up, hand held/front camera, tripod, time lapse, filtered); 6. People (who appeared in the video by image or voice); 7. Content (a very brief description of what play occurred with focus on games played, e.g., "Basketball skills, running and monkey bars" and "Feeding friends challenge"); 8. Location (location of the file in folders on the hard-drive, e.g., iPad Session 1).

Session #	Name	Type	Length	Style	People	Content	Location

The "Session number" is the system used to quote videos in the following three findings chapters, where S1V1 refers to Session 1, Video 1. According to this system, S1P7 refers to the seventh photo taken in session one. My observation videos are categorised in the same way, but the code for the videos differs slightly where the name of the files refer to the camera that recorded them (either LH [Little Huawei] or SC [Stationary Camera]); for example, S3LH5 refers to Session 3-Little Huawei-Video 5. I catalogued the original file "Name" and "Location" as a backup to my "Session #" system.

I categorised the "Type" of file to differentiate between videos and photos. My study focuses on the scripted video-play-texts made by the children, yet there were also a number of photos taken on the devices, and these photos demonstrate a different form of play including "spamming" (where the button was held down and hundreds of photos were taken in quick succession), and there was also editing and filters applied to a number of the photos, making the photos an important element of play with devices that was distinct from the filming of the video-play-texts. I also catalogued the length to get a sense of the typical length of their video-play-texts in relation to the videos I showed them on YouTube and to note the amount of data generated.

The category of "Style" also related to looking at how they were playing with the cameras as objects, whether mimicking the genre of YouTube (selfie), positioning the camera to play more easily (propped up and tripod), using the camera to record something specific in play or in the room (front camera/handheld), or playing with the functions on the camera as an object of play itself (time lapse mode and filters).

I categorised the "People" in the texts to record participation and co-ownership of the texts (the children and I own the videos they produced and appeared in) to create a searchable database of each participant's texts. This category proved important when looking at people as scriptive things in the later analysis stage.

The category "Content" functioned as my initial recognition of performances of play, further outlined in the following section. This recognition came from my familiarity with play anthologies, my own experience as a player and through the naming of the games by the players. This category includes common games: football, basketball, monkey bars, cartwheels, dancing, running, hidey-tig, The Floor is Lava, Marco Polo, wrestling, singing, etc. These recognisable "categorisable" games were played alongside and in conjunction with play that is not so easily definable. These include such play as "singing to shoes then

singing Chubby Bunny to the girls' team" (St Bobby's), invented games like "Gorilla-tig" (LAC) and "hoop-ball" (St Bobby's), as well as YouTube-style vlogs and videos, parody videos, messages to me (St Bobby's), pranks, "3 A.M. videos" (Bramble) and various methods of playing with the camera and their own reflected images. Across the three sites there were many videos of the ground as the children ran and played, often making silly noises, not caring about the image quality. The "wordcloud" in Figure 4 is made up of the "content" category from across the three sites, demonstrating the difficulty of describing much of the play as it came into inter/intra action with materials, people and environment.

Figure 4. Wordcloud of forms of play mentioned in spreadsheet
(Image created at https://www.wordclouds.com)

While the difficulty in the process of transliteration will be discussed below, the wordle demonstrates how across the sites and in each play-video-text there was *movement, silence, bodies, sound* and *words*, all combined in inter/intra action with the scriptive things of the "research playgrounds".

Transcription of sorts

The second step of analysis was in the transcription of sorts, or the "annotated transcription", which was a handwritten record of the prompts that occurred in the sessions. This process involved slow, methodological watching and re-watching of the play-video-texts alongside my observational videos to get a sense of the prompts that

existed outside of the participant-made videos. Each prompt was time-stamped and annotated according to the type of prompt (environment, material, people) or the form of response (movement, silence, bodies, sound, words) that was then used to trace the prompt. My observational videos and notes provided context to much of the play in the participants' videos, though not all. I worked session by session, beginning with Session 1 across all the three groups to see if this was a feasible method and then moving through each site beginning with Session 2 and ending with their film festivals to ensure I had watched, annotated and reflected on each of the video-play-texts and my observational videos. As I worked, I refined my understanding of what I was looking for and which prompts were particularly relevant to the study and why. This process was long, but fruitful.

St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) outline the ontological issue with focusing on only words in the process of transcribing research encounters, arguing that the process places undue focus on the written word. They argue that there is a fundamental flaw in qualitative research where the words "do not count as data until they are written, textualized in interview transcripts – until they have lost their *presence*", arguing that "[i]n fact, words can never retain presence" (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014, p.715, original emphasis). In my process of transliteration, I wanted to hold onto the playful presence that is so integral to these texts of childhood. As explicated above, the use of "text" here does not mean that the play is language-based or logocentric, but rather, that while honouring the multimodality and multispatiality of the play activity, the textual understanding of play allows for insight into the literacy processes of performance, production, produ*s*ing and rescripting.

Play is an experience that is not easily converted to written text (Hackett and Somerville, 2017). Iona and Peter Opie (1959) demonstrate this same issue, stating that,

> Our problem editorially has been to present our findings in a form in which the facts are readily available, yet not so prosaically that the spirit of street play, its zest, variety, contradictions, and disorderliness, is entirely lost. Street play is not a social activity that lends itself to neat analysis and tabulation (p.vi).

As the Opies describe, even the experience of being in the proximity of play is difficult to transliterate. Leader and Rowe (2006) elucidate the difficulty of transcribing an embodied activity, arguing that there is a "gap" in representation, where transcription creates a "fixed and structured" representation of a moment that is more fluid, complicated and lived-in than the text allows space for (p.431). De Freitas and Curinga also express the difficulty of encoding "prosody" as, like movements, bodies and silence, it "resists unitization" (2015,

p.257). Therefore, while in my analysis I was careful to focus on more than just the words, I also used the annotated transcript more as a marker and timestamp than a full transcription, returning to and relying on the original audio-visual texts throughout the analysis and writing.

The use of the spreadsheet and annotated transcription was a way of first visualising my data and then thinking through the process of my analysis. Watching and re-watching the participants' play-video-texts alongside my observational videos was the main action, while the process of transliterating descriptive elements of the prompts and responses meant not only that I had a record of these prompts and responses to return to when moving across the three sites and on to later stages of analysis, but it also allows for another researcher to see and understand my process and potentially replicate it in the future.

Stage 3. Performances: Games, Lore and Mischief

This section looks at how I moved from coding multiple playful actions in the form of five responses to recognising these as performances of play. There is a particular emphasis on the production and creativity in play which, in this third stage of analysis, is seen as a "rescripting" of prompts to create responses of play that are creative, produserly and agentive. Multiple examples of this occurred throughout the research encounter, across the three sites and the three forms of prompts (environment, materials and people), creating active responses that are read as performances of folkloric play. The children's adaptation and parody "work" of rescripting prompts on the playground is one of the elements outlined in recognising children's agentive behaviour in play. This rescripting also plays a large part in answering my first research question: How are children performing and producing play and childlore in the post-digital age? Understanding these texts as being owned by the children means looking for moments where the children *make* the texts their own; it means looking for particular prompts that elicit playful responses that are read as performances of creative and agentive play in the form of games, lore and/or mischief. This section will begin by elucidating how a performance of play is understood in this study to then explain the three categories of performance (games, lore and mischief) with a discussion of my conception of these categories.

Performances of play

In the video-play-texts the participants made, we see performances of play that respond to the environment, material and people scripts around them. Burnett and Merchant (2020b) describe similar performances of interplay of various elements as "literacy-as-event", an

> affective encounter generated through an ongoing reassembling of the human and the more-than-human…[to]…foreground the fluidity, affect, and emergence generated by people and things as they come into relation (p.48).

In performing folkloric play, the children are playing into the genre of child player, inviting and/or denying various forms of interaction and engagement from the scriptive things in their space to produse performances of games, lore and/or mischief. Scripts can be followed more or less to the rule (for example, in a performance of playing football, there are clear positions and rules to follow) or they can be interacted with to varying degrees that fall on a continuum somewhere between acceptance and rejection. This is seen when, while playing the same game of football, the children work to rescript their own collective rules of play that are adapted to the environment, materials and people in the space. If the terrain is different to what they usually play on, they might use a soft ball, changing how players can interact with "the ball" (LAC). How the game is structured, what rules are followed and what imaginaries are invited into the space of play is determined by the people playing the game, while a change or introduction of materials means that a tyre on the ground becomes incorporated into trick shots (St Bobby's). In these examples, either the environment, materials or people (or a combination) are the prompts for play. Someone suggests (scripts) playing football, the "response" is a performance of playing football where bodies and movement are forms of interaction, but also words like "goal", "corner" and "penalty" hold power that is up for negotiation, even in the "quiet room" while playing with the soft toy (LAC). In this study, these performances of folkloric play, which occurred again and again across the three sites, are further read as performances of childhood where children perform as creative, agentive produsers of their own individual childhoods.

Three Forms of Performance

These three different but connected forms of performance are all understood under the umbrella of folkloric play in this study. I developed the three broad categories of performance (games, lore and mischief) in an attempt to organise and structure the data and to gain a sense of the how my participants' play echoed and reproduced structures of "traditional" play. The three forms of performance are non-discreet, interlaced categories,

as demonstrated in the above table (Table 4), which coded the example of play as a performance of both games and mischief.

As demonstrated in the Stage 2 section above, the "Content" section of the spreadsheets initially focused on the forms of play recognised in the space from my readings, play experience and the participants' naming of the games. I then looked at the lore (stories and scripts) within this play, with these two categories often interlacing as the "lore of playing" a game determined how the game was played. Finally, much, but not all, of the playful activity that fell outside the predetermined categories of "games" was, simply put, mischief. Mischief penetrated all five response actions (movement, silence, bodies, sounds and words) from little cheeky smiles to all-out resistance to following direction. There was an abundance of "naughty" behaviour in play across the three sites. The rescripting and resistive behaviour of the participants could easily be dismissed as disruption, however Sipe (2002) and Sipe and McGuire (2006) describe similar actively resistant responses to reading texts in schools, describing the children's playful responses as "sophisticated expressive acts of literary pleasure, in which the children treat the literary text as a playground" (Sipe, 2002, p.479). Sipe further argues that teachers have the power to decide what types of response counts in their "classroom interpretive communities" (Sipe, 2002, p.481), and I would argue that this power exists for researchers in their fieldwork practice too. In a research project that looks at play and has no specific learning objectives, teaching targets or large numbers of students, I have the privilege to enjoy this range of responses and to engage with their meaning, although I can certainly sympathise with teachers preferring their students to respond in direct ways.

The mischief was woven into the discussions and descriptions of the lore of the games, inserted both subtly and obviously into play in all forms across all three sites. Just as the play categories of the past were not helpful to me in the space ("No object games!"), these categories are in many ways imagined. However, organising the forms of folkloric play into these three forms allows me to see how the scriptive elements of the playground worked at different levels of play. They allow a micro and macro understanding of play in the post-digital age to see how through enacting these forms of play, children are produsing and performing their own childhood.

Stage 4. Themes and Theory

The fourth stage of the analysis process links back to earlier theories that scaffolded the research design and encounter. The concept of scaffold is often misplaced in research

writing, as it is given to mean a permanent structure, when the nature of scaffolding is a temporary framework to aid and support the building process. In this case, theory truly scaffolded, initially functioning as a set of possible pathways, then in the fourth stage of analysis, "thinking with theory" carved clear roads to follow (Jackson and Mazzei, 2011). The theories outlined in the literature review are childhood, play and imaginaries. In many ways, these theories function as a priori themes in the research endeavour (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). In this study, these three theories are inextricably linked to each stage of the research process. At the fourth stage of analysis, these theories are used to "read" the performances of games, lore and mischief to see how childhood, play and imaginaries form part of the participants' performances of play in their video-play-texts.

My analysis process also led to the recognition of four themes that were made visible across the three sites: *age, gender, friendship* and *everyday texts*. These themes were "induced from the data" (Ryan and Bernard, 2003:56) in the analysis process, during which I closely watched and re-watched in the video-play-texts and my observational videos. In this process, these four themes persistently determined and/or disrupted the performances of play; these themes clearly mattered *to the participants* in each space. This section will briefly give more detail regarding the four inducted themes that appeared across the three sites, shifting and determining the theoretical lenses necessary for the analysis process.

Immutable "Facts"

The four themes are separated into two forms: immutable "facts" and flexible concepts. "Facts" is presented in quotation marks to represent the situatedness of the term; in this qualitative study, concepts of "truth" and "fact" are questioned. Across the three research sites, there were certain immutable "facts" specific to the environments, participants and materials – two in particular were *Age* and *Gender*. These two "facts" of the research spaces are key to the video-play-texts. It is through these two concepts that much of the self-making was determined and/or resisted and where society in particular played a large part in that process.

Age as a number represented a point of access to materials, but also to friendship groups especially due to the fact that it determined one's grade in school. Concepts of what was "right" or "good" for certain ages were expressed across the three groups in relation to numerous elements further discussed in my findings. The findings chapters discuss how

age was a factor in terms of negotiation and control, often expressed in terms of "cringe" about certain actions or events.

Gender has been a defining feature of play in all game collections and anthologies. I did not specify gender in my recruitment process, but all three groups had more boys than girls and there was at each site at least one session with only one or no girls. The project was advertised as a study about YouTube and games, and in this description, I may have unwittingly made the recruitment more appealing to boys or it may have appeared so for teachers who recruited for me. With all this in mind, it was the gendered performances throughout the video making, video-watching and discussions about play that demonstrated to me the importance of gender in the lives of the children, making me see it as part of the fabric of the spaces and therefore, part of play.

Flexible Concepts

The other two themes, *Friendship* and *Everyday Culture*, were more flexible, mutable concepts that changed in relation to prompts and responses in the research encounter. These two concepts were aspects again in the process of autopoiesis, but there was more room for individuality within these concepts for the children to do the work of "making themselves and the world".

Friendships functioned in the research playgrounds as communities of play. In the process of analysis, friendships were factors in determining who played with whom and how; importantly, they also determined who was left out. Friendships were not fixed and closeness between individuals fluctuated constantly. In my findings I discuss how friendships (and enmity), alongside materials, environments, texts and culture, intersect within the group and determined the encounter.

Everyday children's culture is part of what constitutes children's experience of childhood. This study invited the children's everyday culture into the school/aftercare space, and in the process disrupted codes of space, environment, people and power. These texts were not stable points of culture but shifted as children determined their relationship to the text, positioning it as babyish, good, fun or stupid as they constructed themselves and further how they presented those selves to the people in the room. I draw on the works of Anne Haas Dyson and her concept of "unofficial worlds" (2013) alongside Johnson and Vasudevan's (2012) work on "everyday texts" to think through culture in terms of text and

literacies. The three findings chapters explore how the children's culture was expressed through the children's performances of games, lore and mischief.

These two sets of themes are overlapping in their categories since the *Age* and *Gender* of the participant often determined the *Friendship* and *Everyday Culture* they were more likely to follow. However, this was also open to resistance and rescripting and we see evidence of both acceptance and resistance of the scripts these themes prompt across all three sites.

Much of this study looks to novel and radical methods of qualitative research, shifting away from the more traditional practices and rethinking processes of transcription and coding. This focus has been chosen in order to see, hear and represent the participants' play in a paradigm that focuses on more than words. I have adopted a new materialist approach when looking at the scriptive abilities of environment and materials alongside people. I am also wary of the "order" and "regularity" that is often produced in research in the "guise of categories that erase difference and privilege identity among seemingly similar things" (Jackson, 2013, p.742). Therefore, in my recognition of both my a priori themes (childhood, play and imaginaries) and my inducted themes (age, gender, friendship and everyday culture) I remain aware of the "complexity, or entanglement, of the human and non-human in scientific practices" (Jackson, 2013, p.742). The web of interrelation between my seven themes and all my other stages of analysis is further explored in the next and final stage of analysis.

Stage 5. Writing

Writing as a method of analysis

Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) argue that thought happens in writing – the process of carrying ideas into places they may not have travelled without the act of putting words on paper. Richardson and St. Pierre's method acknowledges numerous, non-traditional forms of knowing that surround the research process (dreams, feelings, bodies, etc.) and that through writing are made into data. I consider my inclusion of the "Intermission" that relate my experience of having a baby during the research process to be honouring the forms of data that are "always already in my mind and body" and which "cropped up unexpectedly and fittingly in my writing – fugitive, fleeting data that were excessive and out-of-category" (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008, p.970). It was these experiences of knowing and being in the research process and the gift of a long, thoughtful period of

maternity leave between the research encounter and analysis that led me to think about what the process of writing would mean in my project.

The writing stage has been particularly substantive in the process of responding to the second research question: What are the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today? The immediate implications of the children's play choices are found in the children's play-video-texts and my observational videos in terms of the effect of their play, what they did afterwards and what others did around them. However, in a much wider, broader understanding of the implications, it is through thinking with theory and in the process of writing and reading that I am able to approach this question. In the process of writing, I work iteratively between the foundational writing that occurred before the encounters (drafts of the literature review, theories and methodology) and my new writing (my three findings chapters). The thesis' structure is fluid as I build my arguments and design the text so that my writing is able to perform three key tasks: 1. Support the field; 2. Diverge from the field; and 3. Extend the field. It is through the process of writing that I am able to see and, importantly, articulate my contribution to the field.

Writing the findings

The three findings chapters use the same concentric circle metaphor as my analysis, but I use vignettes and screenshots of the participants' video-play-texts to function as "prompts" for each chapter. Vignettes are "short descriptive or evocative episode[s]" ("Vignette", 2019, para. 2b) that function in research to "provide a single point of reference for a complex set of ideas" (Burnett et al, 2014, p.92). The vignette style echoes the "short" yet "evocative episodes" of play in the children's videos. While I expected (and scripted) the children's video-play-texts, the resulting tablets full of videos told partial stories of play. The presentation of vignettes before the analysis situates these performances of play as semi-found, semi-told texts, as they were in my study. The storytelling feel of the vignettes also functions to connect the project back to children's literature. Describing findings through vignettes followed by analysis is in the style of literacy scholars (Pahl and Rowsell, 2012; Piazza, 1999; Wohlwend, 2011a) and my own work with Mia Perry and Theresa Rogers (Nelson, Perry and Rogers, 2020). The style of vignette followed by exegesis also imitates the typical layout of game anthologies where, "in the apparatus which follows each main article" there is "an outline history in terms of printed sources and oral collectings" (Opie and Opie, 1985, p.vii). The use of screenshots along with the vignettes demonstrates my continued attention to "more than words" in the research

encounter. These still images (screenshots) are moments of the participants' video-play-texts that are provided in order to offer richer, visual insight into the people who were my participants (a concept explored in more detail in my findings).

The image-vignettes are used as entry points into a larger discussion about childhood and play in the post-digital age. Through a focus on particular performances of play in the video-play-texts, the three findings chapters locate moments in which theories of childhood, imaginaries and play intersect with themes of gender, age, friendship and everyday children's culture that resonated across the encounters at the three sites. In exploring these moments, I am able to construct an understanding of how children are performing and producing play, childhood and childlore in the post-digital age, to then carry that understanding into working out the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today. The image-vignettes are consciously crafted to give a feel of the videos, but, despite the inclusion of images, in the process the children's play is translated and transliterated. The process of creating these vignettes is, as Denzin argues, "not an innocent practice" but an act of "interpretation" (2000, p.256). This act inevitably informs the reader "as much about their authors as …about their subjects" (Sikes, 2005, p.90). This thesis crafts an image of childhood that is determined by the theories and understandings I bring to the children's play-video-texts and my observational videos and notes, just as previous play anthologies demonstrate how their adult authors viewed and understood children, play and childhood. Acknowledging this role of authorship offers insight into the process of writing and crafting the text and the accompanying documentary and allows for critical reflection on the role of the researcher in the research process.

Presentation of the findings:

The aim of the findings chapters is to demonstrate how my research design supports, diverges from and extends research into childhood, childlore and play. The following three chapters first draw upon historical and contemporary play sources to situate the play within the study (across the three sites) and more broadly within a tradition of other players. Second, through the inclusion and defence of counterfactuals, I demonstrate how my study, due to its deep dive, innovative methodology and particular environment, materials and people, diverges from other studies. Finally, I demonstrate how through novel methodologies, application of theories and particular research focus, this study extends the work of others across the multidisciplinary fields that I draw upon to present a unique understanding of play, childhood, childlore today.

Each findings chapter focuses on one category of scriptive thing: environment, materials and people. In a woven fabric, all the threads support and interlace each other. My findings chapters follow one thread, through the stories of play generated in the children's video-play-texts and my observational videos. Of the 439 video-play-texts the children made, I have selected only a small number to focus on because these examples tell the wider story of the research encounters in representative, yet unique ways. Many of the texts I focus on were chosen by the participants as their videos to be edited and shown at the Film Festivals and the students were all proud of these texts and demonstrated purposefulness in their crafting. In writing the analysis of these video-play-texts, I found that these videos led the analysis; they functioned as my scriptive things and as I worked at unpicking and extending the themes, ideas and concepts within the video-play-texts, it became clear that these texts were ultimate drivers of the analysis. The texts I analyse alongside the image-vignettes are made up of other video-play-texts from the three sites and my observational videos. These texts as a body contribute to a tradition of academic work on children's games and lore throughout the last 125 years (Marsh and Bishop, 2014; Gaunt, 2006; Gomme; 1894; Opie and Opie, 1985; Ritchie, 1964/5; and Willett, 2011).

The Methods of the Documentary

This section looks at the methods and methodology behind creating and including a documentary text as part of the doctoral study, while Chapter Six examines the performances and productions of play within the documentary text. The process of collating, editing and producing an audio-visual text as a presentation of data meant that in addition to the primary role of "researcher", I took on a secondary role of "researcher-as-artist". This section examines how these two roles come together where the *researcher* aims to create an edited document that speaks (and plays and performs) to the rest of the literature, theories and methods of the thesis, while the *researcher-as-artist* prioritises the watchable and sharable aspects of the text. The binary is imaginary of course, but it helps me think through and represent some of the decisions (methodological and ethical) that were made when creating an audio-visual document that combines, edits and curates my observational recordings and the children's video-play-texts. Furthermore, in accordance with the overall theories of the thesis, the creation and submission of the documentary text alongside the written text is a performance of rescripting the "scripts" of a doctoral thesis in an act to produse a piece of work that is uniquely mine.

Including an Audio-Visual Text

The reason for including an audio-visual text alongside the written text of the thesis is to represent the multimodal nature of play. When reading the historical anthologies of play, I frequently turned to YouTube videos of the games to understand the play that was being described in the anthologies. While the YouTube versions may not have been identical to the written texts, the videoed performances gave me a clearer sense of the sounds, moments, rhythms, multimodality, multi-spatiality and multi-layered aspects of the related play-texts. Creating a written form of play is difficult; as described above, play and playful activity is not easily transcribed or transliterated (De Freitas and Curinga, 2015, p.257; Marsh, 2008, p.20; Opie and Opie, 1959, p.vi). Hackett and Somerville (2017) emphasise how they,

> frequently struggled with the inadequacy of words, and the way in which words demanded to be arranged in logical and linear sequences of sentences, creating therefore partial, unsatisfactory accounts of the children's intra-action in place (p.380).

While this experience may be true of many research scenarios, the chaos of children's play is particularly difficult to represent. Children's language, bodies, silences and sounds constantly and necessarily overlap. The very experience of play is not one of "logical and linear sequences of sentences" (p.380), but an experience of "the complexity of multiple sounds, gestures and movements" (Hackett and Somerville, 2017, p.382).

Hackett and Somerville (2017) describe some of the complex moments of "more-than-human" communication and performance in play that resist simple transcription, stating that,

> Movement and sound are the ways in which the mud and water pose … questions, and the children's answers, through gestures, full body movements, vocalisations, songs and words, are deeply entangled with these wider more-than-human movements, some of which result in sounds and words at the level of human perception (p.386).

What they call "questions", I call scripts. In their case, the questions they examine are mud and water (which would fall under scripts of environment and materials in my analysis). Hackett and Somerville examine the children's responses in terms of "gestures, full body movements, vocalisations, songs and words", similar to my recognition of five forms of responses (*movement*, *bodies*, *sounds*, *silence* and *words*). In both cases, the stressed entanglements of these "questions" and "answers" (or scripts and responses) are where traditional practices of transliteration fall short. The audio-video form, however, offered

me an alternative way to represent and engage with many of these responses. In the analysis, I could revisit over and over the five forms of responses to understand how they all formed part of the children's performances and productions of play. The emphasis on the affordances created by audio-visual data generation and analysis, coupled with my experience of finding written descriptions of play often insufficient, meant that I felt the need to offer the reader an audio-visual experience of my participants' performances and productions of play.

Limitations to audio-visual representations

However, in my excitement about the affordances of audio-visual technology, it needs to be stated that while cameras can "capture" sound and moving images, many of the particular elements of environment (wind, smells, temperature) and materials (textures, weight, size) are lost in the selective audio-visual capabilities of the camera. There is also the fact that while the camera offers a greater sense of the experience of the research encounters, that sense is still partial. As Beresin (1999) points out,

> The camera is seductive, as it seems to provide a form of documentation with less debate and more data. Yet, even when the editing is kept to a minimum and the shots are taken at the widest angle possible, no camera is objective (p.89).

Recognising the limitations of the audio-visual technology means also being aware of the role the camera plays in providing that partial sense of the experience of the encounter. Bodies are often left out of the frame (bodies, limbs or heads excluded), the sounds are scrambled by the wind, and the play is (often) not centred in the image. With this in mind, the accompanying documentary does not attempt to offer an uninterrupted, unedited view of the three research "playgrounds", "toys" and "players". Instead, it is a text that offers a partial, edited account of the children's video-play-texts and my observational videos in a format that is more responsive to children's play.

Editing a Watchable Document: Combining the roles of researcher and researcher-as-artist

The first draft cut of the documentary included, whenever possible, the children's video-play-texts in full. As a researcher, I was excited by the opportunity to share the entire moments, thinking of the sheer amount of information that could be expressed in video compared to words and the idea that "practically speaking, one cannot reproduce every frame of visual information without supplying full-motion video" (Leander and Rowe, 2006, p.440). It had appeared to me that in cutting these performances short to focus on particular elements, I was not honouring the children's presentations of their texts of

childhood. However, while creating a documentary text that is responsive to the literature, methods and theories of the thesis, the researcher-as-artist also hopes that it will be watchable and "make felt an effect" (Massumi, 2011, p.37). In considering what aspects create a watchable text, I was aware of the length (not too long), the selection of audio and visual material (not too blurry nor distorted and without too much movement); in creating an "effect" I saw the need to craft a story. In recognising the lack of camera objectivity (Beresin, 1999), the researcher felt liberated to be more playful in my editing and curatorial of the children's video-play-texts and my observational videos. I realised the ways in which the researcher already acts as an editor in their decision-making and writing and saw that this was a necessary part of storytelling. As Collier (2019) articulates,

> In the end, it is impossible to avoid the fact that research is almost always bracketed by the researcher who initiates the study and then edits and translates the stories, always partial, collected for public presentation" (p.44).

With this understanding in mind, it became clear that it was unnecessary to show the children's full video-play-texts. In determining which performances were included in the documentary, editorial decisions about inclusion and exclusion were already being made. However, I still wanted to give a sense of the research encounters in the documentary, so I utilised Burnett and Merchant's (2014) theory "that producing and 'stacking up' stories, or multiple accounts, is an alternative way of approaching or exposing these complexities" (p.43). Thus, in the representation of my findings, in both written text and the documentary, I have "stack[ed] up" particular performances of play that occurred across the three research sites.

Creatively rescripting the da(r)ta

Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) suggest a number of "Creative Analytical Writing Practices" to extend the qualitative researcher's writing horizons, including "transforming your fieldnotes into drama" (p.974). They argue that in this process, the researcher will be able to see the weight of certain voices, gauge representation and think about how participants would view their characterisation. While the documentary is not intended as a "drama", the accessible audio-visual form certainly allows me to consider these questions. In particular, the creation of such a text offers the researcher a new perspective on how certain voices, bodies and actions are represented in the "stack[ed] up" (Burnett and Merchant, 2014, p.43) performances of play. Particular players are louder or bigger and are thus more present in the video-play-texts. However, through editing, these voices do not necessarily remain dominant.

In the editing of the documentary, I am rescripting the data in a number of ways: highlighting the participants' video-making-play; accenting particular performances of play-texts within their video-play-texts and my observational videos; and creating a single, linear story of the interlaced, entangled play-texts that emerged in the research encounters but may have also been part of their play outside the zone of the research playgrounds. To understand this form of rescripting, I draw on Renold's (2018) concept of *da(r)ta* – when "data entangles with arts-based methodologies" (p.37) to create "d/artaphacts" (data-artifact). Both my documentary and the children's video-play-texts are examples of da(r)ta and d/artaphacts. My documentary is a produ*s*ed and performed representation of the research encounters with the ability to travel to spaces beyond the research encounter and with the potential to "engage others in 'responding'" (Renold, 2018, p.50) to the documentary piece as a scriptive thing. The produ*s*ed documentary text remains open to the viewer's own rescripting of the documentary, the creation of their own understanding of the text through accepting or resisting my interpretation of the research encounters and the participants' performances and productions of play within it.

On the ethics of film and children: A Sharable Document?

In the design of the research encounters, I had planned to share the documentary with the three sites once it was finished. I also received permission from the participants and their parents to share the documentary, although I assured them I would not place it on YouTube. However, the fieldwork occurred in early 2018. It is currently early 2021 and many of the participants will have moved onto new schools and centres. While there are many moments of fun and play, there are also moments in which the participants express raw emotions. While the schools and centre all expressed interest in seeing the documentary, throughout the encounters, many of the (particularly older) participants expressed what they termed "cringe" at the idea of their video-play-texts being shared. Therefore, I made a decision to create three short compilation videos for each research site. The videos were made up of short clips cut from my observational videos and the participants' video-play-texts that focused on the fun, entertaining aspects of the encounters put to popular music suggested by the participants during the encounter. These videos were given to the schools on the USB sticks along with the video-play-texts approved by the participants. The schools were instructed that these videos were owned by the school and the participants and they required individual participant approval before sharing them. In the film festivals at each site, the children watched the edited compilations with evident delight. At each site, I asked the children if they would like me to include a copy for the school and whether they were happy for it to be shared. All agreed, and at

both schools, the students suggested sharing the document at assemblies with their certificates of attendance; at Bramble Primary, they also requested that their chosen edited video-play-texts be shared. At LAC, the participants invited their parents and friends to the film festival and requested that the compilation video and their edited video-play-texts be available to show the centre. One set of parents offered to create a DVD of the texts to share with the group.

For the documentary, I am conscious of the ever-refined facial-recognition software (even in the last two years) that is increasingly being made available to various users. I am also aware that while I technically have the permission of the participants, their guardians and the schools to share the documentary, I also have their trust to do it in a way that I believe is most ethical. Therefore, I do not plan to share the documentary freely online or with the schools in the immediate future (it may possibly be shared after a number of years have passed to ensure no negative impact to any participants). I plan to use the documentary for educational purposes only, primarily as an accompaniment to the written thesis, and I also plan to share it in conferences and with students. In research we are granted access to participants' lives and stories, but to also be granted access to images and audio of themselves at play was a gift and I intended to honour it.

Chapter Five. The "Scriptive" Playground

The thesis employs the metaphor of "woven fabric" because over the next three findings chapters, I follow three separate scriptive threads (environment, materials and people) which knit together the fabric of play, childhood and childlore in the post-digital age. Centring on these three forms of "scriptive thing[s]" as prompts in play, the three findings chapters examine how children *produse* and *re-script* in their performances and productions of their texts of childhood. The findings demonstrate how such an examination of children's play illuminates underlying themes and assumptions related to the child, their bodies, age, gender and everyday texts. While all three chapters focus on specific examples of play drawn from the large data set produced, these examples are all representational of performances of play that occurred time and time again across the three research sites. Chapter Five focuses on environment, describing the three "research playgrounds" and how these spaces functioned to script some of the play of the participants. Chapter Six opens with a link to the accompanying short documentary and follows with an exegesis of this piece, focusing on materials. Finally, Chapter Seven examines the role of people through close analysis of two video-play-texts made by the children and the interactions that occurred between the children and me.

I. The Research Playgrounds

Play is the central theoretical framework and method of interaction in the encounters, and therefore the sites of data generation – including the school classrooms, outdoor jungle gyms, indoor gymnasiums, music/library room, "Quiet Room" and "Owl Nest" – are the *playgrounds* of my study. St Bobby's Primary School, Bramble Primary School and Ladybird Afterschool Care (LAC) were the spaces upon which the "set" of the research playgrounds was staged. This chapter argues that through the re-scripting of environment in play, children take on agentive roles in creating their own experiences of childhood. The implications of recognising this form of children's agency in play are that we see how allowing for the transformation of space through play gives the children the opportunity to make unexpected choices, perform new and risky actions, take on creative roles and work to negotiate for their needs in a safe space.

The following portraits are taken from my field notes. These are descriptive, subjective interpretations of the three research playgrounds and as the descriptions show, my experience of each space was determined and affected by experiences at the other sites. There was therefore a crossing over and linking between the three spaces that functioned to

create a layered impression of the research encounter. These descriptions are not intended to be objective, but understand that research is "always bracketed by the researcher" and, consequently, "always partial, collected for public presentation" (Collier, 2019, p.44). The field notes below describe not only the physicalities of the environments, but also the ways the children appeared to act and perform "student" within these three spaces. These vignettes were created as voice notes on my phone as I travelled home from the sessions; as a result, there are shifts in tenses throughout which reflect my own instability in the process as both a "becoming" and "being" researcher.

St Bobby's Primary School:

The children move around easily and with a sense of responsibility and ownership. The building is all interconnected and warm, and as the days are very cold outside, it makes for a cosy welcome. We were given the library/play/music space full of books and instruments and tables and chairs to sit around and talk. The average age of participants is slightly older in here. They seem unlike the other groups, which often looked to me or the staff for guidance. They went off immediately with the cameras to play and create videos. Today I spent a lot of time following them around and ensuring their videos were turned on as they played in the outside on the tarmac that surrounds the school, the little school gardens, the jungle gym and the fenced in football court or in the school gymnasium with all the materials from the sports cupboard. — (Session 2 Reflections [Friday, 23rd February 2018])*

St Bobby's had the fewest sessions: five, lasting 1.5-hours each. However, the participants still amassed three hours, 36 minutes and 14 seconds of video recordings to create 81 video-play-texts. The liberty with which the students used the space was a surprise to me compared with the two other sites. I have no way of telling from my experience at the site whether this was the normal way they used the space or whether they took advantage of the research environment to produse their own use of space (as Jude's comment to the camera suggests in his video-play-text, discussed later in this chapter). Whatever the case, the participants moved across almost the entire school throughout the research sessions, performing and produsing the research playgrounds, rescripting a range of materials from sports equipment to musical instruments in their play, both alone and in groups.

Bramble Primary School:

Then she showed me the "Owl Nest". We walked past the playground and I took some far-off photos. I think it would work best to move between the Owl Nest and the

playground. We went into the Owl Nest and it is very cosy. Couches, relaxed space. I think this would be the best option. I have some photos. I wonder how this space will influence the playfulness. Also, the playground is the traditional space and is preferable. — (Space Check [Monday, 22nd January 2018])

The Owl Nest was a small, comfortable room filled with various objects and toys (Lego, soft toys, figurines, CD players, chalk boards) and the seating was made up of couches and large chairs with blankets, all set up around a carpet to create a "living room feel", distinct from the classrooms. However, for a number of reasons discussed in the section on "Spaces for the Unexpected in a Schooled Environment", we shifted to the Upper School for the second half of the project, where we used whichever spare classroom was available each particular week.

The classrooms were set up with desks and chairs designed for sitting and writing. We moved the tables to create one large table, moving around chairs, tables and the items on the desk and schoolbags to create our own environment within this classroom environment. I was very aware of the personal objects (pens, erasers and backpacks) that we moved around in setting up our own space – this isn't any of the kids' [participants] classroom. At the end of the session, we made sure to re-position all these objects as they were. I do not know if this feeling of being in another's space was my unfamiliarity with being in a classroom, or whether it was felt by the other members of the group. We also used the outdoor play areas for video-making and play that included a jungle-gym, and the upper and junior area was divided by steps which they used in their play. — (Session 4 Reflections [Wednesday, 21st February 2018])

Bramble Primary was my first research site and the encounter consisted of seven sessions which each lasted two hours – the longest amount of time of the three sites. As a result, the Bramble participants produced the most video footage, 4 hours, 27 minutes and 22 seconds worth of video recordings to create a total of 180 video-play-texts (many only a few seconds long).

Ladybird Afterschool Centre:

The space is very different from the school spaces as it is a place designed to relax and play. The outside space has a small number of trees, some grassy spaces and a big tarmac area for basketball. There are also two big shipping containers that the children liked to hide in and create dens next to. We spent some of our time outside, but most of

our time was in the "Quiet Room" (though we were not quiet). This room is one of the two rooms set up for children's play in the centre. The "Quiet Room" is the smaller of the two, with a TV, VCR, board games, puzzles and other "quiet" activities. The couch seems to be the central point of the room, even though it is off in the corner. It makes it very familiar and homey and the kids love to jump on it and pull it about and wrestle. The staff member stayed and there was a distinct sense of authority in the room that is very different from [Bramble Primary]. The sense of when to speak, when to listen and how to play is very dictated by the presence of a familiar figure of authority. When they were playing in the bathroom, "out of bounds", she just had to make a small gesture and they all said they had to get out. One asked why and they said she had told them. Once the kids were playing, the staff reigned in the more boisterous forms of play, but otherwise let the children play as they wanted. — (Session 1 Reflections [Wednesday, 21st February 2018])

LAC had the most sessions: eight, which each lasted for 1.5 hours, the same as St Bobby's. However, unlike the other two spaces, where the sessions occurred on average once a week, the first six sessions at LAC occurred over three days, with two sessions per day, and the final two sessions were held after school on Monday afternoons over two weeks. Over this time, the participants amassed three hours, 45 minutes and 13 seconds worth of video recordings to create 178 video-play-texts. This group in particular enjoyed creating time-lapse videos, which are videos taken over a long period that are automatically sped up by the tablet, resulting in 10 minutes of filming to create a 10-second-long video. This space was in many ways an extension of the traditional playground – an environment of play nestled within an educational context, with staff supervising play, organising activities, and providing healthy meals and homework help. All the participants spoke of ties and connections to the centre, their long attendance and the friendships among families. Further giving the environment a liminal status between school and home was the homelike furniture (discussed in more detail in Chapter Six). The community ties and long relationships with the centre created a familiar, safe, playful-yet-schooled environment.

II. The Geographies of Play

The "geographies" in this section's title draws on human geography as a way to conceptualise the plurality of play spaces within the research playgrounds. The environments of play were always in motion, transforming over the course of the session in terms of the level of noise, smells and sounds. As they changed, the spaces functioned to

shape aspects of the play in many ways, such as the available space, ability to hear each other, and to run, climb, etc. The spaces determined and affected what sort of play could occur, how bodies could move and how cameras could capture various elements of the play. Over the course of the research encounter at all three sites, the children utilised both traditional (playgrounds) and non-traditional (classrooms, "Quiet Rooms") play spaces, and these environments influenced, scripted and became part of their play and part of their productions. As Beresin (1999) remarks, the space "shapes the game – and it is indeed inseparable from it" (p.75). In becoming playgrounds, the spaces became performative alongside and in conjunction with the performances by the children. I found that "[t]he space of [play was] produced through the citation in performance of particular subject positions" (Gregson and Rose, 2000, p.447), meaning the research playgrounds became ludic, playful spaces, creating atmospheres that moved and changed as the players, spaces and objects collided and worked together with atmospheres, "perpetually forming and deforming, appearing and disappearing, as bodies enter into relation with one another" (Anderson, 2009, p.79).

School environments (such as classrooms) script children's actions and bodies (Wohlwend, 2011b). They know to sit in chairs, listen to the teacher and follow instructions. Introducing play, materials (tablets and cameras) and people (creating different dynamics of authority) to these environments ruptured routines, expectations and behaviours, creating playgrounds of possibilities. All three spaces were already environments of trust – for the students and for the teachers. The schools and LAC placed trust in me as a researcher and in the children as participants. They allowed filming to take place, for children to run wild with various materials (sports equipment, musical instruments, toys and cameras) during school hours, and they allowed children access to spaces generally understood as "out-of-bounds" (often remarked upon with glee in the children's video-play-texts). There was in many ways a suspension of rules for the purpose of this research project – and I am very grateful for it. On account of this trust, the research playgrounds created emergent space for "the unexpected" (Ptolomey and Nelson, 2020, p.2). This liberty allowed for a playful approach to rules and boundaries which subsequently meant children brought their everyday texts into these "schooled environments" (a term I use to include both the two schools and LAC).

While LAC is not a school, the children are picked up from their schools in groups and accompanied to the centre by the staff. They remain in their uniforms for the duration of their stay and the staff are authority figures (albeit fun ones who play games). Aspects of

school routine and codes of dress indicate the schooled nature of the spaces (Zanden and Wohlwend, 2011). The schooled environment is part of all the children's everyday lives and forms a part of their identity. One such example of this came from LAC when Michael[6] (6) questioned Sam's (9) constant disparaging remarks with:

> Michael: "Sam, why do you always say I know nothing?".
> Sam: "Michael, you're a P2" [Primary Two].
> (LAC S3SC1 [24:30]).

Sam uses the institutional recognition of the age-stage continuum as a marker of knowledge. School hierarchy is built into the environment, language and social situations, even when they're not at school. In this way, LAC functioned as a schooled space in much the same way as the schools themselves. Age and grade level were important factors for the children across all three sites, determining structures of power, assumed knowledge and access to texts (such as YouTube). Play is bound by certain geographies such as time, location, age and/or participants. In the following example, we see how school environments as local spaces with specific lore are challenged and how that challenge is met by drawing on aspects of school lore that are often taken for granted, such as "age and stage" progression. In the examples above and below, childhood and children's experiences are determined by the young people through performances and productions of the lore of the schooled environment, drawing on age-based hierarchies and local versions of games.

In the first session at St Bobby's, Emily, Robert and Connor were watching a YouTube video of the game *This Is Buggy*. This is a hand game, where the performer draws (or imagines) a small black dot/squiggle/circle/etc., on their palm. They name this dot "Buggy" (or a regional variant) and proceed to pretend the dot is doing tricks: flying, jumping, etc. Then the performer requests that the audience clap for Buggy and the performer also claps, killing Buggy. Sometimes on the opposite palm they have drawn something to depict a squished Buggy, which they then reveal. All three students were familiar with the game, as were almost all the participants across the three sites. Emily and Robert explained to me that they call Buggy "Teddy" in their game (also reported at the other two sites). However, Connor argued it was called "Chucky" in relation to the horror film franchise *Child's Play*, which was possibly related to the fact that the seventh film *Cult of Chucky* (Mancini, 2017) had been released a few months before this discussion.

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[6] All names are pseudonyms.

Below is a description of the conversation which began as we were all sitting at a small table watching a YouTube video on my computer. I explain that in Australia we played "Buggy", while in Scotland I have found it to be "Teddy". They're interested in the fact that I'm Australian and as a result, they appear to accept a new name for the game.

> Emily: It's either Teddy or Bob (25:37).
>
> Me: It's Bob here?
>
> Robert: Bob's the stick man (holding up his palm)
>
> Emily: (holds up her palm and points to her wrist) Bob's the stick man and then Teddy's the (shrugs as if it is self-explanatory) Teddy's the Teddy man.
>
> Connor: (Interrupting Emily) Chucky, Chucky, Chucky (nodding in agreement with himself), Chucky, Chucky.
>
> Me: Chucky the character?
>
> Emily: (scornfully) No one does "Chucky".
>
> Robert: (Holds up his two hands in a "stop"/questioning gesture to Connor.)
>
> Emily: Who goes, "This is Chucky?" (holding up her palm to him). Like, a three-year-old? "This is Chucky?" (Said in a mocking tone.)
>
> Connor: No, but he did. It's like, when you pretzels(?) and you blow it and apparently, you're gonna die tonight.
>
> Emily: Shut up, [Connor] (smiling at him and he smiles back).
>
> Me: Is that a YouTube thing?
>
> Emily: Nobody does Chucky. You know who Chucky is?
>
> Me: Yeah, the horror thing? The doll?
>
> Connor nods. (St Bobby, S1SC1 [26:07]).

Emily and Robert are friends who often referred to activities they did together outside of the group, while their relationship to Connor appeared to be kept to school/class. In the first session, Connor was unsure about the project and as a result, was very cagey with his answers, asking me, "What's this really about?" (S1SC1[7:26]). This happily changed once he realised that physical play was on the cards, and he personally recruited three other members to the later sessions. While I was happy to include "Chucky" as an alternative name for the game, Emily and Robert were not. They found the idea laughable and were firm in their resolve that this was not the case. Connor did not give up his position and I simply noted the name and allowed the discussion to flow on to the next topic.

Connor may have been creatively making up a new name, re-scripting with intertextualities from the recent film, or perhaps drawing on a play reference the others did not know, but they were firm in the lore of their school and did not take up this playful script. My

alternative name was allowed and was both validated in the name of the YouTube clip I had brought in, and also the fact that I presented it as coming from a different time and space of play: Australia and my childhood. Because the name "Buggy" was introduced by an outsider adult and was evidenced online, it did not interrupt the school lore, while "Chucky" was positioned as simply wrong. Creativity in play involves a certain amount of risk with scripts that are sometimes taken up and other times rejected. Much of play is made up of rules and boundaries, but it is also a place to explore wider societal rules, boundaries and borders that might be otherwise invisible.

Emily demonstrates her absolute disbelief in the idea by asking whether "a three-year-old" says "Chucky". This type of question was often seen across the spaces, as referenced above in Sam's comment that Michael was "P2" – as evidence that he was in some way insufficient. The participants routinely drew on the concept that knowledge and sophistication are affiliated with age in a hierarchical manner (the older you are, the better you are). This idea is built into the structure of schools that determine abilities based on age (Masschelein and Simons, 2015). The role of environments here is clear, but it is also the way that these structures are internalised and then re-produced in play between people that further entrenches such ideas into conceptions of childhood. Emily is performing disbelief, and to do so she turns to hierarchies of age to exemplify ignorance. This might not seem too remarkable, but when we think of how in the past such examples would have included women or people of other races, we see the important role age plays in the school environment in determining power and performances of play. Age is a factor of pre-determined importance in schools, but it may not reflect the needs or abilities of children. The "age and stage" rhetoric of childhood inherited from Progressive educational beliefs of the late 1800s that connect education to evolution have, according to Kieran Egan (2004), meant that there is a fundamental design flaw in schooling due to these problematic inherited concepts that were "wrong from the beginning" (p.9). The schooled environment works to further school the materials and bodies in these spaces that do not always account for different cultures and classes (Taylor, 2003). Particular literacies and ways of knowing are "privileged" (Wohlwend, 2011, p.9) in the school space and owing to the internalisation and acceptance of these schooled structures by the children, Connor's intertextual, playful reference and Michael's age leave both at a disadvantage in these play situations.

The playground is filled with these forms of lore that determine the geographies of play, such as the geographical locality of play, evidenced in the regional variation of "Bobby"

and "Buggy" described above. However, there are further connotations and rules around play that are dictated by the community where certain play is deemed undesirable and yet, perhaps as a result, made ever the more enticing. Games and songs with language or themes deemed "inappropriate" (a topic further discussed below) are still a part of play, and play anthologists of the past performed their part in creating environments that either actively encouraged or discouraged such play. In all their books on play, the Opies appeared to delight in reports of pranks and naughty play. At St Bobby's, the conversation often alerted me to the existence of boundary lines around play that were determined by their particular environment. In one of the videos that I included in the school compilation, Emily and Lauren were playing with musical instruments and happily chanted "Celtic" in reference to the football club. When they were watching it, the girls were a little worried, saying they weren't allowed to chant "Celtic", but when I offered to edit it out, they determined together that it was such a quick moment in the video that maybe no one would notice. In the same space, the question of playing Ouija arose during the group conversation. St Bobby's is a Catholic school, and until the group discussed not being allowed to play Ouija, I did not realise there was any problem with the children playing it. At Bramble (a non-denominational school) the children played a game that was trending on YouTube at the time called the "Charlie Charlie Challenge", which in many ways plays out like Ouija (pencils are set to spin and land on words with only chance – or spirit – to guide them). Not being local or religious myself, I did not realise that the playing of such a game would be considered against any rules, but I have since been informed of the taboo status of such play in many institutions. These geographies of play are linked to community, society, schooled spaces and beliefs, and these elements are interlaced throughout the children's own produsing and re-scripting processes of play. In a final example of the geographies of play, I will examine a playful aspect of being a researcher-outsider and how the children attempted to re-script the "game" of choosing pseudonyms.

As the research generation took place in Scottish playgrounds and an afterschool centre, at times language and play references were lost on me, an Australian. When I did catch them, I did not know whether these were wider general references or specific to the school, age or friendship group, or whether they were established terms or just created. This issue was easily solved by asking the students for more information, but one particular reference required outside investigation. This occurred when I asked the students of St Bobby's to give their school a pseudonym. After initially offering another Glasgow school's name as their first choice, they decided on St Bobby's, followed by giggles. I wrote it down and later went to find out why it might be funny. Not sure how to spell it with the Scottish

accent I asked a number of Scots. Some – primarily those from the East coast – smirked with immediate familiarity at both my mispronunciation and the children's cheek in requesting "Boaby". According to *The Urban Dictionary,* this is a slang word for male genitalia, "[o]ften used as a nickname with reference to someone's idiotic actions. One who acts unwisely on a given occasion and is given this appellation on judgement of their conduct" (Craig, 2003, para. 2). The geographical location of the phrase connects it to other such language and slang often found in play, such as the "Truce terms" mapped out across the United Kingdom by the Opies (1959, p.169); terms for the games *tig* or *tag*; and the name for the person who chases referred to, among other names, as "'on it', 'on', 'it' or 'he'" (Kelsey, 2019, p.5).

Playground games and lore are tied to spaces geographically and temporally, and this slang term was no different. It was nonsense to me, but it was also the naughty, bawdy playful creativity that I was looking for in my research sites and it was presented in a wonderfully resistive way. Acting the part of the researcher invested in giving my participants a say in my research, I had offered what could be regarded as a tokenistic moment, the chance to give themselves a name in a text they would likely not read. The children, not necessarily aware of this background, but knowing that I required something of them that allowed a bit of creative thinking, offered a word that carried with it subversive power. In this moment, my self-positioning as a researcher giving participants' voice was ruptured through the "mimicry and mockery" that is at the very heart and "substance of child play and children's folklore" (Sutton-Smith, 1999, p.7). I chose to view this moment through Sutton-Smith's "spectacles of a rhetoric of fancy" (1999, p.7) and so I take the children up in this fun, resistive play and have used the name, albeit with a different spelling. My positionality as a researcher was called into question through this nonsensical play; the children through their language and lore were able to playfully subvert and gently mock the power that I brought into the space.

In examining how children are produ*s*ing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age, there are clear connections to past forms of play, including parody, taboo and also the traditional bringing together of everyday culture in performances of rescripting and remixing. The schooled environment plays a role in officially limiting certain language and references deemed to be inappropriate, many of which are complexly layered into the histories, geographies and politics of the space (in Scotland these include references to "Celtic", playing Ouija and local ([sexual] slang). However, knowledge of the very inappropriateness of these play topics also makes them enticing play materials, and

performances of such mischievous play are evidenced across the three sites. While there are numerous performances of mischievous play by the children, there are also many examples of play that depends on the institution of the school to inform positions of power (such as the "age and stage" rhetoric) and closed community elements that allow for boundaries to be determined around local lore (such as those that allow for "Buggy" and "Teddy", but not "Chucky"). The children's play choices – scripted, informed and implicated in the schooled environments of their play, occurring repeatedly across the research sites – demonstrate their complex performances of literacies of space, geographies, community and context that they bring to their play. These performances demonstrate children's ability to draw on their environment to determine but also disrupt narratives of how to perform the "schooled child", evidencing their intricate and layered understandings of their position and power within their everyday environments.

III. Research Environment of Negotiation

This section looks at negotiation and the interweaving of materials, environments and people, with a particular focus on how space plays a definitive part in creating and structuring rules. The negotiations with environment and materials generally occurred between the participants as they worked out how to play a game. Sometimes this was through conversation, but more often the game began and much of the verbal negotiation was interspersed with non-verbal cues such as nods, laughter, sighs, gaze and gesture.

In what follows, I examine two distinct examples of negotiation in the research space. The first was performed in conversation with me as the adult in control of the research project holding a clear, definable position of power in the research space. The second moment is more complex in the ways that negotiation was performed between the players of an indoor football match as they playfully re-imagined an exchange and negotiated positions of power through language. These two moments exemplify how the children worked together and with me to create an environment within the schooled space where negotiation was possible. Examining what negotiation and power look like in a playful research encounter highlights how children's performances and productions of their play function to create spaces of possibility, lines of flight and creative openings for something outside the norm. Through engaging with Mayall's (1994) argument that children's freedom to negotiate is determined by adults' understandings of children, their bodies and experiences of childhood, I examine how the research space potentially becomes an environment that

allows more flexibility than the schooled space, despite the myriad of ways these two environments intersect.

At St Bobby's Primary, Emily (12) and Lauren (13) created four video-play-texts performing a rehearsed dance (StBobby, S4, V19-22). The dance had clear signs of choreography with "a signal…given to start and finish the song" (Willett, 2011, p.347). The dance was to the song *Finesse* by Bruno Mars, featuring Cardi B (2018). Lauren initially asked if she could use her phone "to stream music" (31:00) with the suggestion that she would usually need permission from "someone" (not me) to use it (St Bobby, S4, LH5). Jude (10) then immediately joined in the discussion to say he was going to bring his phone, to which I responded that they were "not allowed to use their phones during this, I'm sorry to say" (31:35). This request to use their own devices was echoed by Maidie at LAC and Tom at Bramble. Wohlwend (2010) states that "we need to move away from a model in which schools provide educational hardware and move instead toward one that invites technologies into schools" (p.150), arguing for a model that takes into account the varying access to technology and internet at students' homes and yet does not require children to "check their technoliteracies at the classroom door" (Wohlwend, 2010, p.145). While this discussion links to the agencies and access available to children with their own devices, it is also problematic in terms of digitally excluded children and the various economic ramifications on families of such decisions. However, in my study, in order to adhere to ethics review guidelines, I had to be certain that none of the videos would end up on YouTube. As a result, I had to control the texts, limiting how they were shared and giving the schools and centres rights over the texts as long as the children agreed. The children often asked if the videos would be uploaded and were generally disappointed to learn that owing to the videos being made at school, uploading them would contravene the Local Authority's policy.

Back at St Bobby's, Lauren and Emily were trying to find a song they could dance to by checking the very limited selection on my computer. I had brought in a small selection made up of songs suggested by the students which I had listened to ensuring they passed the requirements outlined in the methodologies. Lauren and Emily suggest they "can try *Up All Night* on it" (31:40), attempting to flexibly work around the censorship and lack of resources. *Up All Night* (2003) is a song by the folk-band The Waifs and is a mellow, harmonious track lacking the fast-paced beat required for their dance. Their idea of "trying" another song "on it" shows their familiarity with working around similar situations. Their dance required a text that we all knew was readily available on both my

phone in my hand and their phones in their bags, but out of reach due to the school environment. My liminal position in this space allowed for a creative work-around, where I used my adult status to access the texts while suggesting we all agree to rescript the rules of language together, in order to obey the rules of the space while still permitting access:

> Me: Are you trying to do a dance thing without any music? (31:40)
>
> Emily: Yeah, because we forgot to ask for the song.
>
> Me: What song is it? Is there any swearing in it?
>
> Lauren (quietly): Arse.
>
> Emily (whispers): Shut up!
>
> Me: (spells out) A-S-S? Like a donkey?
>
> Emily (excitedly): Yeah! (Lauren giggles)
>
> Me: Thought so.
>
> Emily (with amusement): Like a donkey (StBobby, S5LH5 [32:46]).

Emily and Lauren were excited by this cheeky, surprise access. They were amused at the play with language and were also happy to get access to the text they needed for the dance. There was a moment when Emily was not sure what role I would play and attempted to quiet Lauren's admission of swearing with "shut up!" (41:30). Jude, who was sitting with me quietly watching the scenario unfold, is the focus of the camera's gaze. The discussion occurs off camera and when I ask about swearing, he looks towards the girls. When they admit to the swearing and say, "shut up", his eyes briefly light up, but otherwise he takes in the entire scene without any visible reaction.

People and environment cast imaginary borders around language. Swearing in school is officially prohibited, and while there may be teachers who are more lenient, in general the children are careful around adults to mask inappropriate language, and that works both ways since adults, who may normally swear, refrain from swearing around children or in their workplace or other such spaces (e.g., church). The children throughout the project did not seem to swear, or I did not notice it. However, in the last session at St Bobby's, we went through the video-play-texts to decide which would be passed onto the school. They immediately recognised one with illicit content:

> Connor: "That's the one with the swear words in it"
>
> Stephanie: "Ah-ha"
>
> Robert: "Yep". (St Bobby, S5SC1 [49:27])

They requested this video-play-text not be passed onto the school, effectively censoring the texts so that they are "appropriate" for adult audiences. There was no evidence in these moments that the children were concerned with the swear words in the video-play-text due

to the words being problematic in themselves (as transgressive, abusive or misogynistic). The word, though barely audible to me as it was caught in the wind, sounded like "shit", and the children did not seem to be worried by the content or with my having a video of it; their primary concern was with "the school" seeing it. Their decision to delete the video-play-text is an act of knowledgeable, experienced children playing a part in reproducing the innocent image of children for adults. Whether this act of censorship was performed in order to not get in trouble, be embarrassed or some other motive, I do not know. The participants here demonstrated knowledge of their audience and their imagined responses. They knew a number of people who may see the video-play-text, had a collective imagination of who else might see it, and therefore worked together to create an image of themselves at play that, while it may disappoint the Opies and other folklorists and linguists, would most likely please the school administrators, teachers, parents and other potential adult audiences. Here they were crafting an image of themselves on film, practising self-curation (Potter, 2012), and in so doing were agentively producing an image of childhood that suited their needs.

A key element of negotiation surrounded understandings of *appropriateness*. What makes certain texts more or less appropriate? What makes actions and language permissible or naughty? Environments and how they create what "inappropriate" means and how that then works are integral in the research process. The schooled space is marked by many rules and boundaries, with rules that range in their flexibility. People and environment give language power. While for many of these children, swearing at home might be the norm, their parents may be shocked at their child swearing in class. This demonstrates how the children's "everyday texts" are not able to be their "everywhere texts", as space and place determine access and appropriateness to the young people. Children's individual experiences and agencies regarding access to "inappropriate" texts at home are subject to the discretion of parents and guardians, not the school, leading to "out of school" knowledge and literacies sometimes being deemed unnecessary and inappropriate within the school. The schooled space is one of "discursively-constructed binaries of appropriate/inappropriate or structure/agency" (Wohlwend, 2011b, pp.5-6). However, within the schooled space, particularly in moments of play, "inappropriate" texts are recalled and imagined in, performed and rescripted in play. These are acts of transgression, slippages and unexpected moments that create "lines of flight" and potentially, in play, lines of fancy. The playground is a liminal space between the home and school. Peer to peer language holds its own power and these slippages and moments in between bring to light another complex social world with rules and lore of its own. The Opies (1959) argue

that "the modern schoolchild, when out of sight and on his own, appears to be rich in language" (p.9). I would argue that by the very nature of the claim "out of sight and on his own", we (adults, researchers) have no way of knowing the truth, but these small language slips strongly suggest a possibility that the Opies are correct.

The second example comes from LAC and is a less direct example of negotiation. However, it involves creative use of language and takes advantage of the research environment as a safe space to reimagine power structures. In the research playgrounds generally, there was often a need to adapt a game around a space – such as football in the Quiet Room – where the rules of the game had to function adaptively around and with the environment and materials at hand. In the indoor football games at LAC, there were no goal posts, so the couch became the goal, requiring discussion around rules regarding height of goals and whether "offside" or penalties counted, and the children made the rule that the goalie was also the videographer. Further, hard balls were not allowed, therefore toys, predominantly a large soft toy in the form of a gorilla nicknamed "Harambe", took the place of the ball. This negotiation around objects and materials allowed the children to playfully interweave complex knowledge of LAC, football, games, gorillas and internet viral sensations into their video-play-texts. Harambe is a deceased gorilla who became an internet meme in May 2016 (Ohlheiser, 2016). While Quinn and Sam (both nine years old) attributed the name to its source and appeared to find it funny, Michael (6) and Messi (7) appeared unfamiliar with the meme origins of the name. This was not surprising since Harambe was a trend two years before the research encounter, when Michael would have only been four years old and Messi five years old. Despite their initial unfamiliarity with the name and perhaps continued unfamiliarity with the context, over the course of their play all four boys called the toy "Harambe". The boys at LAC played indoor football during the first session and then played it again a number of times over the encounter. Each time they would keep track of the goals (with some disagreement) and would introduce the videos with the appropriate title, e.g., "Football Part I/II/III/IV".

During "Football Part IV", Sam was once again goalie, which meant that he had control of the camera and was directing the play. Messi was absent for this game and while Sam attempted to direct the play, Quinn and Michael were far more interested in their wrestling-football-play than a competitive game. Sam's interest waxed and waned and his monologue meandered from the game to other aspects of the room in a stream-of-consciousness narration of his thoughts. Standing in front of the sofa-cum-goal, Sam states, "Girls go to college to get more knowledge, boys go to Jupiter to get more stupider.

Everyone has the right to say that" (Session 4, SC2 25:30). He announces to the room that the girls are always chanting this at school. Sam's sudden announcement to the room functioned as a prompt for Quinn who, while still wrestling and playing, switched his main attention to the conversation. Sam and Quinn voice frustration at the girls' chants and then, working together, the boys began to parody the chants, changing and reworking the words to better suit their own needs. They substitute "girls" with "boys", excited by the satirical word play, extending the rhyme further with, "Boys go to college to get more knowledge, girls go to university to get more 'dursity'!". Sam is very pleased with this word, explaining, "Dursity. It's a word I just made up!" (Sam). Sam then apologises to me, the university representative (although not a "girl" representative), showing that he does not see me as a member of the imagined girls' group to which he is responding. The boys' playful parody seems to answer an imaginary challenge that may have been quite real at another time. The group of girls who originated the song play are imagined into the LAC boy's space of play, and now the power has shifted the imagined girls are at the mercy of the boys' creative, parodic response songs. Through this play, the girls have moved from being the powerful holders of the chants to being at the receiving end of this parody and power play. The giggles and enjoyment of the mischief are clear to see in the video. Sam and Quinn are rescripting their roles in relation to these imagined girls, while Michael, who is three years younger, does not participate in the chanting or rescripting. He continues to play the physical game of indoor football and enjoys the enjoyment that the others are sharing, but possibly due to his age and apparent unfamiliarity with the girls' original chant and playground politics, he is not part of the parody-song-game-community of Sam and Quinn (LAC, Session 4, SC2 25:30; LH5 13:40).

The space they are in is safe and away from the girls, so there is a distance that allows this play. The people in the room are connected, but all are on the same team except from me, and I do not seem to count and the staff are absent. There is an imagined force that is being reckoned with in this play. Fiske (1994) describes the type of challenge that Sam and Quinn have set out to their imagined group of girls, stating that,

> The play may not in itself be resistive or subversive, but the control or empowerment that it entails produces a self-esteem in the subordinate that at least makes resistance or subversion possible (p.247).

The boys are re-scripting their roles as the subordinate in this text. Their parody and satire, their extensive playful work with language and nonsense, further produses ownership over these rhyming texts. The environment allows this play to occur, the playfulness with the

rhyme potentially heightened (or at the very least echoed) in the playfulness of the football game they are playing. The research playground has given them a closed, safe space, creating the opportunity to play and create response rhymes to their gendered challenge. Within this closed circuit of play, they are able to be risky and playful. This example is one of complex negotiation with space, texts (from the room, school, internet, etc.), materials and environment. The participants are produ*s*ing multiple texts of football, language and satire, video-play-texts, friendship and gender. They are determining the communities around them through produ*s*ing the environment in this interplay of material, space and people, to negotiate themselves to a position of power through play.

Negotiations in these two examples are complex power plays that involve various literacies of space, power, people, materials and environment. The research space is uniquely placed within the schooled spaces of the research sites to allow for a certain amount of flexibility of rules and structures. This flexibility in turn invites the participants to agentively produ*s*e and perform their own experiences of childhood, creating texts of childhood in their play that are evidenced through their video-play-text productions. In creating a safe, playful environment such as the research playgrounds, we see how these children's play choices all demonstrate an active ability to produ*s*e a complex set of literacy practices from their everyday lives and integrate it into action with each other to create their own experiences of childhood.

IV. Space for the Unexpected in a Schooled Environment

Across the three research playgrounds, the young people, teachers, school and afterschool administration were open to possibilities that could arise in a research encounter; as a result, these three spaces were emergent and becoming. These becoming spaces allowed for an "atmospheric" shift (Anderson, 2009) for the participants, as their everyday schooled spaces became research playgrounds. My study could be considered what Deleuze and Guttari would call a "rupture" in everyday schooling and afterschool care through the introduction of materials (cameras and tablets), people (me) and environment (creating the "research playgrounds") to create "a departure from typical school activity" (Leander and Rowe, 2006, p. 443). However, in what follows, I examine first how these ruptures and departures can create "lines of flight" that are not always positive and require some control over the research space by the researcher. The second example, on the other hand, is one of many and is drawn from the data to demonstrate a positive experience of this rupture to the everyday through a close examination of Jude's video-play-text. Third, I

look at how Jude's video-play-text is translated back into the language and philosophy of the schooled space through the presence of a teacher.

At the research encounter at Bramble Primary, I used elements of the schooled environment to my advantage to break up a cycle of play that was occurring at each session and was increasingly creating disputes and friction within the group. In the first session, the students were very excited to create what they called "3 a.m. videos". This game involved everyone gathering in the "Owl Nest", assigning distinct roles to each other and then beginning the performance. They first set the scene, switching off the lights and making the room as dark as possible (often apologising for a small amount of light in the video-play-texts), then Alasdair and Lewis would set up the camera while everyone else hid. The game consisted of a video introduction, which was some variation on the phrase: "Hi Guys, welcome back. We're doing a don't [do X] at 3 a.m. challenge". "Do X" was substituted with an activity they would then perform such as "don't play with Lego", "don't do a silly dance", "don't play with figurines", etc.; the options seemed to draw on whatever materials or space was available. Alasdair and Lewis would begin to "do X", then Rowan would flick the lights, Olivia would make creepy noises and Tom would jump out of his hiding place in character as either a zombie, ghost or another sort of ghoul. Alasdair and Lewis would then be attacked by the other three ghoulish actors until the ghouls either admitted it was a prank or the wrestling came to an exciting climax. The video-play-texts always ended with a request for viewers to "like and subscribe" and often to "see you next time". The children would then watch the video-play-text with glee, laughing and critiquing various elements, and then set everything up to play it again. Such repetitive play has been described by play scholars as "chapter play" (Vasudevan, 2019) and "episodic play" (Marsh, 2017, p.25).

The 3 a.m. game links back to various forms of "traditional" play reported in game anthologies, including parody, prank, theatrical play, wrestling and games with things. These games brought together a rich combination of texts, performances, and citations of play from elsewhere in the children's repertoire. Unbeknownst to me at the time of play, 3 a.m. videos are a genre of YouTube videos whose format clearly scripted the play outlined above. While Alasdair, Lewis and Tom appeared to be familiar with the YouTube 3 a.m. videos, Olivia and Rowan did not. However, the rules of the game appeared clear to Olivia and Rowan and their own respective roles were given some creative licence to rescript and include elements they wanted, such as drawing on the white board and pretending to be dolls. These video-play-texts are examples of creative, agentive moments of play,

interlaced with complicated textual citations, improvisation, traditional play and the use of surrounding materials. The "repeated sameness" (Pennycook, 2007, p.579) of the play was part of the fun for the participants, and the ability to watch back, critique, relive and then reenact with small tweaks here and there appeared to be just as much a part of the game as the videoed performances.

The Owl Nest came to represent this play for participants, and over the next two sessions the group, particularly Alasdair and Lewis, wanted to replay this game. The space began to function as a palimpsest for this particular play activity, the play lines of earlier performances scripted the suggestion, where the Lego, blankets and whiteboard all became part of the cycle of games (Marsh et al., 2019). However, the loop of games was not always fun, requiring a lot of rules to create a successful performance, and as various players "broke" these rules, there was fallout within the group. The repeating of the play appeared to worsen the group dynamic and disagreements and fights broke out. I found it very difficult to balance the role of observer, researcher of play and figure of authority there to protect the children and ensure they felt included and valued. Therefore, citing a number of other issues with the space (including lack of heating and occasional flooding) I requested to the Depute Head that we move to the upper school building.

The upper school building offered a warmer space with a classroom setup, as described above. While this setup went against my initial design, I intended the new space to affect the participants to re-set their scripts of performance in space, break up the dynamic and reel in some of the aggressive behaviour. We continued to use the outside playground to make videos and run around freely, but the time inside took on a more "schooled" atmosphere. This was seen in the way the children moved their bodies around the space, how they used the furniture, and the lack of control over elements such as light (the upper school has large windows and the size of the room meant darkness was impossible). The group sat in the chairs properly, did not use the floor space the way they had in the Owl Nest and were also less likely to stand up and wander around the room playing with things as this classroom belonged to other students and teachers, so the students knew that the things in it were not for general play. I found that in "conceiving of space as performed and performative" I could "analyse the processes of spatial performance and the 'relationality' of performed spaces" (Leander and Rowe, 2006, p.438). I was therefore able to re-set the tone of the research encounter through modifying the research playground to take on more elements of the "schooled space".

Allowing the children to lead the play performed and produced across the research playgrounds often led to unexpected literacies being invited into the research space. The research design looked for and engaged with what I am calling "out of place" texts, drawing on the concept of located or situated texts, as these were moments of rupture that challenged and unsettled routine schooled literacy practices and knowledge assumptions about children, childhood and their texts. However, I needed to disrupt the children's chosen repetitive play in order to bring the group back to harmony. While the video-play-texts they created in these moments demonstrate a complex layering of literacies from a range of spaces and places in their lives, the game itself was causing hurt to the players. Therefore, by paying attention to the schooled environment and allowing it to play its important role in providing a safe, readable atmosphere to the children, I invited them to draw on their literacies as students – how to perform and behave in this social space with their peers. In this example, the schooled space was used as a tool to help guide the students' bodies and actions back to collective harmony, while in the next example, the school atmosphere was at odds with the creative enjoyment evidenced in a video-play-text created in the research playground.

At the St Bobby's film festival, we invited Mr Berry, the Vice-Depute Head, as an official school representative to watch the participants' edited videos. In the following section, I first offer a close reading of Jude's video-play-text and then examine the text's reception at the film festival with the teacher present.

"Welcome to my vlog, my name is Judith Cassboy," a small, bright face announces proudly, nodding along as he clearly articulates the name. His face is close to the camera and we see blue sky dotted with clouds and the crooked bare branches of a large tree in the background. The camera is juggled between his hands in selfie mode, swung around as his attention shifts between the screen and the playground. He reminisces about old play and play spaces, taking the viewer on a tour of the playground, but without really shifting the video from his face, except for an occasional dizzying whip around. Despite the constant motion, the image is quite striking. The closeness gives it a feel of intimacy. The discussion circles around various moments of nostalgia, play and reflection. More than anything, the pleasure is palpable as he smiles and laughs and almost falls out of the screen, giggling and tumbling, dropping the camera, practicing parkour, climbing a jungle-gym and running around. He is gleeful in the repeated delivery of his "name", descriptions of place and experience and sharing his world with the audience.

- St Bobby's Primary School, S3:V3

Jude is an energetic young boy who appears delighted to be showing the viewer his school and the areas of his past and present play. The vignette above is a small sketch of a five-and-a-half minute video consisting of almost non-stop excited chatter by 10-year-old Jude. Jude is playing at being "Judith Cassboy" a name he chose as "funny" (S5:LH3), as he participates in the genre of YouTube vlogging. Jude foregrounds his historical and current play in the playground and his position in relation to others in the study. As he wanders around, Jude surveys the environment and narrates the space, describing everything from the fox "poops" that litter the ground to recollections of past play, the state of the muddy ground, the plants, the grass and his own feelings and plans in an almost logorrheic manner. While the video is not particularly long, the "stream of consciousness" type narration allows Jude to cover a range of topics in a short amount of time, including his age, interests, relationship with the group, and his play. When asked to make a video, Jude was immediately determined to make a vlog. Jude was excited and ready to take hold of the device and begin creating. He did not visually map out his plan or discuss with me or the other participants what or how he would make his video, but he took the device in hand, asked me how to put it to the correct settings and went off on his merry way to "vlog". From the moment Jude learnt about the project, all he wanted to do was watch YouTube and then make a vlog. Jude could not wait to tell his classmates that he was in school watching YouTube and making videos. He revelled in using these out-of-school texts and literacies, and throughout his involvement in the sessions, this excitement for all things YouTube did not diminish. Figure 5 shows three screenshots from Jude's Vlog.
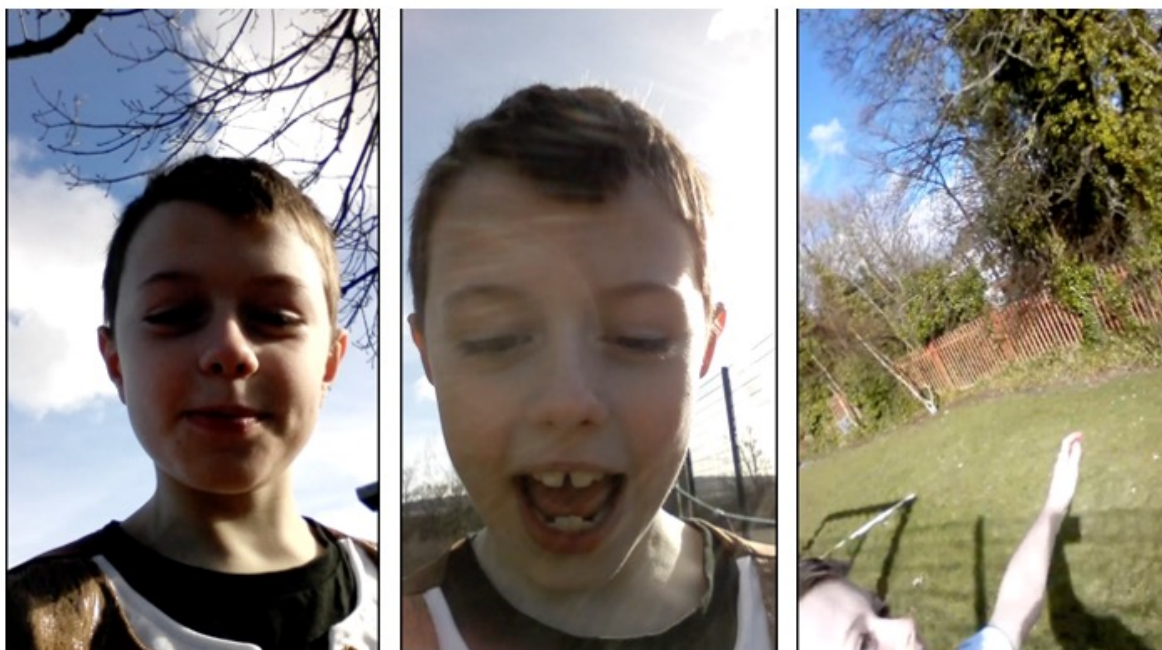
Figure 5. Three Screenshots form Jude's Vlog

Jude entered the St Bobby's group in Session 3, after the group had established

expectations for the sessions, including knowledge of the routine (discussion, video-

watching and video-making), who was involved (P6/7s), what games were played and the

feel of the space. Jude entered and ruptured this routine. He was a P5 (Primary 5) student,

while the rest of the students were in P6 and P7. Jude was 10 and his energy and

excitement distinguished him from the group, an observation he made several times in his

vlog: "I'm the youngest out of all of them" (01:05). Jude is becoming and being in the

video-play-text; his existence is relational to his past actions. In the video-play-text, Jude

comments on the fact that he is in an area of the garden that,

> "When you get to P4/5 you can't go back in this place, so I'm trying to, erm, just stay
>
> in it 'cause I'm allowed to do this if I have my camera and that is good!" (00:56).

At no point did I obtain permission for the children to enter these spaces, but as far as I was

concerned, the garden was free to use. Jude never asked permission from me, but the

assumption of access to space came with the camera as an object. With the camera, space

was different for him and, as no one stopped him or told him otherwise at any point in the

making or reviewing of the video-play-text, it seemed he was correct. He prodused access

to space that was otherwise denied him through school rules. The geography of the

schooled space changed in relation to the materials and the research playground, and Jude

presumed this access and acted agentively in seeking it. Jude's video-play-text is five

minutes and 30 seconds of such moments of emergent literacies, production of space, and

agentive performances of being and becoming. However, at this point I turn to the reception of the video-play-text as this relates to the schooled environment and how these texts and experiences are translated into the language of the school.

In the final session, we held the small film festival, where we invited Mr Berry to come and watch the videos with the participants in the library/music room. After a short introduction to the project, and having seen a short (15-second) clip of one of the students eating and spitting out marshmallows from the "Chubby bunny challenge", the children began to report their own experiences of eating too many marshmallows. He smiled, watched and allowed the children to interject quick jokes. We launched into the film festival and I explained we had made videos that would not go on YouTube, but were YouTube style. Having this information, Mr Berry asked the students, "So what kind of skills were you learning then, guys?" (S5LH3 [04:30]). The students were able to list a number of skills they thought the study encouraged: "social", "teamwork", "trust" (which came with the response, "That's a big one"). Of course, they were completely correct – all these skills are part of play, life and living in the social world – but I was happily amused when someone also answered, "Horror!" (S5LH3 [4:32]). The lack of technical suggestions (i.e., filmmaking, setting up a shot, etc.) hints at the students' knowledge of the type of answers that were expected by Mr Berry. St Bobby's was recently granted a prestigious award relating to the nurturing environment it provides (October 2019). The award is for a school environment that focuses "on emotional needs and development as well as academic learning in a whole-school environment" (Nurtureuk, 2019). This focus on emotional needs and development "in a whole-school environment" was demonstrated to me through the learned language the children were able to supply in response to Mr Berry's questions. Mr Berry asked the students to verbalise the meaning of their activities of play with me through questions like, "Did you enjoy yourselves?" (S5SC3 [00:01]) and "How did you feel when doing this?" (S5LH3 [12:20]).

The reason I underlined Jude's video-play-text as a key example from this space is due to Jude's ability to verbalise his experience. Throughout his video-play-text, Jude stated his enjoyment in words: "[this] is good" (00:56); "this is so fun right now" (04:35); "this is my first ever vlog…I love doing vlogs!" (05:27). He also acted out his enjoyment audibly by whooping, laughing, sighing, whistling and humming to himself, and physically as he ran, climbed, jumped, etc. Recognising the "more than words" paradigm of this study, one is able to read in Jude's expressions, gaze and movements his joy in the moment as he produses his first video-play-text. Jude's enjoyment in creating his video-play-text was

possible in a research environment that was created in a schooled space with a nurturing environment – Jude felt happy, safe and free in this activity by virtue of *both* these factors: the school and the research playground. However, when Mr Berry turned to Jude while watching and asked, "How did you feel when you were doing this?", Jude turned to him with a slight shrug and without a smile and reported, "Fine" – a comment then repeated by Mr Berry (S5LH3 [12:20]). Figure 6 below first shows Jude watching his video, while the second shows his response, "Fine", to Mr Berry.
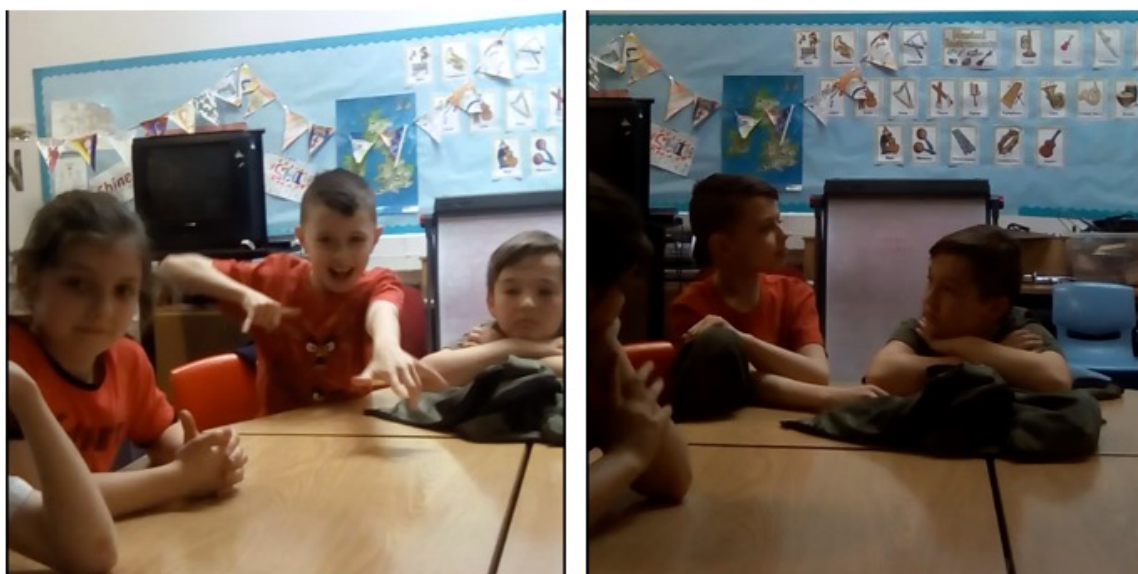
Figure 6. Jude's response to his video and reporting "fine"

This account is not intended as a critique of Mr Berry as a teacher or St Bobby's as a school that works to emphasise students' wellbeing and is focused on listening and "advocating" for students – yet there is clearly a misalignment between the joy displayed in the video and Jude's subsequent assessment.

In particular, the last question has a teacherly overtone that looks for a particular response and engagement. Mr Berry is an embodiment of the "schooled space" for the children. His body language demonstrates that he is in teaching mode, as do his use of gaze, voice, tone and gesture. The pacing of his voice and silences to encourage "active" listening and engagement are all signs of an engaged and responsive teacher. However, Wohlwend (2011b) reminds us that "[d]iscourses are always doing something, that is, these discursive constructions have social, cultural, and political uses" (p.5). The discourses of emotional wellbeing that shape much of the school's happy, sociable environment are also part of what constitute the schooled space.

In the film festival, there was little "official" attention paid by me or the teacher to play and the emergent possibilities it could afford. The children could parrot the school's language describing skills in relation to their participation in the research project, but they also chose to add in the descriptors "fun" and "horror" and to recount stories from the encounter. They discussed the music, their actions, the "how" of the video making and the creative synergies of working together. I led the conversation around YouTube, embarrassment and other such factors, but this could easily be a space where the children could further their agency and lead it to other unexpected spaces. Wohlwend however, further argues that,

> Discourses also create slippages that are productive so that children and teachers can agentially combine or move among constructions for their own, rather than institutional, purposes (2011b, p.5).

These "slippages" between Mr Berry's targeted questions and the children's excited recounting of eating marshmallows, making videos, playing pranks and performing all sorts of play in the process of creating their video-play-texts offers new, potentially productive pedagogical directions. Ellsworth (2004) suggests that,

> To think of pedagogy in relation to knowledge in the making rather than knowledge as a thing made is to think of something that cannot be easily captured in language (p.2).

Asking Jude to articulate how he was feeling while creating his video-play-text functioned as a block, rather than a becoming. Jude's response of "fine", his deflation and his body language (meeting Mr Berry's gaze, chin high, arms closed around himself) presented a possible challenge to further questions. Mr Berry's decision to ask that question demonstrates a privileging of language over other forms of communication that were on display both in Jude's video-play-text and in Jude's initial response to watching his video-play-text: arms lifted, hands pointing, gesturing towards the computer showing the video, mouth smiling and open (Figure 6). Mr Berry is here

> privileg[ing] language over sensation, objects of experience over subjects of experience, the rational over the affective, and knowledge as a tool for prediction and control over learning as play and pleasure (Ellsworth, 2004, p.2).

The misalignment between Jude's response and his video-play-text demonstrates why play time is so necessary and ought not to be completely co-opted into learning and skills-building exercises. There are skills to be learned, but the joy of the moment also needs to be preserved. This perspective aligns more with what Edwards (2010) describes as the "post-human condition of experimentation" (p.9), an attitude to teaching that looks less

directly towards learned moments as a past concept and one that instead looks to relationships and their multi-directional, experiential potential. While these ideas may be familiar in thinking about child-centred, Progressive education (Tisdall, 2019), they are not so common when thinking about play within the educational space. Play is currently generally understood as an aid to learning and a method of engaging students in literacies rather than a radical philosophical shift in conceiving how the child's body, the environment, the materials and the people in the space can form part of a pedagogical approach that understands experiences of learning as assemblages of elements in motion, rather than a linear progression. A pedagogical approach through play would highlight the complex relationships between literacies, negotiations and contextualities with and beyond language to transform the school from within. Environments like the safe and nurturing spaces of the three research sites are perfect places for such transformative pedagogical approaches to be realised.

Conclusion

When we do this research, allowing for pedagogies of the unexpected to appear, we foreground children's agency and their emergent relations with each other, highlighting their ability to produse and re-script their own lives in ways that invite moments and relations of their active becoming and being. This chapter has focused on environment as a scriptive thing, paying particular attention to how the schooled environment shaped much of the play through macro and micro measures that resonated across the data. The research playground created a unique, but not impenetrable atmospheric shift from the children's everyday experiences of being in school, which is evidenced in their video-play-texts and discussions around the production of these texts. Rowsell and Pahl (2007) discuss the history of texts in relation to space and knowing, stating that, "texts can be seen as traces of social practice, and their materiality is important in revealing those traces" (388). In the performances and production of video-play-texts, the children were produsing and creating new texts through drawing on their knowledge and experiences of in and out-of-school literacies. The research environment created a space that invited literacies that are often deemed "out of place" within a schooled environment due to elements that are considered "inappropriate". This study explores children drawing on various literacies from home, school and online to examine how through play they perform and produce their own texts of childhood. This chapter, in its focus on environment, has been particularly concerned with what this practice of performing and produsing texts of childhood meant within a schooled space. What has become evident in the process is that the children are agentive,

creative produsers of their own culture. In safe, supportive and emergent environments, research with children can "continue to push at the boundaries of educational possibility" (Bayne, 2018:5)

Next, Chapter Six offers an elucidation of the accompanying documentary texts as it examines the second scriptive thing of the research project: materials.

Chapter Six. Material Play in the Post-Digital Age and a Documentary

The documentary functions as a "scriptive thing" for Chapter Six, in which each section will discuss sections of the short film (07:05 minutes long). Therefore, I suggest viewing the documentary before and alongside reading this chapter. Please access the text at:

Documentary link: https://vimeo.com/502564282

Password: Childlore

Chapter Six examines the second of the three "scriptive thing[s]" (environment, material and people) of the research playgrounds. This chapter explores the role of materials in the children's play, with a particular focus on everyday texts introduced to the space by me, the researcher, and brought in by the children. At all the research spaces, throughout the sessions, these everyday texts (both physical and imagined) were agentively rescripted by the children in their performances and productions of play. The inclusion of the documentary in the chapter focusing on materials serves in part to script the chapter, but also to make visible the material nature of the documentary as a text: a text that, like those played in the research playgrounds, can be watched, played, rescripted and *prodused* for the players' own purposes. The documentary is not positioned as proof in relation to the writing, but is an accompanying text that is subjective, curated and created by me based on the experiences and texts created in the research encounters. Finally, in a research paradigm that values more than words, the documentary serves to "affect" the reader with the excitement, pace and feel of the playground to create an image (albeit partial) of the experience. After all, as the Opies (1985) state, "A printed page cannot convey the exuberance of children singing these games on their own" (vii).

The "materials" of play in the research playgrounds are the playthings – the toys – that the participants take up and rescript in their play narratives. These things are material (soft toys, footballs, musical instruments, cameras and tablets) and immaterial texts (songs, language, dances and laughter). These two sets of texts offer different experiences of play, different opportunities with regard to how they can be rescripted and prodused in games, lore and mischief, however, both forms are equally valid materials of play. When describing how bodies physically respond to watching a film, Kennedy (2003) argues that "[a]ffect and sensation are *material* and part of that engagement (p.16 in Ellsworth, 2004, p.5 original emphasis). The immaterial texts of play (songs, language, etc.) are malleable

playthings that function to both determine and disrupt play in the same ways as material objects. However, there is a difference between imagining a tablet into the playground and being offered a tablet to play with, just as there is a difference between recalling a song from memory and having it streamed into the space through a phone, and this chapter considers what the effect of introducing everyday texts, such as digital tablets and streamed music, to schooled spaces does to children's performances of play. In this chapter, the materials of play comprise a diverse set of playthings including a traffic cone, a sofa, bodies and a streamed song. These texts offer and invite different performances of play that draw on different literacies and funds of knowledge, but all these diverse playthings are understood in the study to make up the toybox of material, scriptive things of the research playground.

I. Traditional Games with Digital Toys

The documentary opens with a shot of the sky, framed with tree branches gently blowing in the wind from a moment in 10-year-old Jude's video-play-text when he placed the tablet on the ground, announced, "Be right back" (St Bobby's, S3:V3;04:00), and disappeared. After 17 seconds he returned, picked up the tablet and continued to play and create his vlog. The viewer is not given insight into why Jude put the camera down, but from my observational videos and notes and the children's video-play-texts, I know he left to fetch a ball that had gone over the fence in the other participants' game. This interruption or rupture in his own play narrative appears not to bother Jude. Being aware of (and sometimes participating in) peripheral play is part of being in the playground space, part of the fabric of the playground where games and "play lines" intersect (Marsh et al., 2019).

The playground is often unquestionably considered a space of traditional play, a designed and designated space for playful interaction, where researchers since the Opies have embedded themselves to explore childhood and children's play worlds. There is sometimes a conflation between the concepts of "traditional play" and "non-digital play", and the playground is often caught in these discussions as a sanctified "schooled space" where children have limited access to their digital devices (and the school's digital devices) and are instead encouraged to "unplug" and play without any digital connectedness. This thesis, however, argues that the children's incorporation of digital toys and tools into their play is a continuation of traditional play.

The chapter looks at what happens in children's play when you bring scriptive materials of the digital (in this case, tablets and YouTube videos) to an environment where digital tools are restricted in play. The scripting of the YouTube videos served not only to invite imaginaries of YouTube into the space, but, as outlined in my methodology, these videos all focused on forms of "traditional" play based on my analysis of 125 years of anthologies of children's games and lore. Further, my analysis of the children's (digital) video-play-texts initially codified much of the children's play in relation to "traditional" categories and forms of play. Therefore, from the outset, this project merged concepts of traditional play with innovative digital texts and toys. This study argues that what Fine (1980) dubbed "Newell's Paradox" – the "problem" of play involving both inventiveness and tradition in reference to Newell (1884) – is resolved with the recognition that play is *necessarily* and *constitutively* both inventive and traditional. Children's play is a process of children's agentive rescripting and produsing of "traditional" play. The children took up the scriptive materials from the research playground, creating novel texts that integrated traditional forms of play.

The first part of the documentary contains seven clips of play that include running, "Marco Polo", tag, "Floor is Lava", dodgeball and what the players call tyre ball (Figure 5 below).
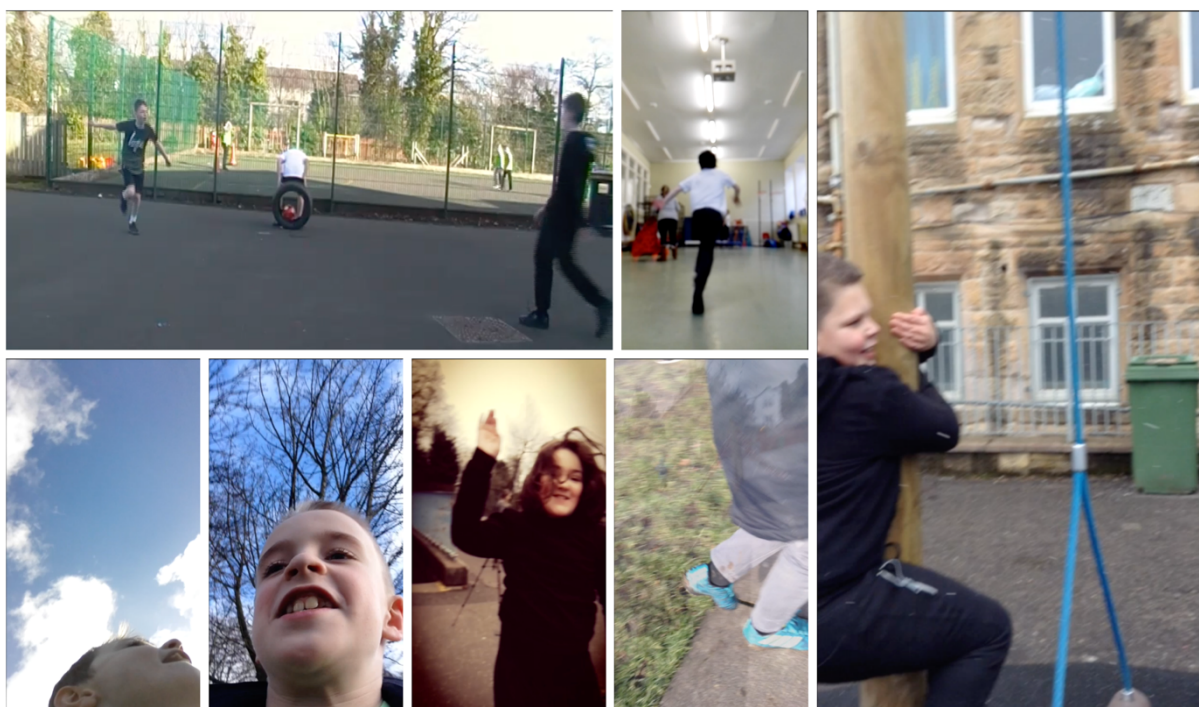
Figure 5. Collage of traditional play examples from the documentary

Depictions of these games and similar ones are found in the play anthologies I have examined and in play examples from around the world and through time; from the vases of antiquity to Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 1560 painting *Children's Games* to YouTube videos of "Hide and Seek" (B, 2017). These games are easily identifiable as traditional games that

connect to a long lineage of play, but they are also uniquely performed and produced by the children in these moments.

In the production of their video-play-texts, the participants made various directorial decisions about how they would play with/around/through the object of the tablet. These decisions were, however, also impacted and determined by the environment and materials of play (including the tablets themselves). The tablet in the hands of the players gave the children agency over a number of decisions within their play. They took the object with them into their spaces, often where I could not see them (hiding behind shipping containers or around the other side of the school); their familiarity with the tablet meant that they had a sense of ownership over the equipment and the texts they created – often referring to the tablets as their own and always going for the same devices each session. Their familiarity with YouTube videos made with cameras and tablets also functioned to script the directorial decisions they made (such as using selfie or camera mode). In the film festival, Jude explained his directorial style:

"It's a vlog; I have to keep my face in the camera at all times" (S5SC3 [08:35]). Quinn and Jude both demonstrate this vlog-style-selfie-genre in their video-play-texts, whereas the other five clips in Part I of the documentary show the camera positioned to take in the general play of others to varying degrees of success. There are many video-play-texts made up of running feet and blurred images as the children held the cameras while playing. We see in Lewis' video set up (Figure 6 below) the difficulties of attempting to switch between selfie mode and giving the viewer a general view of the play.
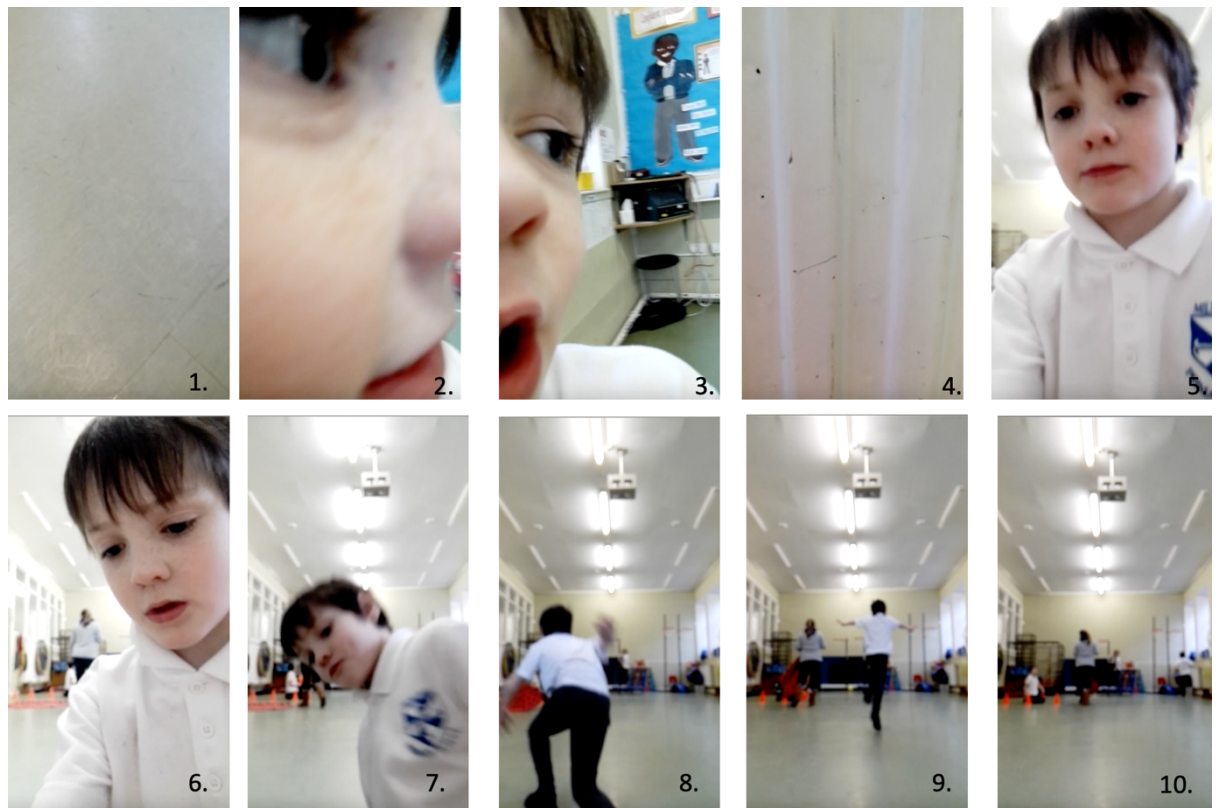
Figure 6. Lewis' 10 steps to set up a shot

In the ten steps identified in Figure 6, we see Lewis navigate between showing his face in selfie-style and showing the room.

Step 1. an opening shot of the floor.

Steps 2 and 3. Lewis introduces the video-play-text.

Step 4. the wall.

Step 5. Lewis' face as he re-positions the shot.

Step 6. Lewis adjusts the tablet's balance.

Steps 7. Lewis edges away, ensuring the camera is in position.

Steps 8-10. Lewis runs/skips to join the others.

In setting up the initial shot, Lewis turned on the front-pointing camera of the tablet (i.e., not the selfie mode). When he begins his introduction, however, he finds he is unable to easily flip the camera around to show his face in the familiar YouTube introduction style. As a result, the viewer is only given a half-shot of his face. As the video progresses, we hear his tone drop from the upbeat introduction as the tablet-as-object interrupts his plans. The flow of his confident opening, "Now we'll just sit you here" (images 2 and 3, 01:19), turns to silence, with which – though only lasting for a few seconds – the viewer is given only a view of the wall. The silence invites us to imagine what is occurring for Lewis in this moment off-screen as he puzzles over the logistics and works out how to play with the object of the tablet. Then the audience's view is suddenly shaken and we hear Lewis, who

appears to now be speaking to himself, say, "Oh yeah, wrong way" (01:26). At this point the tablet is once again flipped around as the video introduction and set-up has gone from a brief excited exchange to one that is perhaps more difficult and potentially more frustrating than expected. Despite the delayed beginning, once happy with the set-up, Lewis runs/gallops/skips back to the group, who are far away and blurry in the video. Later, in this same video, the tablet slips and is facedown for a few minutes before the participants realise. The camera here is limiting the creative freedoms of the children. The video-play-texts are disrupted and, in many ways, determined by the object of the camera, rather than the agency of the children. Despite the creative agency of the children, if the needs of the tablet (battery, position, framing) and the requirements of the environment (light, sound, space) are not met, the video-play-texts cannot be produced.

I am not here suggesting that digital technologies as objects rupture performances of play more than other objects do. We see materials ("toys") of the research playgrounds interrupt play sequences across the three sites: when towers of blocks tumble at the wrong moment, when a traffic "witch's" cone is too heavy to be successfully lifted in dance, and when a musical instrument fails to make a noise or makes one louder than expected. Digital technologies are another toy or tool of play that both script and rupture play narratives as the play is performed. However, due to the introduction of these digital toys to the play environment of the children and my encouragement for the children to include these objects in their active playground play, these moments of rupture formed by the assemblage of child-and-digital-object are notable. These particular assemblages of child and object do not exist in earlier play anthologies or in other similar research on children's folkloric play; therefore, this rupture in the children's play comes from the methodological decision to place the technology in the hands of the children, rather than film them with observational or non-disruptive objects (such as GoPros strapped to their chests as in the *Playing the Archive* project (Potter and Cowan, 2020). The needs of the tablet in the play echo other needs of objects in play – the size of the doll determines what clothes will fit, the structure of the tower determines how and when it will fall. However, due to the introduction of the materials to the children's play spaces, we see the rupture and we notice how the technology functions as object, and this offers further critical insight into the ways that children are playing in the post-digital age.

The children across the three sites were familiar with final video products and with playing with digital devices, but negotiating the tablets as objects in the research environment still added a level of difficulty to the play. This concept was possibly best vocalised by Sam in

the first session of Ladybird Afterschool Centre (LAC) when he argued that he was not "out" in a game of "Floor is Lava" because, as he said, "It's hard to climb a tree whilst holding an iPad!" (S2:V2). Sam here is arguing that his position in the game is not attributable to his own actions, but to the combination of Sam-tablet-tree-game. The environment, the tablet and the person in combination were not able to function in the game and therefore, he argued, allowances must be made. Quinn, the leader and peacemaker of the group, agreed that Sam was not out. Therefore, in this game there appeared to be at least three complex levels of rules: first was a general community understanding of the game and its rules; second was that the rules were malleable depending on the children's social positions in this environment; and third was the player-material-environment as an assemblage with a different relationship to the rules and practices of the game. This new assemblage of player-material-environment was seen in many forms across the research playgrounds, such as the tablet-camera-goalie in the indoor football games and in the creation of Jude-Tablet-Vlogger (discussed in the previous chapter), who stated that he was granted access to restricted space because he had the tablet. The research project allowed the participants freedom of movement around the normally regulated schooled spaces with new materials and activity. Their produsing of the research playground space involved becoming complex assemblages of participant-tablet-videographer. My presence validated much of what the tablets/cameras already brought to the ways they were re-scripting the space and objects around them.

In performances and productions of power in play, the combination of person-material-environment was particularly clear when, at LAC, Quinn, Sam and Michael were making a video-play-text and Sam held the tablet. The game they were playing was named in the video as "How Many Poses Can You Do Without Falling Challenge". However, the filming of the game did not appear to matter to Sam as much as the control of the space, the texts and the other participants. The resulting 10 minute and 44 second video-play-text is mostly made up of blurry images and closeups of the couch cushions. Sam held the camera and reminded the others throughout the game that he would "stop filming if they don't listen" (S4, V22). The position of control appeared to be in relation to the filming, however, from the resulting video-play-text, it is clear that the text in production is "Sam-tablet-videographer-leader" rather than the video-play-text requested by me, the researcher. The tablet, the ways in which it can be played and how it determines and disrupts the play are created in conjunction with elements of the environment and, crucially, the agential play of the children. Moments with material objects in play, such as the examples mentioned here, occurred across the children's video-play-texts throughout the data. The

next section examines how the participants "played YouTube" with the devices, creating numerous video-play-texts that followed the same lore and language of address and particular forms of filming and were yet all evidence of original, agentive play-work by the children.

II. "Playing YouTube" –The Lores of Address and 'Everywhere Texts'

> Messi: Always when I play games, I pretend to do YouTube. I don't actually have a camera, but I always pretend to do YouTube.
>
> Me: How do you do that?
>
> Sam: You just say… [interrupted by staff and told to let Messi speak].
>
> Messi: So, you play the game, and I was pretending that I was on YouTube.
>
> Me: Did you hold a pretend camera?
>
> Messi: No, I was just playing.
>
> Quinn: I used to do that. Before I had a YouTube channel I was like, "Hey guys! Today I'm gonna show you how to build a bridge in Minecraft" (8:26).
>
> - (LAC S1:SC1).

The above encounter comes from the first session at LAC, when Messi, Sam, Michael and Quinn were responding to my question, "Do you make videos?" within a discussion about YouTube. The context of play and video-making for these boys revolved around playing video games (Roblox and Minecraft) and creating videos of themselves playing. Messi (7), Sam (9) and Quinn (9) were excited to share their everyday texts with me (including music, games and YouTube channels), while Michael (6), the youngest, was content to sit in the middle of the group and whisper comments to Quinn [Figure 7 below].

Figure 7. Sam, Quinn, Michael and Messi (left to right)

Despite Google's +13 age requirements, Quinn and Sam both have YouTube channels, with Quinn "about to hit 50 subscribers" and Sam "about to hit 10" (S1:SC1: 05:29). Quinn and Sam are well versed in the world of YouTube, as is displayed through their ability to interweave complex YouTube language and video-maker practices into conversation – including discussions of "subs" for subscribers, "fans" for watchers who "like" the video or comment approvingly, and a discussion of the "notifications" they receive as members and produsers in the YouTube community. In the exchange above, I demonstrate my own unfamiliarity with their specific form of creating videos, as you do not need to hold the camera in your hand when making video game videos; instead, the camera is set up to film the screen (and sometimes also your face with a "face-cam") while both your hands are occupied with the game controllers. Unlike Quinn and Sam, the younger boys, Michael and Messi, do not have YouTube channels, however, Messi demonstrates familiarity with the language of YouTube by explaining to me the meaning of "subscribers" along with the other boys. Messi states that his first time making videos will be "today" (as part of the session). I highlight these different relationships to the YouTube platform as they underpin much of how the video-play-texts take form across the three sites. The children have a range of levels of familiarity with the YouTube platform and experience making videos, but almost all participants perform playing YouTube in their video-play-texts.

What marks the video-play-text as one with a performance of playing YouTube versus one that is not clearly partaking in this genre of play is the language evoked at the beginning

and end of each video-play-text – what I am calling the "lore of address". Sam, in the example above, begins to share the secret to performing YouTube-play with the enticing, "You just say…", but is cut off. However, Quinn offers the opening lines, "Hey guys! Today I'm…" (8:26). As the accompanying documentary demonstrates, these opening lines (and closing lines at the ends of these video-play-texts) were performed by almost all the participants in productions of YouTube-play. The greeting is made up of a version of "Hey guys" followed by "welcome back" or "so today we're/I'm…", while the sign off requests active participation on the YouTube platform by asking the viewer to "like and subscribe", give "thumbs up" or "comment below". The language is polite but firm, requesting payment for the video in this form of participation – "give this video", "make sure to", "remember", "get this video to 100 likes", and "if you enjoyed, please subscribe". However, as Messi exemplifies in the exchange above, "just playing" might also constitute playing YouTube, without the lore of address or particular form of play. Play is an individual, creative experience as we have seen in the various produsing and rescripting examples throughout this thesis. However, this section focuses on the community game of "playing YouTube" that occurred in numerous places and spaces across the research playgrounds.

The "lore of address" describes the rules or conventions of the game of "playing YouTube"; dictating the language and forms used to begin and end a YouTube-style video. In the documentary, there are a number of examples of the uniformity of this play across the three spaces. However, the rule-like structure of the game is particularly clear when the rules are broken, such as when, at 02:03 minutes, Sam attempts to begin a video with, "Here's the pose again, okay", and Quinn interrupts the video-play-text, turning to Sam in surprise and stating, "What are you doing? We need to do the intro" (02:05). Sam immediately recognises his faux pas with a laugh, covering his face with his hands, saying, "Oops!" and moving towards the camera saying, "I have no (idea?)" (02:10). The rules of play here dictate that the opening of a video requires the lore of address to be performed. As outlined above, these two participants know how YouTube videos function, and in this example from the documentary, they demonstrate knowledge of the rules and regulations that determine whether a text falls into the genre of YouTube video. In YouTube videos, the lore of address announces participation in a genre of videos and in a community practice. The opening is almost ceremonial in the ways that the language marks the text as a YouTube video. I argue that through evoking the lore of address, whether in a video that is posted online or while playing without a camera present, YouTube becomes an "everywhere text". From the reports of pretend play and the video-play-texts produced in

the encounters, there appears to be no essential material or equipment required for this play; all that seems to be needed is the scripted address. Further, it appears from the video-play-texts and play observed in the research spaces that beyond the lore of address, the content can be anything. As such, I argue that the lore of address functions as an incantation of playing YouTube – wherever and whenever one plays it. As a result, through imaginative play, YouTube is made accessible in the "schooled spaces" of the research environments despite restrictions on the players, on their digital devices and texts. The children create and participate in imagined communities of YouTube in their play, inviting imagined "guys", "fans" and "subs" to witness their playground performances and participate through "liking and subscribing". YouTube is both an actual and an imagined space of play that the children perform into in their video-play-texts. As a scriptive material of play, the children's literacies of YouTube determine the language (lore of address), form (selfie-style) and genre (vlogging, challenges). YouTube becomes an everywhere text through the processes of rescripting and produ*s*ing as they are performed in play. In this way, the corporate, digital platform YouTube becomes another text of childhood for the children, remixed into a play-text alongside music, videos and other aspects of popular culture.

Maidie's Expert Video-Play-Text

Part II of the documentary begins with Maidie (12) performing the lore of address. Maidie's video-play-text shows a serious, practiced, precise, thoughtfully structured performance. The style and lore of address, tone and structure mark it as participating in the YouTube genre of "makeup video". Maidie created four videos before she was satisfied with the end result, demonstrating advanced understanding of the genre and expectations of YouTube-makeup-videos. Maidie is an expert produ*s*er whose use of tone, pacing, balance and description evidences her awareness of an imagined community audience.
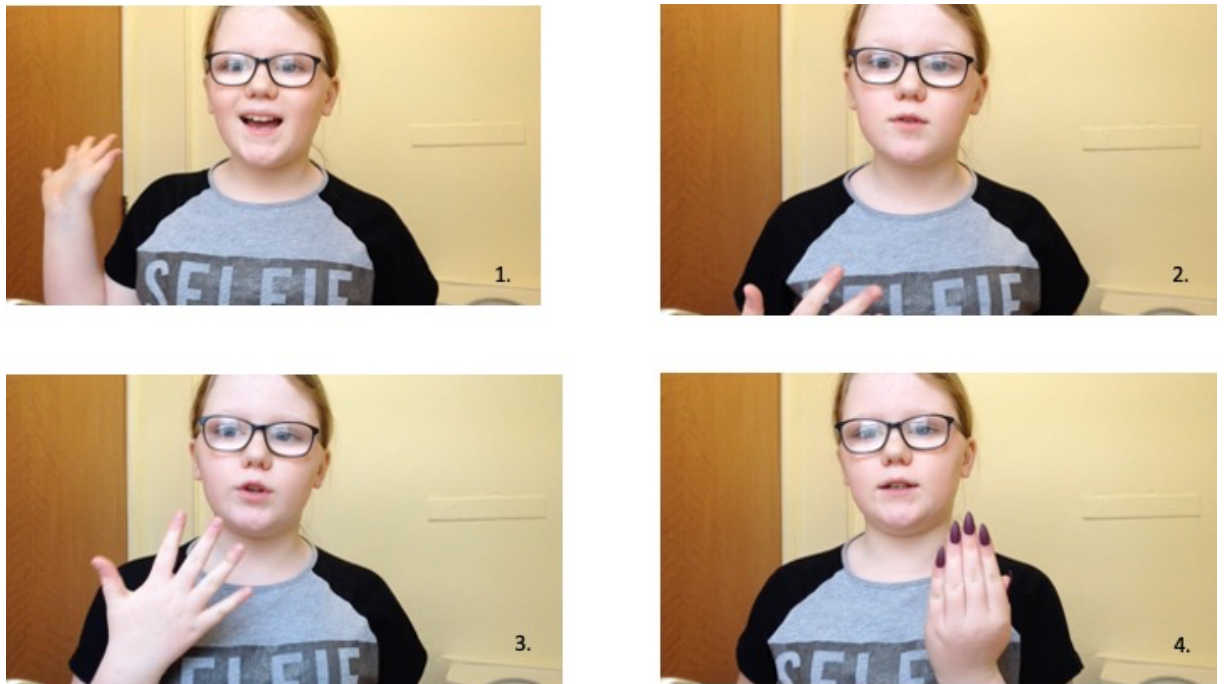
Figure 8. Maidie's Nail Video-Play-Text

Maidie was the oldest participant at LAC (there for two of the eight sessions) and she was also the only girl participant in those sessions. I gave Maidie as much freedom as the research environment allowed to choose her content and space to create her video-play-text. She thought for a while about the videos she watches on YouTube and what materials were available and then, very excitedly, asked if she could make a "false nail video" with the nails she had on. She quickly amassed the materials she needed to take off the nails and began to soak her nails in a bowl of water. I have very little knowledge of false nails and Maidie was patient and informative as she demonstrated easily taking them off and putting them on again.

The nails themselves are striking the first time you see them (in person and in her video-play-text) and when I showed this clip at a conference, the audience audibly reacted to the nails with small gasps and laughs. The nails, with their deep purple colour, offset the light tones around Maidie from the wall and door behind her and her light hair. These sharp objects are also juxtaposed against her soft face and hand, as seen in images 3 and 4 (Figure 8 above). The nails are long, bold and sharp – almost aggressive in their presence. They appear slightly ridiculous until you watch and see her familiarity and ownership of them. She has tamed these nails and is demonstrating her expert knowledge to her imagined audience, who are looking to learn, not laugh. Maidie appears to recognise the event of the nails and uses this to her advantage by performing a planned reveal (image 4, Figure 8). While her right hand is visible for the first three images, her left hand is hidden until she announces the purpose of the video-play-text as a false nails tutorial. This style of

reveal mimics makeup videos that Maidie had earlier reported she likes to play with her friends. In the makeup videos, half the face (left or right side) is made up offscreen and then carefully concealed from the camera with the YouTuber's hand, they then move their hand to reveal their whole (half made up) face. Maidie interweaves these literacies of YouTube, makeup videos and audience anticipation into her video-play-text, using her body, the space and the materials to create a watchable, informative text.

Throughout our discussions and in their performances of play, Maidie and the other participants across the three sites presented various levels of literacies related to YouTube. Those with more experience, including Maidie, Emily, Lauren, Tom, Sam and Quinn, demonstrated being able to not only find and participate in communities of interest, but also knowledge of how the site functions as a space of advertising and consumerism. Similar to findings from a 2019 Swedish study on children's understanding of YouTube channels and celebrity, many of my participants were able to "demonstrate critical reflexivity in relation to… marketing strategies" (Martínez and Olsson, 2019, p.50) and "make sense and negotiate" the platform, YouTubers' performances and the role of algorithms and other site metrics in determining what they see.

As one of the oldest children at LAC, Maidie was described to me as "like staff" by staff (to Maidie's evident pleasure). She used her social status in the space to remind the boys to fix the couch, pointing at them and the couch in an echo of the body language used by staff. Maidie was given permission to use the staff bathroom to create her video-play-text (the same space the boys had been earlier asked to vacate) because the nails required water, the tablet required sound control (away from the other players in the project) and the video-making required privacy. In this way, the materials and the purpose create a reason for Maidie to use the staff space, furthering her status as "like staff". The nails as objects extend this persona of adult, requiring delicate hand movements that are unsuitable for the rough play the boys perform in indoor football, due both to their brittleness and their sharpness. The nails therefore function to script play, movements and being while simultaneously scripting how not to act. The nails as objects are at once a symbol of maturity and knowledge, but also a toy, like a costume that can be put on and taken off again as the play requires. Further, the nails were described to me by the staff as "cheap", "for kids" and from "the shop". The nails are play-objects that are "artifacts with anticipated identities" which are "projected for consumers" through their design and "distribution processes" (Wohlwend, 2009, p.59). Their easy availability, marketing and design for children meant that the objects were dismissed lightly by the staff. However,

Maidie's performances with the nails in the research playground and in her video-play-text demonstrate her knowledge of these objects and how they relate to maturity, girlhood and worldliness beyond the LAC environment. These materials rescript the child Maidie to become girl-woman-YouTuber-teacher, able to share with her viewers her knowledge and skill.

However, her knowledge and skill were not for all to see. Once she had finished her video, she brought it out to show me, laughing and clapping excitedly as she watched it. She then asked, "Do I need to show them?" (LAC, S5, LH2 [5:00]) in reference to the four other LAC participants. I told her she did not and even showed her how to hide the videos on the tablet. Her reluctance to share the videos was understood as her being part and yet apart from the rest of the group. As Bloustien (1998) found in her research with young girls and video-cameras,

> Actions and thoughts performed on tape, but not in front of a visible audience, create a space for experimentation, a moment of blurring of what are designated private and public worlds (p.127).

Maidie was given the freedom in the staff bathroom to produse her own space of experimentation, inviting imagined communities into the space and rescripting herself through her words and actions as she performed a young woman YouTuber. Maidie in these moments of experimentation is both a "being" and a "becoming"; a child participant, but also a young woman who required more space and privacy in order to feel like she could safely and happily perform her everyday texts. Through allowing for a mix of public and private performances, the research environment and the tablets, within safe and accommodating spaces, provided opportunities for the children to produse their texts of childhood, rescripting and produsing their experiences of the research project in play.

Emily and Parody Video-Play-Texts

Following Maidie, Tom and Alasdair's serious performances of the lore of address in Part II of the documentary, we then meet Emily, who performs the lore of address with a goofy smile and exaggerated body language (01:56). While Maidie requested privacy to create her makeup video-play-text, Emily was in the middle of the playground. In this first session at St Bobby's, there were only three participants: Emily, Robert and Connor. When given the tablets, Robert and Connor went down to collect balls and play basketball, while Emily went to the playground to create some gymnastics video-play-texts. For this part of the session, I travelled between the two groups of players across the playground, saying hello and checking that they were okay. In the video-play-text of Emily's parody play, I

had offered to hold the tablet for her as she was finding it difficult to place the tablet in the right position to film her gymnastics on the jungle gym (Figure 9 below).

Figure 9. Emily in three positions in her video-play-text

Emily was very critical of her performance while I was around (despite my protests!), describing her videos as "cringe" and "terrible". However, in these video-play-texts, she displays complex literacies, demonstrating knowledge of digital tools (creating time-lapse and silhouette videos), digital texts (such as the YouTube videos she parodies), humour and comedy (through her parody play and body language), social situatedness and maturity (in her embarrassment at performing in front of a stranger – me), and physical ability (she performs round offs, cartwheels and gymnastics on the jungle gym). Emily's performance of a silly-yet-proficient-gymnast gets around the "cringe" awkwardness of creating video-play-texts in a public area. Her parody production works to produse a space of humour and power around this awkwardness through her agentive rescripting of the YouTube video-play-text she has been asked to create. Emily is subverting my request to create "YouTube-style videos of their play", rescripting the assignment to produce a text where she is not placed in the vulnerable position Maidie describes above, not wanting to share. Emily, in fact, announced upon re-entering the room at the end of the day, "Robert, come watch my 'cringe' video" (S1LH3). Emily took ownership of the text through her use of humour and parody, but also by demonstrating her skill at gymnastics to create a sharable text within her own social world.

Although not all her video-play-texts were parodies, Emily demonstrates this play between humour and power once more in the introduction to the "Chubby Bunny" video-play-text

(02:19). In this clip, Emily (12) is positioned between Lauren (13) and Stephanie (10), as can be seen in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10. "Chubby Bunny" play with Lauren, Emily and Stephanie (left to right)

In the introduction to this video-play-text, Emily performs the lore of address in the same exaggerated, joking parody form she used to introduce her gymnastics video-play-text above. However, this performance appears to be both for the camera (participating in the assigned activity) and also for her two co-performers. Lauren is Emily's best friend; Emily recruited Lauren into the project and they always paired up in video-making and play activities. Stephanie is a few years younger than the girls and was recruited by Connor. All three girls are very sporty, but while Emily and Lauren spent many of the sessions making videos in the music room/library together, Stephanie played football with the boys in her age group. In this video-play-text, they decided to band together as "the girls", with Emily inviting Stephanie to come over. In the first image, Emily is pulling Stephanie into view and positioning her before she begins her opening address. Emily's humour then seems to be directed at both the camera and at Stephanie in particular, who is very amused by the parody. In the top two images above, Emily is positioning and amusing Stephanie, while in the bottom left image, Emily is making a fast, gang-style sign off with her hands and in the bottom right image, Lauren is making the same movement, but she has rescripted it, making it a slow, purposeful movement. In this video-play-text, Emily is once again displaying a number of literacies, but this time there is a different social situation. While the witness to her humour in the first video-play-text is me, an adult-researcher who has requested the videos, in the second video-play-text she is performing for the camera and her peers. Her relationships with Lauren and Stephanie permeate her performances, her

knowledge, her use of humour and her ability to lead. Emily's position between the two girls and her body language and movements mark her as leader. She positions Stephanie, performs the lore of address and initiates the marshmallow eating, orchestrating the video and determining how "chubby bunnies" is to be performed and produced by the girls. The humour in the parody work comes from Emily and the other girls' familiarity with this genre of the YouTube video in combination with their understanding of how to perform a task in school – even a playful "task" like creating a video-play-text of Chubby Bunnies – and her gentle parody in this play. Their shared knowledge of what it is *meant* to be is crucial in order for the parodic rescripting to be funny. The knowledge of the watcher regarding the quirks, humour and re-scripting is key to this play. The initiated know the boundaries and limits of the game and therefore recognise the creative, agentive variance enough to appreciate this form of play.

The children's adaptation and parody work of rescripting in the playground is a key demonstration of children's agentive behaviour in play. This rescripting directly responds to the question of how children are performing and producing play and childlore in the post-digital age. Understanding these texts as being owned by children means recognising the moments where the children *make* the texts their own. In examining scriptive prompts that elicit playful performances of creative and agentive play in the form of games, lore and/or mischief, we see how children work in the playground to produ*s*e their own texts of childhood in play. Building on this premise, the final section of the chapter examines what happens when bodies and materials "meet" in children's play in the post-digital age.

III. When Materials and Bodies Meet

Figure 11. When Materials and Bodies Meet Screenshots

Children's play in the post-digital age continues previous generations of players' tradition of creative, innovative play. Children make use of what is at hand with scripts of play made up of environment, materials and people (actual and imagined into the space) and produse their own experiences of childhood. In the research playgrounds, performances of rescripting in play could be seen across the various versions of games with the large or small innovations and changes that took place. Taking the "traditional" game of football as an example, it was played across the research spaces in outdoor and indoor courts, with matchups that at times were one player versus five (St Bobby's, Session 4). At LAC, the game of football became a series of video-play-texts entitled "football part I/II/III/IV", which involved Harambe, the soft-toy Gorilla, being used as the ball, the couch used as the goal posts and long disagreements about "penalty" shots and what constituted "corner" or "offside" in the limited space. At St Bobby's, the game of football was completely rescripted to become "tyre ball" (documentary, 00:45-01:10) with a different purpose and aim of the game; but still, remixed into the new games was the object of the football, rules about kicking and handballs and the language and performances of "goal". Materials that are designed to be played with in particular ways – cuddly toys, iPads, chairs – often script the actions for which they are designed: they are cuddled, sat in, watched – used as the designers intended. However, as Marsh (2017) acknowledges, "children may not necessarily engage with the toys as intended by the producers" (p.27). In play, soft toys

like "Harambe" become footballs, iPads become something to swing, drop and throw about, and chairs are used for anything but sitting on.

In the research playgrounds, I found that more often than not, the redesigning and re-scripting of materials was not discussed; play commenced, and others joined in without verbal discussion, rendering a transcript of the words inadequate. Through action, gaze, gesture, laughter, silence and smiles, the children collaborated to (re)appropriate the materials around them for humour and creativity: drums were used to punctuate jokes, gongs to sneak up and prank other students, toys as footballs, basketballs for basketball and football, swinging ropes for "Tarzan", jungle gyms for "Floor is Lava", etc. These "more than words" forms of communication were part of the fabric of the playground, where such interactions are written into the space, which has been explored by play scholars through concepts of the palimpsest and play lines (Marsh et al., 2019). These forms of communication are further written into the experiences of the children with the other people in the playground, particularly their friends and the games they have played in the past. However, as the following example of Olivia and Lewis' play with the tablet will demonstrate, in an understanding of play that children share, they are able to create and produ*s*e together. Each moment of play was a process of re-scripting the tools, toys and texts available to them – and one object or material that was always available to them was their own body.

Nonsense Play and Bodies

In Session 6 in the Bramble Primary playground, Olivia created a 25:59-minute video-play-text of her dancing (documentary clip 03:49-04:17). In this video-play-text, Olivia would request a song from me, and I would then assess the song (based on my knowledge of the song and the video guidelines outlined in my methodology) and I would then stream it on YouTube using my phone, which I requested Olivia leave facedown as she danced. The following chapter explores this exchange in greater detail; however, the episode here relates to the play-texts created just after this moment. The play began with a song request during Olivia's dance:

> Alasdair: "Put *Havana* on".
> Olivia: "What?"
> Alasdair: "*Havana*".
> Olivia: "Havana-ooh-nana?"
> Alasdiar: "Yeah, put that on" (Bramble S6, V20 [18:55]).

Havana by Camila Cabello (2018) was a popular song on the radio at the time and all the children in the group were familiar with it. Whenever Olivia referred to the song, she always called it "Havana-ooh-nana"; this may be due to her unfamiliarity with the word "Havana" and lack of knowledge regarding where the word ends and the non-lexical vocables "ooh na na" begin, rendering the word nonsensical. Previous playground studies found that children did not replicate the videos or lyrics exactly (Opie and Opie, 1985, p.414; Willett, 2011, p.348), however, while Olivia's dancing is creative and original, thanks to the technology at her fingertips, she is able to draw recorded versions of the songs, "original texts", directly from YouTube. Her singing, when not caught in the wind, is an act of singing along and keeping up, rather than recollection and invention. As a result, creative invention of lyrics in her dancing video-play-text is minimal. However, after the "original text" was taken away and as we moved as a group from the playground back to the school, a small amount of textual re-writing around *Havana* was performed. This play with language does not appear intentional, but it may be (Marsh, 2008). The Opies observed similar play with "international" words, stating that children "accept them uncritically, not worrying that the words make little sense; in fact, the stranger the words are, the greater is the liberation into fantasy" (1985, p.26). There is a politics to the rescripting of language and unfamiliar words, particularly names of people and places, but in this play moment it appears that Olivia is not intentionally trivialising the name in play, but rather playing through and with the shapes and experiences of the sounds of a song that is part of her everyday texts and experiences of childhood. This reading of Olivia's performance focuses on her experience of creating three video-play-texts (Session 6: V16, 00:09; V17, 00:29; and V18, 00:02) following her dancing play and the scriptive elements of people, materials and environment in that play.

After the "original text" is taken away and the group begins to walk back up to the main building, Olivia made three video-play-texts in which she yelled variations on "Havana-ooh-na-na!" into the tablet without removing the cover so that the screen shows blank. The blank screen in the making of these short video-play-texts is purposeful; Olivia immediately replays the video-play-texts and giggles at her voice (S6LH5 [02:54]). Lewis, who was walking with us, was amused by this play and subsequently joined in yelling, "Havana, ooh nana!", bending over with effort as he sang a few words of the song in a loud, aggressive-but-playful manner. The two then stood outside the main building, climbing up on the accessibility railing, to yell back into the empty playground. The song in this moment became a "transferrable and inclusive object of play" (Willett, 2011, p.349). With their bodies, they played with the song-object, experiencing the sounds of

their voices, the feeling of yelling, and the pleasure of playing with silly words. The fact that they could record and listen back was a key part of their play, and with the tablet as a tool, their own voices were transformed into objects of play in this game (Dolar, 2006). This play lasted for only a couple of minutes before I became nervous that we were disturbing classes and we quietly headed inside.

As I analysed Olivia's videos, I simultaneously witnessed this behaviour in my then 18-month-old daughter. In the buggy on walks, she loved to yell the names of people she knew; she would yell words and sounds into the air and laugh happily. Olivia and Lewis were participating in similar play, albeit with more media savvy references to draw from and the ability to record and listen back. They also appeared to be playing a game against the action of walking back to class in a mischievous act of resistance. This performance of mischief involved multiple acts of yelling, bodies climbing and videos without video (Sipe and McGuire, 2006). All these elements are brought together in play to become a short moment of resistance against schooled environment and known rules of conduct within the space. The participants here are performing "word play", not in a classroom sense, but in a base, playing, embodied sense where the word itself allows for a sensation of play and parody. The walk and language play allow for a space where the child's body can demonstrate resistance before entering the school, a space where "the illiterate, unruly body is developed into the disciplined, docile, student body" (Leander, 2010, p.viii). This language-body-space-play builds in part on the play scripts formed by Olivia's previous dancing video-play-text. The scripts in this play excerpt were complex and layered, including environment (the outside, windy school grounds, the freedom and restrictions of the research playground within a schooled space, and the knowledge we would soon be inside); material (my phone with its ability to play songs on request, the song itself, the tablets and their recording features, the accessibility railing and its slight height, and their clothes, bodies and voices as play-objects); and people (the walking, moving bodies of the five participants and the adult-stranger-researcher, the knowledge of the school staff and students inside the building and also the knowledge of not having certain people around to enforce rules of the space). There is further play in the knowledge of the lyrics and how to sing nicely, and also perhaps, particularly for Olivia, the lack of knowledge about the word "Havana", allowing it to become a silly, nonsensical word: "havanaoohnana". In this rescripting of the song as a nonsense play-object, Olivia and Lewis take "control over the content and form of the original songs" deriving "pleasure in using these popular texts to suit their own circumstances and purposes" (Willett, 2011, p.350).

In the case of Olivia and Lewis, their mischievous play demonstrates actions of resistance and defiance in the production of yelling, moving, nonsensicalness and blank video-play-texts, presenting an almost anti-performance performance. Through these texts, the children produ*s*e their own nonsense texts; as Abrahams (1969) finds, "on first blush these rhymes often seem nonsensical, a simple playing around with sounds for their own sake, while sense is being made on the level of the social world within play" (p. xvi). It is not necessarily that there is more of an understanding of the language, but through participation in the performance, there is a shared meaning made socially. This created a moment, in the anti-performance performance of coming together between Lewis and Olivia, a coupling not often seen in play throughout the rest of the sessions. The materials made available to the participants in the research playground both scripted and allowed for performances of rescripting to occur. The material tablets, cameras and even bodies alongside the immaterial songs and voices of the children were the objects of play in this "nonsensical" performance of mischief in the playground. The environment, particularly the accessibility ramp, was taken up as a material and object in play, but also remained part of the infrastructure of the space. In the next and final example in this chapter, I examine the "Couch Playground" as it functioned as a "scriptive thing" of both environment and material in the research playground at LAC.

Couch Playground as a "scriptive thing"

Figure 12. The Couch with Sam, Quinn and Michael (left to right) and Messi (on top)

Part IV of the documentary marks a slight change in direction from the rest of the text because the clips are taken from my observational videos made with the stationary camera

rather than from the children's video-play-texts (04:18-05:22). In this 1:04 minute rupture in the documentary text, we see various examples of play filmed over six sessions. This play is less clearly defined by the introduction of the tablets to the play space; the tablets are present but are not central to the text. Instead, the couch, an everyday piece of equipment and part of the children's familiar space, is the central object. The purpose of this section is twofold: first it challenges the discourse of play being "mediated" by the digital, and second it centres the research playground around a specific environment and object to see how the various forms of play are scripted by and also scripted alongside this object.

The section is called "The Couch Playground" in reference to the research playground of this study, but also to position the viewer to rethink the space of the couch as a site for sitting to a site for playing. In this short selection of moments across the research encounter at LAC, we see the couch as a space where friendships are enacted through language, proximity, touch and laughter. Games are played around, on, with and against the couch as the participants take for granted the robustness of the couch to jump onto and push up against in football and also take advantage of the separate space within the space. There were many jumping, running, pulling and tugging moments alongside the participants' use of the couch as a space to cuddle, sit, rest and watch the iPads. The couch was both a material toy in play and an environment for play. The couch is repeatedly transformed in play, from goal posts to time out spaces to places for respite and emotion to a "slippery slide" (04:34). The materials of the couch, the slippery feel, the comfy cushions and its well-worn look script the various playful interactions with the children, transforming Sam and Messi into "basketballs" (04:39). Like the children's bodies, we see other objects as they interact with the couch playground, particularly the tablets (04:57). The tablets are designed to be held and the couch creates a comfy space to snuggle up and around the tablets. The children, their bodies, the removable cushions and other materials that come into contact with the couch produ*s*e the varied environments of play over the sessions.

In most of the footage of the boys on the couch, their bodies are splayed out, comfortable and often interlaced with touch and distance between participants, potentially as indicators of friendship. Performances of friendship are not always easily read by non-participants (me), but it was clear from the first session that Quinn was a central figure in the group, with Michael and Sam often vying for his attention. It was also clear that Messi was at the periphery of the group and while the other three participants often sat on the cushions of the couch, Messi took up position on the flat arms of the couch or, as in Figure 12, on the

top of the couch. However, these positions were subject to change and we see the children migrate across the couch playground over the course of play. The various literacies of social interaction, space and identity are performed in this space. Through mostly unspoken interaction, the boys negotiate their space, determining the power roles and friendships. The tensions that they understand and respond to were only partly visible in these texts and to me as I read their body language and space as an adult and outsider to both the afterschool centre and the group. Many of the factors behind the friendships are determined by aspects outside the research space, such as family relations, personal histories of and between participants and their daily experiences. However, when discussions of the digital and their everyday culture was not only reported, but further represented through laughter, shared references and "inside" jokes, the research environment played a role in weaving the complex social fabric of the playground.

On the couch playground, the children perform similar acts of friendships to those seen in larger playgrounds, but due to the limited space and the design and feel of the couch, their bodies are pushed to interact. The performances of friendship range from bullying (Sam telling Messi, "You don't even know what a basketball is" [04:43]) to challenges (Quinn asking Sam, "Why are you crying?" [04:49]) to relaxed, silent waiting, laughing, jumping, climbing and team games. Examining how the children perform, rescript and produse texts in their play spaces "reveal[s] the complex cultural and social aspects of children's game design which involve children actively positioning themselves on the playground in particular ways" (Willett, 2015b, p.42). The edited selection of moments from the couch playground functions as a microcosm of the larger research playground, where the children worked with the materials, environments, and people as scriptive things in their play.

In bringing the couch into the foreground of the participants' playful interaction, I highlight what the couch affords for interaction and play in contrast to the other research playgrounds of traditional classrooms or outside spaces. As the participants' bodies intertwine in play in the observational videos, their relations and personal histories start to populate the research narrative. My questions and focus turned from the literacies of the digital to the embodiments of intimacy associated with friendships. The children's embodied performances of play that occurred on, with and against the couch, pushed into interaction with each other, scripted my reading and experience of the research encounter. The focus on the object of the couch as a playground rescripted in play prompted questions regarding other educational spaces in the research encounter and what pieces of furniture and architectural design do to those spaces. As Ellsworth (2004) notes,

> Our experiences of a building arise not only out of our cognitive interpretations of
> the building's allusions to historical or aesthetic meanings but also out of the
> corporeality of the body's time/space as it exists in relation to the building" (p.5).

My experience of the research encounter, my focus and my questions were affected by the
ways in which the children's bodies and relations in the research environment were further
affected by the presence of the couch. This rupture in the research encounter due to the
couch prompts me to ask questions such as: What would it do to a classroom (not just a
nurture room) to bring a couch into that space? What would it mean for the learning that
could occur in that space? How would the bodies, relations, histories and intimacies of
friendship be (re-)negotiated around the introduction of such an object in a schooled space?
As Barbara Comber (2021) reminds us,

> geography matters. Constituting classrooms as socio-material spaces, highlights the
> relational aspects of teaching and learning, stressing that learning environments, and
> their representations, are always spaces of dynamic negotiation of who can be where
> and where, who can say what, where and when, and who can do what, where and
> when. Such contingencies are fraught with the micropolitics and macropolitics of
> daily life, whereby places and identities are made in ways that exercise power. As
> educators we need to continually stay tuned into spatial dynamics to work visibly and
> sustainably for justice (Comber, 2021, p.4).

Throughout the documentary, we see the bodies of the children interacting with the tablets
and cameras. They play with the tablet as an object and the camera as an interactive mirror
of sorts where they can witness themselves up close during play and then re-watch and re-
witness their bodies in strange, silly and fun positions. These performances of play with the
tablets create assemblages of the child-object-camera that are also at the same time
assemblages of the child-technology-camera-mirror-body-reflection-object, all produced in
the knowledge that they can be immediately reviewed, re-watched and re-performed. In
Part III of the documentary, the children struggle at times to fit their bodies into the limited
perimeter of the lens – Messi's tumbles and jumps, Olivia's running and turning, Rowan's
jumping and jabbing – as they are too large to fit into the space. Their bodies, their very
selves are too excessive, exceeding the reflected representation of themselves on screen.
The children are more than the mirrored version of themselves and are more than the
assemblage of machine-object-play, but in the process of this object-play they are able to
experiment, examine and imagine what it means to use their bodies in different ways.

There is evidence of the careful positioning of their bodies regarding distance, depth and height from the camera for their specific purposes, demonstrating literacies and learning as their bodies interact with the environment and materials. Emily, Messi and Olivia need distance to dance and perform, with Messi and Emily able to accurately gage what the camera can see in selfie mode, while Olivia is left to guess using the stationary camera. In Michael and Rowan's short clips, their faces are brought close to the camera so the audience looks into the eye of the child. In these moments, Michael and Rowan suspend their use of the tablet's mirror-like features and are instead gazing at the object of the camera itself, sharing their eye with the eye of the camera. Their bodies look into an anticipated eye of the audience, perhaps themselves, as from my observational videos I know that both children immediately re-watched their videos after taking them. These video-play-texts are shared, intimate moments between the participants and their own imagined viewer, and yet there is a disconnect, a rupture in the process of this eye contact, where now, three years later, in the edited documentary, the intimate moment is not shared with the participants, but with the video-text-eye of the participants.

Through this capturing of the moments in time, the video-play-texts and documentary connect the children's bodies to the current viewer. It is these connections, these distilled moments that create the assemblage of child-body-camera-time that makes video technology such a powerful tool of play. The video-play-texts capture moments of the children playing and performing as beings and becomings – creating their own texts of childhood. Yet at the same time, they are then amputated from the process; the child continues to "become" and so does the text, with its own trajectory. The video-play-texts of this study have taken on a research trajectory that is separate from the children performing within them, just as other texts take on their own trajectory distinct from their authors. This particularly becomes the case when a text is uploaded to the internet and shared. The knowledge of this connection between the bodies of the child and the video text creates reasonable fear in adults, particularly parents, carers and/or people who work with children. A possible implication of this play in the post-digital age is that texts of childhood, created in the moment of play, are not necessarily ephemeral objects of past playground fun. The connection between the bodies of children and online risk is a large area of study with many scholars looking at harm and risks with young people online. Overwhelmingly, however, scholars agree that while children should be educated about these risks, we should not be stemming children's creative, agentive play such as that exhibited in these video-play-texts, but should be working to create safe spaces where such exploration and play is possible offline and online at local, national and global levels

(Handyside and Ringrose, 2017; Livingstone, 2009; Livingstone et al., 2011; Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016; and 5Rights, 2020).

Conclusion

In examining the role of materials in scripting performances and the production of play and childlore, we see that childhood in the post-digital age is a continuation of the age-old tradition of children's innovative play. Digital materials were not only introduced to the research environment but were crucially placed in the hands of the players. This placement was a move away from most approaches to play studies. Alongside this was the attempt to script traditional or heritage forms of play through YouTube videos. This layering of scripts of digital and heritage forms of play functioned to invite certain responses of play in the children, but only when they were interested and inspired by these forms of play. More often than not, the digital was not a toy that mediated the play, but – in multiple examples across the three sites – became simply another toy in the playground to be taken up, rescripted and produ*s*ed. Similarly, the heritage games that I suggested the children play did not lead the children to copy and recreate these games in their video-play-texts, but instead were elements that reminded them of other play from their own repertoire that was then performed, interlaced with other forms of play and everyday texts. The dancing, football and running games that the Opies observed in the 1950s playgrounds and that Gomme observed in the 1890s parlours and streets have been rescripted and replayed over generations by new players taking up and leaving aspects of play as they encounter new people, materials and environments in their own play. In the post-digital age, just as in ages past, children produ*s*e and rescript environment, material and people in their play to create their own experiences of childhood, crystalised in their own play-texts of childhood.

Chapter Seven. The Person in the Playground, The Child in Childhood

This chapter focuses on *people*, the third of my three "scriptive thing[s]" in the research playgrounds (environment, materials and people). In this chapter, I present analyses of three performances from the research encounter: the first two sections examine two solo video-play-texts created by Messi from the Ladybird Afterschool Centre (LAC) and Olivia from Bramble Primary, while the third section looks at a moment drawn from the observational videos from Session 1, also at Bramble Primary. This chapter focuses on the individuals within these three performances to examine how they fit as players and children within the broader communities of the playground and of childhood. While these three texts are situated, implicated and unique to the children who created them, they are also representative of the many other texts the participants created throughout the research encounters across the three sites.

The title of this section is a play on Iona Opie's (1993) book, *The People in the Playground*. Opie refers to the players of the games she and her husband collected as "people" rather than children. I use Opie's term as it draws the focus to the scriptive prompt of people that I unpack in this chapter. I like the way the term initially decentres the concept of the child in the playground, (re)positioning children as *people* – important persons who own their play space. I also like the way Opie's title draws attention to gaps often found in collections of games where the focus is so intensely centred on the children that anthologists can fail to take into account the other people in the playground and their various effects on play. In my project, the "people in the playground" include not only the child participants, but also the staff and myself, the researcher, as well as various people in the children's lives (brothers, mothers, friends) and in their media-scapes (singers, actors, "YouTube stars"), who are transported into performances of play through the children's games, lore and mischief. All these people (in flesh or imagination) form part of the making and presenting of these children's childhoods in play.

While Opie was interested in the collective experience of children, this chapter focuses on the individual. As emphasised throughout the thesis, the focus on the human may seem at odds with my new materialist paradigm, however, within the woven fabric of inter/intra relations between materials, people and environments, I have chosen to highlight certain threads. The aim is not to unravel the entanglements, but to recognise how these scriptive

threads are interlaced as part of the children's productions and performances of play. The positioning of children as people is powerful and political, and yet it opens a path towards the erasure of the child in the study's discourse. Opie's wording highlights important capacities of children that are often ignored in adultist and "aetonormative" discourse (Nikolajeva, 2009). However, because the focus of this study is children's experiences of childhood, I will continue to refer to the participants as "children" in the text. This study engages with what it means to perform and produce childhood as a player, through theories of *produsing* and *rescripting*, drawing on these "trivial" (Sutton-Smith, 1970; Wohlwend, 2011a, p.6) activities of life to offer profound implications about what it means to be human.

I. Messi Exercising: framing play, othering and communities of play

The first section of this chapter examines a video-play-text that is 8:07 minutes long, created by seven-year-old Messi. Messi attended the Ladybird Afterschool Centre (LAC) over the February half-term and was present for the first four sessions (of eight in total). In these four sessions, there were only three other participants: Sam (9), Quinn (9) and Michael (6). All the participants were boys. Sam, Quinn, and Michael have Scottish accents and Messi (who identified himself as Polish) has a slight Polish-Scottish accent – I do not know how long he has been in the UK.

Figure 13. Sam, Quinn, Michael and Messi (from left to right) during Video-Watching – Still from Session 1, (LAC. S1, SC1, [2:30])

While the earlier findings chapters introduced the LAC boys, this chapter's focus on *people* as a scriptive thing requires a brief revisit to my account of the group's internal relationships. When first meeting the participants, Quinn and Michael appeared to be best

friends; I mistook them to be the same age as Quinn is quite petite, but he is in fact the oldest of the four boys. Quinn's close friendship with Michael seemed to grate on Sam. Sam and Quinn are family friends, a relationship that Sam often mentioned, bringing in shared references and knowledge that demonstrated their close family ties and friendship. Sam was very excited to use the devices and by the opportunities afforded by the research playgrounds, and one form of expressing this excitement was through demanding attention, particularly from Quinn, to the extent that a staff member who initially attended the sessions excused herself stated that she "just can't handle" his behaviour. Unlike Sam, Quinn had the demeanour of a very easy-going person and was popular with all three boys and with the staff. As discussed in the previous chapter, Sam and Quinn were keen YouTubers with their own channels and extensive knowledge of the site, but Michael and Messi were not. Neither of the younger boys appeared to have the same exposure to YouTube culture at home or through peers, and in the video-watching sections of the encounters, they would often get bored. Michael, the youngest, would zone out and snuggle into Quinn, while Messi would get distracted and look away or shift about, play-kick/tackle and generally irritate the other boys. While Quinn and Michael found Messi somewhat annoying, they generally shrugged off his actions; Sam, however, appeared to find his presence alone quite frustrating, often voicing that fact. In Figure 13 above, we see the four boys seated on the couch. Quinn sits between Sam and Michael, all three close to the laptop. Messi sits awkwardly half on the couch next to Michael and half on the large armrest of the couch. Throughout the 30-minute video-watching discussion, Messi slid between the armrest, floor and couch seat, always slightly on the periphery of the group, but edging ever closer. The other three boys moved about, too, but their movements were more tactile, interrelated – touching, pushing, hugging each other in a more physical manner. Messi's liminal position in Figure 13 is indicative of his relationship to/with the group throughout the four sessions he attended.

This sketch of the relationships between the participants is necessary in order to recognise some of the scripts of people that were actively circulating in the space among the participants. These scripts were woven throughout the encounter, impacting how Messi was treated, the choices he made in the encounters and the ways in which he performed and produced his play in the video-play-text examined below. The text below was chosen for the performances within it and for the circumstances of its production. Below is an account of the text that combines video-stills with vignette-style descriptions of Messi's video-play-text.

Seven-year-old Messi, who has a football shaved into the back of his head and has characteristically chosen the pseudonym of his favourite football player, stands smiling at the video camera, which is positioned to frame his upper body.

Figure 14. Messi introducing his video

He whispers to the camera as he begins his warmup stretches. On close re-watching we can only just catch the words of introduction as he stretches and warms up. Then there is a shift, and we hear him clearly state, "and it looks like…. this!" He then jumps up, repositioning the camera on the floor to demonstrate the "table" yoga position, carefully modelling correct hands, feet and head positions before he moves on to further stretches, balances, rolls and jumps.

Figure 15. Yoga "table" position, balancing on one foot, jumping and rolling.

Messi quietly narrates throughout, although it is hard to hear him over the loud play occurring offscreen. The offscreen play sometimes distracts him and he turns his head to look over. When the video ends and he is puffed, he waits a moment, looking towards the sounds of play, and then he suddenly jumps towards the camera with an earnest, whispered appeal to viewers to "please subscribe" as this is his "first YouTube video" and he's "not a YouTuber" but is hoping for "one hundred million subscribers". He looks directly into the screen and his face looks small, young, innocent and a little sad.

Figure 16. Messi looking at offscreen play then making his appeal for subscribers.

However, at the very end, the tone shifts as he signs off with a hand gesture saying excitedly, "Rock'n…yeah!". Then he sticks his tongue out in a kind of K.I.S.S./Miley Cyrus impression.

Figure 17. Messi ending with "Rock and …yeah!"

– Ladybird Afterschool Centre, S4:V10

The images in the vignette above show the contents of the video, giving the reader an insight into how Messi positioned the tablet-camera, what movements he made with his body and what he looks like. However, they also offer a deeper, immediate recognition of the humanity, the boy, in the video-play-text. His open face in Figure 14 is sharply contrasted with the fourth image of Figure 16, while in Figure 17 we see his face so close that his teeth, his haircut and the shadows on his face catch our eye. Whether these small moments remind the reader of another particular young person, themselves, or an imagined "child" in play, the images serve to bring into focus the humanity of the child-participant in the study for the reader who has never met them.

In his solo video-play-text, Messi's voice is literally a whisper; however, although he is difficult to hear, his movements are strong, bold and clear. His entire body tells the story of this video. Like Maidie's video-play-text discussed in Chapter Six, Messi here is the expert *produser* of his play text; he knows what he is doing and is demonstrating his strengths (both his physical strength and his knowledge). His body speaks for him and through a paradigm that values "more than words", we see how this takes shape in the text. Messi

takes us through a workout routine that is thorough, full of various exercises and stretches that would genuinely help someone train. His embodied play *escapes* the frame as he jumps, tumbles and takes up space, as demonstrated in Figure 15 above. He moves and re-positions the tablet for the best possible view, but the environment does not allow for enough distance to be placed between him and the tablet to effectively *capture* all his movements. Messi's play is bigger than what the camera can frame (the evocative language – *escape*, *capture* – is here used to signal his individual agency beyond the limited space the camera allows). At the same time, across the room, Sam, Quinn and Michael also struggle to fit their moving, playful bodies into the video frame. However, while Messi adapted and moved the tablet to best suit his needs, issues with framing caused disagreements over tablet control in the adjacent group.

Messi has clearly practiced his moves and has a routine that he is demonstrating. He does not pause between exercises, but skilfully transitions from one to the next over the eight-minute video. He demonstrates a number of traditional literacies related to sports, health, exercise and the body. His skills, he informed me later, are from exercises he learnt at school, at football practice and from his mum. He does not connect these skills with the LAC space, nor with any peers in the room. As a result, Messi is not performing "out-of-school" literacies but rather "out-of-place" literacies. He is an expert and an excellent (albeit quiet) instructor, but these skills do not come under the umbrella of the literacies that are valued in this context by his peers (or by me – through my supplying of materials and request for videos). The emphasised literacies in this context are the ones that are being demonstrated on the other side of the room where Sam, Quinn and Michael are loudly creating a YouTube-style "Yoga Challenge" video-play-text scripted by a YouTube video I had shown them in the video-watching session. In Messi's video, "YouTube" literacies, with which he is less confident, are secondary to the physical education literacies he performs with gusto and skill. The boys are rescripting a set text, while Messi is produ*s*ing his own video from his base knowledge, but there are links between the two video-play-texts, particularly the "table" pose. Prior to creating his video-play-text and after watching the "YouTube Yoga Challenge" video in the video-watching session, Messi attempted to demonstrate his knowledge of the table pose to the other boys, who were not interested. This particular pose may have been *the* scriptive thing that enticed Messi to create his own text. Over the previous three sessions, he had mentioned making a football tricks/exercise video and had played versions of indoor football (substituting toys for the ball) with the other participants, but this was his first video-play-text.

Messi performed the "game" of making an exercise-YouTube-video, bringing together old and new literacies: his advanced knowledge of fitness, and his first filmed attempt at performing the "lore of address" of YouTube play. He shows knowledge of the style of introduction, presenting his name and his aim, and then moves through the video to end with a sign-off requesting viewers to subscribe. However, he also rescripts the lore of address to bring in an element of himself at the very end of his video-play-text. After performing the ritual sign-off, with the earnest-sounding desire to gain "one hundred million" followers (Figure 16), Messi looks directly at the camera, raises his hand and clearly brings into view the "rock'n'roll" hand gesture (Figure 17). He then supports this gesture with the verbal "rock'n'…yeah", then shifts the tablet to perform the gesture with the other hand. In this ending, Messi rescripts the ending of a YouTube video, mischievously inserting his own playful lore into what is a scripted ritual of address in most YouTube videos, as evidenced across the performances of the other participants of my study. In this moment, Messi is a creative and agentive produser of his own texts. Interestingly, this precisely echoes the awkward catchphrase of Kayla, the underconfident protagonist of the 2018 film *Eighth Grade*, who produces YouTube videos that end with the customary plea for subscribers, followed by her saying, "Gucci" and making an a-okay symbol (Burnham, 2018). We see in these twinned performances young people taking control of their texts, creating ownership through remixed language and gesture. The viewer, who a moment ago was implored for support, suddenly sees the happy, cheeky smile of a seven-year-old at play. The "rock'n'roll" gesture and exclamation in itself is a text that comes from a very different cultural space to the YouTubers discussed and shared in the video-watching sessions of LAC. Due to his young age, I assume he was bringing in an everyday text that his family appreciate and one that is certainly an "out-of-school" literacy in the most traditional sense. Messi here produces a unique performance of his interests, abilities and everyday texts, fusing together his experiences of the research encounter, everyday play and childlore to create his own "text of childhood" in the form of a video-play-text.

Messi demonstrates his extensive knowledge and interests in his YouTube video performance, which is scripted by materials (tablet, YouTube text), people (researcher, peers, staff, himself) and environment ('research playground', indoor limited space). Messi's video-play-text demonstrates his strengths in more "traditional" literacies related to health, physical education and sport, while he was less confident in performing "out-of-school" literacies (particularly those concerning performances of YouTube lore of address). Through the concept of "out-of-place" literacies, this section questions the

assumption that when "funds of knowledge" and "out-of-school" literacies are valued, children are freed from aetonormative curricula. Messi's freedom to produce his text came from the fact that, while scripted in form, he was able to bring in literacies from across his experience. By only paying attention to non-traditional literacies that are performed in these video-play-texts, we perpetuate a myth of division – adult/child texts; home/school literacies; adult/child culture. In examining Messi's play choices in his video-play-text, we see a performance of bricolage that brings together diverse elements of his experience of childhood in the post-digital age. In the next section, we see further evidence of Messi produsing and rescripting his play experience in the examination of the communities (imagined and actual) that he interacts with in his video-play-text and wider play.

The relationship between the players and their YouTube texts (both their project video-play-texts and previously created YouTube texts) appeared to be associated with age, with older participants across the three groups more likely to create distance between themselves and their video-play-texts. Players at St Bobby's (where the participants were 10-13 years old) in particular referred occasionally to their video-play-texts as their "cringe videos". However, to simply associate these actions with age would be to overlook the extent to which the materials, environment and people script performances. Therefore, I argue that the people in the research encounters were scriptive things prompting a narrative of "cringe". The children worked together, disassociating themselves from babyish "cringe" texts to create an ensemble performance of maturity. This group performance, however, was ruptured at times, such as when players did not participate (like when Jude demonstrated pride in his video-play-text), and when these themes manifested differently around gendered texts (including Emily's discussion of makeup videos and how it changed across discussions with me, with her female friend Lauren, with her close male friend Robert or with her peers). Gaunt (2020) speaks of the "context collapse" that occurs on YouTube due to the "blurred publicity and privacy" of the site. Schools are another space of such context collapse, and inviting home texts (materials, visuals and imagined texts) into these spaces disrupts the public/private boundaries.

We end this part of the discussion back with Messi at LAC, where the idea of a YouTube account and its videos is not so associated with "cringe" and is more associated or perhaps imagined as experience. Messi and all the participants know that their video-play-texts from the research encounter will not go on YouTube. However, Messi in his video-play-text calls it his "first YouTube video", with the immediate clarification, "I'm not a YouTuber" (LAC, S4,V10). Messi occupies a liminal position, neither inside nor outside

his imagined community of YouTubers. He has participated in making a YouTube style video, but in that same text he determines his non-membership status. This occurs throughout the research encounter as participants reflect mid-video on the in-between status that these video-play-texts hold, as they invite "likes" and "subs" (subscribers) to the "weird channel" (Quinn, LAC, S1, V8), all while understanding that it is a closed circuit that no "subs" can "like" or even view. This section examines the children's production of YouTube texts in multiple forms to understand how they are produsing their relationships to their play "texts of childhood". The participants' performances of their relationships to their "texts of childhood" are co-constructed and prodused depending on where they are (and are not), who is there (and who absent) and what materials are present (and are not). For Messi, the tablet, the video-watching, the research playground, the indoor environment, me, his peers and their relationships all formed a part of the creation of the video-play-text and his relationship to that text. Importantly, as texts, materials and people change, so too will Messi's relationship to the text. Children are performing and producing unique play-texts (material and immaterial) that draw on and play into their knowledge of the world. This thesis therefore suggests that understanding childhood today means examining texts produced by children as "beings" and their changing relationships to these texts as part of their "becoming" identities as people.

Messi is "othered" by his peers throughout the research encounter. The three boys have their own dynamic, often unsettled, but Messi is certainly the odd one out. Sam, who himself is feeling pushed out of a close relationship with Quinn, harangues Messi constantly throughout all the games and play. There are various ways that the othering plays out in the research playground: through direct words, language play and physical exclusion. Sam often moans, emitting depressed and annoyed sounds of "oh" and "ah" at the suggestion of being paired in play with Messi. Messi is left out of group nicknames, such as "The Savages" made up by Quinn and Michael (LAC, S3LH3 [23:15]), and, most damning of all, is accused of cheating. In fact, based on video evidence, he did cheat, but *all* the participants cheated in games; it is a natural part of play. Being labelled a cheat, without a "community of friends", places Messi in an unenviable position. However, despite being the outsider in the research group, Messi was resilient and resistant. In the final example below, Messi takes a risk to produse a new partnership and friendship. We then briefly return to his video-play-text to examine what communities exist in this space of apparently solo play.

In the activity that followed the making of his video-play-text, all four participants were sat on the sofa (Figure 18 below), with Messi sitting close to Quinn, while Sam sat on his other side and Michael stretched out across the remaining space. During the video-watching section, I asked the group if they wanted to do a "YouTube Feeding Challenge" (where one blindfolded partner feeds the other partner with hilarious results). Following this question, Sam turned directly to Messi to ask who he would partner with.

Figure 18. Messi, Quinn, Sam and Michael (left to right)

>Messi: (to all) Oh, are we doing it? [the "feeding challenge"]
>
>Sam (to Messi) Yes! It's a Challenge, we're supposed to. Are you going to do it alone?
>
>(Messi pauses, looks around for a moment)
>
>Messi: No, I'm gonna do it with [Quinn].
>
>Sam: If [Quinn] wants you to, that's his choice.
>
>(Messi quietly addresses Quinn).
>
>(Quinn looks around the room, not responding, then looks to me)
>
>Quinn: Do we have a blindfold?
>
>(LAC, S4SC1 [26:39]).

Messi is produsing a friendship alliance with the most desirable friend in the group. He is taking a risk and is demonstrating to Sam that he is not a "loner". Messi and Sam are produsing and performing their communities to each other in this moment. Sam's question to Messi is an expression of power. Both children are attempting to draw and then re-draw boundaries around the people in the space, rescripting relationships as they go. Their previous encounters, past relationships, present and imagined futures all tie into how they

enact these performances and how much freedom they are given to produse their experiences. Quinn is placed in an awkward situation. A friendly and non-confrontational person, Quinn, does not directly respond to the situation, neither encouraging nor denying Messi's friendship. Quinn ensures that the conversation moves on, inviting the voice of an adult into the moment to ease the tension and excuse him from a direct response. Michael, on the other hand, Quinn's best friend of choice throughout the research encounter, is absent from this discussion. Michael may not hear it, or it may not be an issue. While Sam is "flexing" his relationships to Messi, Michael is relaxing on the couch, not actively performing any particular friendships, although at the same time, his lack of performance is in itself quite telling of the secure position he finds himself in. In order to resolve the situation, I organise a rotating partnership for this activity to ensure that everyone partners with each other and has a turn at the key roles: 1. blindfolded feeding, 2. being fed, 3. filming. However, at the end of the play, Messi expressed that he felt left out and although the staff and I calmed him down, in the next activity (eating marshmallows), his tooth fell out. This was the last session that Messi attended; whether this was due to his missing tooth and/or his general feeling of being left out I am not sure, although he joined in for the film festival, as discussed below.

Messi in the above video-play-text and throughout the research encounter acted to produse and rescript the experience for himself. He chose to create a text that drew on his strengths, creating a solo video-play-text that he was proud of, happily replaying it to me immediately after making it. He selected this video-play-text to show at the film festival celebration, to which he invited his mum, dad and younger brother. The video-play-text shows Messi's ability to choose a community over the group that othered him. In the text he was playing alone, but he was also drawing on his family, everyday texts, school-sports literacies, and (newly practiced) YouTube knowledge. He performed his interests in his play, addressing an imagined audience made up of a community that listens and, as he informs me when showing me the video, can "learn" from his expertise and be "helped" (LAC; S6LH). His imagined audience are looking for exercise/stretch videos and he answers their need. He is filling a niche and he is happy and proud of his text. He is not alone in making this video: from the people in his life he brings into creating it, to the imagined audience watching it, he invites others into his video-play-text through his movements, his stretches and his gaze when addressing the audience.

When I was editing the video together, he asked me to add Barcelona's football song in the text at a volume level that drowned out the others' play (and much of his own voice). This

move underscored the value he placed on the movements over the words. However, knowing his status in the group, I worried about the eight-minute length (the other videos were two minutes each) and the solo nature of the text. In my research notes after the film festival, I reflect on the editing process:

> *I am wary of this video when showing it, purely based on his status in the group. I don't want others to make fun, so while I edit it according to his requests (music, titles and rolling credits), I also add a split screen so that it shortens the video without removing anything. I split the screen into four so that we see four Messi's stretching, rolling and jumping [as in Figure 18 above]. This small move impresses the others and elevates the status of the film. Messi is so proud, and he has brought his mum, dad and younger brother to the viewing. This act of editing the text in some ways includes me as author. It goes against what many would think of as the child-researcher bind. But I did it as a protective move and took the gamble based on my knowledge of him and the others, expecting that they would be impressed and excited by the move. Happily, my gamble paid off and he sat with a wide, proud smile throughout the short film festival.*

Messi prodused and rescripted his experience of the research encounter and I also rescripted and in part prodused his production to protect him, fusing the role of researcher and text-producer to create a text that we were both proud to share with Messi's communities of family, peers and staff at LAC. Messi's play choices demonstrate his ability to produse his own community, drawing on his diverse literacies of body, health, media and experience to create this performance and production of play. Through the affordances of digitally mediated play, Messi was given the opportunity to rescript the research encounter and produse a unique material "text of childhood" in the form of a video-play-text.

The next section provides another close examination of a solo video-play-text, but this one is produced by seven-year-old Olivia. While the focus is once again on movements, motions and gestures more than sound, Olivia's dance-play-text provides a completely different form of rescripting and produsing of experiences of childhood through play in the post-digital age.

II. Olivia Dancing: Scripts, Space Invaders and Object Play

This section examines the 25:59-minute video-play-text of Olivia dancing in the playground at LAC to popular music played on my mobile phone. Olivia was the youngest participant in the group and the only girl. She had mentioned dancing in previous sessions and often freestyle danced and sang in short videos. Therefore, at the end of the video-watching section, when the group were planning their videos for that session, I suggested (scripted) that Olivia make a dance video to Justin Bieber and she immediately agreed and began deliberating over which track to choose (S6LH1, 10:30). The resulting video is one continuous shot that the dancer runs in and out of, constantly changing her position in relation to the camera. As one song ends, she requests another, then checks it is okay with me before playing it and resuming her dancing. This repeats for a total of eight songs. While Messi's video-play-text (above) occurred to the side of the play space, Olivia's camera and play is positioned right in the middle of the playground. This means that while her play space is larger, the other participants often run through her video-play-text as they play out their own games, lore and mischief in the playground.

More than any other video-play-text from the study, this text acts for me as a "scriptive thing". I am drawn to Olivia's performances in the text – her gaze, free-flowing dance, body, movement, pauses, humour and interaction with other players. The ensemble of girl, camera, school space and dancing invites multiple avenues of examination, from online harms and risk (Livingstone, 2009; Livingstone et al., 2011) to girl's performances of sexuality on social media spaces (Handyside and Ringrose, 2017; Renold, 2018; Renold and Ringrose, 2011) to the effect of young girls dancing in ways perceived to be sexual (Christensen, 2000; Gaunt, 2006 and 2020). However, these directions of focus, although exciting and valid, drew me away from Olivia's performance and into the unknown. Therefore, while keeping sight of my second research question, which examines the *implications* of children's play choices for understanding childhood today, I drew back my own gaze to focus on what is contained within Olivia's video-play-text, the moments observed around it in the encounter and the other participants' video-play-texts. This choice was made to understand the experience of the child in childhood, "the player in playground" – moments of Olivia's agentive produ*s*erly rescripting in her video-play-text. This section therefore sets out to examine who Olivia is in this performance of video-play-text and how she is produ*s*ing her own experiences of childhood through her play choices in the research playground. Furthermore, I focus on examining what a new materialist and "more-than-human" perspective brings to understanding Olivia's dancing-video-play-text.

Eight-year-old Olivia stands in the playground, leaning close towards the camera, trying to gauge whether or not it is on.

Figure 19. Olivia's Dancing Video-Play-Text Opening Shot

The concrete outdoor environment looks sparse from this angle, with nothing but a brick wall and a strange white door that is a lift for disabled access, but this is not clear in the video. There is bitumen (tarmac) with some white lines (possibly boundary markers suggesting/scripting play?). The microphone catches the sounds of the wind, obscuring almost all the other sounds, but we hear echoes of playground screams and running in the background. Offscreen Olivia orders me: "Give me the phone", "You need to watch them" (the four other participants who are making their own video-play-texts out of camera shot).

Music begins. Olivia leans close towards the camera, obscuring the lens with her hair. She backs away and begins dancing. Small movements, a little bobbing up and down – unchoreographed dance. She knows the tune; she picked the music. Her dancing remains to the side, whether on purpose or not is unclear, because throughout the video she cannot properly see herself while dancing – there are no reflective surfaces nearby and the camera's "wing" viewer is very small.

Figure 20. Leaning in, dancing hands, peripheral dancing, gaining confidence

Later in the video, she comments that she's "upside-down, like a bat" (12:07) when she leans in closer, giving some indication that she may not be able to see her position. However, while the beginning of the dance is often out of shot, for the majority of the performance she is squarely in the middle.

Olivia dances away from the camera, the wind whipping her hair about. She looks in the direction of the noises of play off camera then grabs the bottom of her jumper and shirt and with a little smile takes a few jogging steps towards the camera pulling up her shirt to expose the bottom of a sports or training bra in a flash move.

Figure 21. Olivia's 'flash' in sequence

She continues to dance with more vigour and begins to take up more space.

- Bramble Primary School, S6:V20

In the extended video of dancing-play described above, Olivia both accepts and rejects scripts made up of *people* (other players running through her space, my own videoing and help with song choice, teachers walking by), *materials* (the camera, a "witch's hat" cone, her school uniform), and *environment* (the wind, the bitumen, the playground-school space) (Bramble S6, V20). Olivia makes decisions in her play as to the scripts she takes up, rejects or ignores. These rescripting decisions are not set, but are malleable and fluid, such as her play with the wind: she sometimes enjoys the wind flowing through her hair, changing her dance to suit the feeling. However, in the same dance she also plays against it, pushing her body towards it, resisting it and in other moments she dances despite it, as it distorts the music and throws hair in her eyes. This assemblage of dancing-play-interaction with the wind shows her fluid relationship to this environment-script of the wind. Alongside, with and against the wind, Olivia is rescripting and produsing her dancing video-play-text performance. This analysis method recognises numerous potential scriptive things in the research playgrounds, which function to foreground "the unpredictable, emergent relations that arise as nonhuman and human bodies come into contact with each other" (Burnett and Merchant, 2020a, p.3). A sole focus on the text of dancing, without looking at the inter/intra-action between the space, environment, cameras, me, and the other children running through, would be "stripped away" with the "participation of nonhumans…taken for granted" (Burnett and Merchant, 2020a, p.6).

A number of elements in this video were scripted by the research process, from the fact we were in an almost empty playground during class time, to the "motley crew" of research participants (Head Teacher, Bramble Primary), to having the cameras and access to music in the school ground. In scripting these elements, I worried that I had left Olivia with nothing to do but perform a dance, demonstrating little agency and simply following my direction. Instead, this video-play-text offers an array of ways in which Olivia made the space and the play her own. Concurrent play that zigzagged across her space of play bled into her dancing game, invited and not, to create a unique performance of her body, interests, gender, knowledge and innocence. Olivia produses traditions of play with innovative dance moves and media knowledge. She acts in her play borrowing, remixing

and rescripting from the scriptive space around her, creating a fascinating dance between tradition and innovation.

Below is a table that outlines three forms of play in Olivia's dancing video-play-text that are performed in response to scriptive things in the research playground (Table 5). The three focus scripts are the "People in the Playground (Space Invaders)", "Environment (Wind and Space)" and "Objects (Clothes, Phone, Cone)". These categories are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, overlapping and interrupting each other, but they provide a frame to discuss how scriptive things work in the playground. While the category of Environment (wind and space) was briefly discussed above, this next section will examine the three images of the "Space Invaders", followed by an exploration of the three images of "Object Play": "Clothes, Phone, Cone". However, first, I offer a brief analysis of Olivia's play in relation to folkloric play forms.

Table 5. "Scriptive" play divided into three categories

People in the Playground (Space Invaders)	Environment (Wind and Space)	Objects (Clothes, Phone, Cone)

Unlike many of the group video-play-texts the children made, Olivia's video-play-text is essentially focused on one game: dancing. She participates in the tradition of dancing, often a social activity, but here played alone. Olivia's performance is understood as an active choice of dance linked to other similar performances in the past. While her choices of music and styles of dancing draw on many contemporary references, they are embedded

within a genre of games Gomme christened "Singing Games" in her 1894 publication (which came before her dictionary, *Children's Singing Games with the tunes to which they are sung*) (1894b). However, according to the Opies (1985), a translated similar term "had been familiar since the beginning of the century" in Germany (p.23). This genre of play has continued to evolve as new players and new texts have entered the playground, innovating well known games to incorporate new musical genres, lyrics and dance moves.

Willett (2011) describes the kind of dancing Olivia performs as "not rehearsed", with moves that "emerge…spontaneously through their play" (p.347). Olivia mouths the key words to the songs, but we only catch glimpses of her singing since the words are swallowed by the wind. Like Messi, her movements are clearer to follow. To the sexier songs of Justin Bieber and Luis Fonsi, she strokes her arms and body sensually in the moment, while to the stronger, firmer beats of Taylor Swift, she marches and aggressively punches the air. Her jumping, swaying in circles and clapping along is inspired by what she hears, the people, the materials, the playground and her media knowledge. Her dancing appears to be inspired by the moment rather than learned in any formal way. Her dancing-text is a response to a variety of prompts, centring on the media texts she invites into her space of play, the camera I provided and my suggestion to make a dancing video.

In play, Olivia produ*s*es a performance dance-space which at times is interrupted and compromised. The interruptions are occasionally invited, but in the two main examples below they are unwelcome as they invade her produ*s*ed space of play, rescripting it once again as a "schooled space" with rules and regulations that limit her access to her everyday texts while also limiting her powers of negotiation. While Olivia dances, her peers run around the playground in an imaginary world of zombies, devils, angels and bombs. There are occasional moments of overlap between the play worlds, sometimes invited, as when Olivia calls out to Alasdair, "I've got your favourite song on!" (04:04) only to be corrected with, "It's not my favourite, it's Lewis'" (04:08); or she is distracted briefly by a commotion we cannot see and yells, "Is he okay?" (17:21-18:01). At other times she guards her play space, ignoring the boys' song requests, shooing and chasing them out of her area. These space interruptions are not always available to the viewer (as in the images above) but are evident from Olivia's physical and vocal reactions (yelling, screams, pointing, gaze, jumping back). Olivia, although positioned in the middle of the playground, has created her own private zone of play. The interruptions when uninvited and disruptive are chased away.

When looking at "traditional" play, there are often gendered readings of the playground. For example, in their 1985 anthology, *The Singing Game,* Iona and Peter Opie state that "it seems natural to little girls to act a part and put actions to a song" (414). This conflating of play, "nature" and "little girls" raises questions regarding performance of tradition and gender in play. According to the Opies, numerous texts dating back as early as 1842 position singing games as "being played by girls alone" (1985:27), yet the Opies also list a number of "observations that sometimes, in some places, boys did join in" (1985:27). In Olivia's video-play-text and in other video-play-texts and my observational videos, we see the boys requesting songs and insisting, "I've got good moves to that!" – and indeed, their moves are impressive. Alasdair, for example, demonstrates in another video-play-text "flossing", a dance that became a viral sensation and was integrated into the hugely popular international multiplayer game Fortnite. He is also a key "Space Invader" in Olivia's video-play-text, at times inviting himself into the space, calling out as he runs through:

> Alasdair: *"I wanna be a back dancer!"*
>
> Olivia: *(chasing him around and out of shot)* *"You're gonna ruin my show!"*
>
> Alasdair: *"I'm a back dancer!"*

Here we see Alasdair creating a role for himself in Olivia's video-play-text-space that is deferential and may appeal to her. Later, he does indeed become a part of the dance and she listens to his suggestions for songs, but in the earlier stages of the video, she is interested in creating, maintaining and produsing her own space of play. Olivia expresses concern regarding Alasdair's intentions and her own control over the text. Her cry, "You're gonna ruin my show", demonstrates her creative control and vision for the video-play-text, to which Alasdair is seen as a risk. Alasdair is allowed in the video and later even plays a part in the negotiation of one of the song choices with Olivia and me (he is pictured dancing in Table 5 above, in the third image of 'Space Invaders'). While Alasdair is initially an uninvited "space invader", he rescripts his role, produsing a place for himself in Olivia's (solo) video-play-text through his deferential "back dancer" to her assumed "front dancer" position. When Rowan, Alasdair and Lewis interrupt Olivia's dance, running through the shot in an attempt to provoke a reaction, the boys are partaking in what according to Roud (2011) is a "commonplace" aspect of play where "the boys …rush in and 'spoil' the girls' activity" (p.53). While this may be annoying for Olivia, Roud finds that the boys "often regard this as a legitimate 'game'" (2011, p.53). The running-video-making-play between Rowan and Lewis continues as they film these interactions with and interruptions of the dance. For Olivia's part, she promptly shoos them out with big gestures

that morph into creative dance moves (Bramble, S6V20 [16:20-16:38]). Play is full of liminal spaces of creativity, between accident and intention.

However, the children are not the only "space invaders", people who are uninvited and disrupt Olivia's play space. My role as research/adult-in-charge is a contested one in the video-play-text as Olivia invites me in to help stream the music, but also wants to be alone, as expressed below:

> Me: "You're not allowed to watch the videos" (15:15).
>
> Olivia: "I won't, I'll cover my eyes!"
>
> Olivia: "Why?" (pause)
>
> Olivia: "I watch the videos all the time!"
>
> Me: "I know, but you watch them at *home* all the time" (Bramble, S6:LH4 [15:30]).

Childhood and boundaries are complicated in the liminal space of the research environment and schoolyard. Produsing research playgrounds was partly a process of rescripting the space, inviting in "out-of-school" texts and literacies and allowing for un-school-like play. However, while I offered Olivia the choice of song, I was often forced to veto her choices due to swearing and "inappropriate" accompanying videos. I outlined in my ethics procedure and in communication with the gatekeepers at the three sites that I would view all videos before showing them to the students, so I could not show her the videos she was selecting in the moment from YouTube. My approach attempted to be flexible, so I allowed her to listen to streamed music from YouTube. Even then I was taking a risk in trusting the video titles that specified they were "clean". Olivia needed to be reminded throughout her dance not to watch the videos and eventually she questioned this act of censorship in the dialogue above.

Olivia's suggestion that she would "cover her eyes" (Bramble, S6:LH4, 15:19) is an example of her attempt to rescript the situation through negotiation to allow for spaces in-between. Not technically able to watch – although able to peek – she would hold the power in this situation. Olivia's idea is playfully inventive. It resists the script of what is allowed and not allowed in schooled spaces, offering a rewriting and (re)positioning of power to allow for creative openings and loopholes. My project was grounded in theories that position the child as decision-maker, which informed and were at the heart of many of the research decisions. However, I was not able to offer Olivia the access and flexibility that she was used to at home. In my position as adult-in-charge, I needed to respect the rules of the environments that trusted me, and this meant that despite my theoretical positioning of the child, the reality of the situation and the "duty of care" that I had undertaken in relation

to these children meant that their everyday texts could not be their "everywhere texts". Zones of access exist in children's lives and this remained the case regarding much access to material and digital texts in the research playground.

At times, Olivia understood the self-imposed rule that when I had not seen the video, I could not show it to her. However, at other times she supplied other reasons for my resistance. When selecting Taylor Swift's (2017) *Look What You Made Me Do,* Olivia was transfixed by the video (Table 5 above, first image of "Space Invaders"):

> She holds the phone in her hands and stares down as I ease it from her fingers. She informs me about the song:
>
> Olivia: "It's all about 'what you made me do' song. So, this is scary for you, so I'm gonna watch this bit".
>
> Me (gently as I ease the phone away from her): "No, no, no" (Bramble, S6V20 [11:52]).

Olivia positions herself as being familiar with the text, situating me as the outsider who should not be viewing the material. She once again attempts to creatively rewrite the power scripts to suggest that the innocent one in this scenario is me and that the reason for my censorship of the video can be circumnavigated by her knowledge and bravery. These are her everyday texts – media that is "embedded in [her] everyday interactions and circumstances" (Vasudevan and Rodriguez Kerr, 2016, p.366). Her familiarity with the texts is at odds with the literacies she is allowed to draw upon in the school space. Her knowledge is given invisible borders despite the fact that it has been known by literacy scholars for years (Heath, 1983; Moll, et al., 1992). In these performances of play, Olivia draws on her everyday texts in an attempt to renegotiate what it means to perform adult and child, bravery and fear, knowledge and innocence. This is the context collapse (Gaunt, 2020) that comes from bringing in everyday materials, in the form of texts and objects, into a space that does not traditionally use these objects in play. Through guided, teacher-mediated use, many of these texts have found their way into school classrooms, but in the playgrounds of the three research sites, these tools and texts did not appear to exist.

Olivia produses her own dance moves, drawing on a variety of sources, from her media knowledge of the song, singer and genre, to her social knowledge of her peers and the playground, evidenced in her quick side check before "flashing". When I presented a section of this video at the British Sociological Association Postgraduate Forum in May 2019, one audience member recognised the flash mentioned in the above vignette as a Justin Bieber "move". While I have not found record of this in his videos, there are

numerous images of Bieber in this position: shirt up and flashing his stomach, especially as part of the Calvin Klein campaign (Strugatz, 2015). Olivia's rehashing of Bieber's "move" is a demonstration of the adaptive nature of play, as well as, possibly, quite sophisticated knowledge of the artist and popular culture. New moves enter and disrupt older playground routines, rescripting play through production and use where "innovations creep in all the time" (Opie and Opie, 1985, p.444). Olivia rescripts what it means to dance in a provocative or silly way, not only scripted by the music, but playing with the text responsively. Olivia allows the environment to prompt her motion and when the wind picks up her hair, she spends 12 seconds moving her head about playing with the feeling of the wind in her hair (Table 5, "Environment" images 1, 2 and 3). This familiar sensation roots the play in the outdoor environment, scripting responses in the form of choreography. Olivia draws on scriptive things to agentively produse her own playground and video-play-text. Olivia's creativity in dancing is demonstrative of what Marsh (2010) describes as the "integral" link between play and creativity (p.22). Marsh continues, stating that "it would be impossible to conceive of play that is not inherently creative" (2010, p.22). Play is an ongoing creative and productive act experienced in ways that are not all representational, intellectual or logical, but also physically responsive and intuitive and the "more than words" focus of this study highlights these complex, embodied performances of play. Olivia's encompassing of different Bieber references, along with the flow of the wind, technology and numerous other elements of the playground, create a fresh, innovative text which at the same time links her to generations of agentive produsers of dance and play.

Negotiations around what constituted "appropriate" texts occurred across all three sites, such as in the example from Chapter Six when I allowed Emily and Lauren access to their requested text, and also when I allowed Olivia access to the song *Shut Up and Dance With Me* by Walk The Moon (2014). This flexibility occurred following Olivia's selection of the 2017 song *Swalla* by Jason Derulo featuring Nicki Minaj and Ty Dolla $ign (Derulo, 2017).

> Olivia approaching me: See this? This doesn't swear in it.
>
> Me: (Only slightly familiar with the song) "Um, yeah that one's okay".
>
> Olivia presses play and then skips the intro. She crouches down to put the phone on the floor, but then begins to dance looking at me with a little smile.
>
> Me: Gotta put it down though.
>
> Lewis: This song's so weird, it's like people in bras. I've watched the video and its people in bras and they're dancing. And they do like (dances a little shimmy in jest and I laugh). It's hilarious.

Me: (to Olivia) Put it down please. Please, put it down (directing with my hand).
Thank you (when she does it).

Lewis: It's cringy, it's cringe. (muffled)…and it actually swears in it!

Me: Who does? In that song?

Lewis: In that song, yeah. But it's blipped out.

Me: Yeah, it's blipped out of this one I think.

Lewis: It swe…it says the F-word in it.

Me: Really?

Lewis: Yeah. It says the F-word like millions of times.

(I walk over and check the video to turn it off.)

Me: I've gotta make sure it's, no, no. Oh, no, not this one.

Lewis: It blips it. It's very sweary. It's a very sweary song.

Olivia: I heard it. (Some commotion as I take the phone and ask Olivia for another request)

Lewis (in the background): Plus, it's a bit rude in the music video she pulls down her pants and then shows her butt (12:25) (Bramble, S6LH4).

Having now watched the full video I can attest that it would not be allowed at most school and does not pass my criteria outlined in Chapter Three. In order to move the conversation on quickly, I was flexible with Olivia's request for *Shut Up and Dance*. She thanked me and began to dance. At the chorus, Alasdair joined in, singing along happily. We had changed the song, but Lewis was still demonstrating his knowledge of the forbidden text, describing the previous song as "very sweary" to the extent that he placed it "in the Guinness book, no, it's not in the Guinness, no". Olivia interrupted with, "I don't care!", but Lewis continued, "It's like in the British records for how many swears in one song" (Bramble, S6LH4 [13:28]).

This was a moment of oversight on my part. In retrospect I see a number of alternatives, from using a music streaming app without videos to downloading the videos beforehand and ensuring they were all appropriate. While the children had access to an inappropriate song, it was switched off after I was alerted to the content and I tried to keep the video out of sight. However, this experience with the inappropriate video-text evidenced the children's extensive knowledge of illicit texts and inappropriate language from their everyday lives beyond the schoolgrounds, in spaces and contexts where identities may allow for more in-between moments and where negotiation plays a larger role.

Of note in this exchange is the fact that the children's media-scape included the song, the language used to describe the song, and the changing perspectives that Lewis offers. In regard to the children's media-scape, this song was selected as a dance track in the Korean reality dance show *Produce X 101*, episode 6, aired on June 7, 2019 (Jun-young, 2019). The reason this is worth mentioning is that the other two tracks included in the episode were tracks requested at the two other sites for dancing and video background: Bruno Mars and Cardi B's *Finesse* at St Bobby's and Imagine Dragon's *Believer* at LAC. These are globally popular songs that make up part of children's and adults' media-scapes. This moment saw an out-of-school text become an "out-of-place" text in the school playground. While the text was on my phone, I did not know the song or its illicit content, but the children did. This brings into question the idea of innocence and knowledge. Lewis loudly expressed how inappropriate the content was, while in the same breath demonstrated his knowledge and familiarity with the text. Olivia chose the text, presenting it as "not sweary", which was essentially true, yet the video has many overtly sexual references. I do not know how familiar Olivia was with the video, but she did address Lewis' remarks, stating, "I don't care" (Bramble, S6LH4 [13:28]). Olivia accepted the inappropriateness of the text when I said I needed to change it; she did not argue and when she was allowed *Shut Up and Dance*, a mild, but "sweary" song, she quietly thanked me (S6SC2 [23:40]), which she did not do for any of the other songs. Lewis, on the other hand, was compelled to explain the text to me, at once shocked and ready to censor the "cringey" song, yet also referring to it as "hilarious". The text may sit in a place beyond Lewis' vocabulary, which might be why he draws on familiar ideas of what makes a song inappropriate, simply framing it as "sweary". The song actually only has three "swear" words in its entirety, and these are hidden in the long rap sequence. However, it is certainly inappropriate and problematic: the video is full of inuendo and suggestive nudity, and while the men are fully dressed, the women are dancing in bras and underwear.

There is a curious link between the inappropriate song *Swalla* and the playground: it begins with a music box rendition of the classic playground singing game "*Did you ever, ever, ever in your long-legged life…*" (Turner, 1972, p.42) accompanied by images of lollipops and candy to suggest the figure of the Candy Man. The annexation of playground tunes for the purpose of rap and other such music is discussed in Kyra D. Gaunt's (2006) *The Games Black Girls Play*, which looks at games and spaces of play and the co-option of girls' play culture into men's popular music for profit. Gaunt argues that "the practice of 'borrowing' from one setting to another is a natural outcome of oral-kinetic communication" (2006, p.106), further stating that "there exists a symbiotic or dialogic relationship in which both

spheres [girls and paid musicians] are creating and refashioning new musical ideas, based on pre-existing material from the other realm" (p.107). This "two-way interaction between musical play and media" (Willett, 2015b, p.34) further demonstrates the cultural embeddedness of children's play. Marsh (2008) describes the iterative, creative relationship as "a fluid interchange of musical, textual and movement material between playground and mediated sources" (p.185). The participants throughout this section are shown drawing on texts and language that is often denied to them in the school space, and yet familiar in their everyday. Children take part in constructing these boundaries, working together to police language and texts (such as the deleting video-play-texts containing their swearing in Chapter Five and, in the case of *Swalla*, flagging it as inappropriate to adults). These actions show the children's active participation in produ*s*ing childhood as innocent.

This final section on Olivia's video-play-text examines the objects she interacts with, including her clothes, my phone and a cone ("witch's hat"), as outlined above in Table 5. These material objects are not designed as playground toys; however, they invite (script) play through their texture, possibilities and availability. Olivia's clothes, as discussed above, offer the risky (and risqué) scripts of removal and flashing; they also offer other playful scripts of resistance (they can be grabbed and need to be pulled up when they fall down), pleasure (they are soft and can be stroked), playfulness (her skirt flapping and flying around as she jumps, clothes reverberating with impact of jumps, the wind and being pulled). In earlier outside play, in rainy mid-winter in Scotland, Olivia threw off her boots and excitedly (and purposefully) limped around the playground. Her clothes are not simply a uniform to don but are items full of potential to cover or shock, depending on where her play takes her.

My phone (Table 5, "Objects", second image) is a key component of Olivia's video-play-text. My phone is both a text in itself to be rescripted in play (particularly the game of sneaking a peak at the videos until I catch her, which is reminiscent of many "hide-and-seek" type games of the past), and also a conduit for other immaterial play-text invited into the play space. Providing Olivia with YouTube on a device at school gives her access (or at least the suggestion of possible access) to her everyday texts. However, as discussed above, the phone itself is not without its gatekeepers (both adults and children), who restrict her access in their performances of "school appropriate texts". Access to her everyday texts in their original form are bound geographically and contextually. However, Olivia and the other participants cannot be limited in their imagining of their everyday

texts, and in this way, through their own imaginations, their everyday texts can become what I call "everywhere texts".

The final example of an object of play in Table 5 is the cone or "witch's hat". This object in Olivia's video-play-text is introduced after her almost minute-long absence from the screen. The viewer is left listening to the wind and watching the white door and empty playground, hearing sounds of play echoing in the background, when suddenly Olivia returns lugging what looks like a cumbersome and heavy cone. From my observational videos and research notes, I know that she "stole" it from the boys to make a barrier to stop their invasion, but then, with it in hand, began to rescript it to become an object of dance. Olivia dances with it, holding onto the top, she pulls it around in a circular motion, allowing gravity to carry some of its weight, and even occasionally attempts to lift it. She is unable in the first few attempts to lift it and simply turns this struggle into a flowing, spinning dance move. However, when she later sees what is happening in the play around her, she offers the object back to the boy's game "Here! (picking up the cone and calling to the other players) Guys, here!" (S6V20 [10:41]). Olivia's circular dancing is reminiscent of cabaret or pole dancing for some observers, but I would not suggest that as a direct play script for her actions. I would, however, argue that due to the long relationship between traditional playground dancing, music hall-style performances, adult dancing and MTV-style videoclips (Gaunt, 2006; Opie and Opie, 1985), Olivia's dancing may be informed by this heritage.

Olivia's physical play with these material objects (clothes, phone and cone) demonstrate her ability to draw into play almost any object at her disposal. The digital, while in many ways mediating her play though music and camera-focus, is also just another element in her play. The cone, her clothes and, as discussed below, her body, are taken along with the digital as scripts for dancing play, exemplifying the concept that in children's post-digital play, and even in digitally mediated play, the digital has become just another toy to be rescripted and creatively made a part of the production and performance of children's culture. As mentioned above, Olivia uses her body as a material in play. Just as her clothes, my phone and the cone are materials (toys) of play, so are her arms, hands, hair and body. She performs acts of mirroring, re-playing and rescripting media and other people's (particularly women's) dances. Olivia's use of her body as an object in play, however, is not an invitation for objectification. Messi's jumping in his video-play-text examined above reveals no more or less of his stomach than Olivia shows. Also, like Messi, and despite the larger space of play, the camera cannot fully frame her play; her body erupts

from the frame, disappearing, then suddenly reappearing with new objects and new moves. However, in many ways her body can be contained by the frame and it is in these images that we are troubled. The image of a young girl addressing the camera with her body is frightening in the post-digital age.

Childhood is complicated by the child's own body – its movement, its sexuality, its everyday needs and its implications. This is the case for young girls and particularly for young black girls and boys (Gaunt, 2020; Goff, et al., 2014; Vasudevan, 2019). Olivia's dancing-video-text plays into the tensions between the binary oppositional ideas of innocence and knowledge, when one moment Olivia does a sexy "body roll" move, followed by a very unselfconscious pulling up of her tights and a mini flash of her tummy in the process (13:30). This flash is a distant echo of the knowing flash recounted above, and my use of the word "tummy" further demonstrates the difference in the presentation and reading of the moment. One flash is a risk, a leap – a risqué, cheeky performance of the forbidden. The other is an unconscious adjustment of clothing for comfort – a familiar hiking up of drooping tights known to all wearers of the garment. One represents knowledge and the other, innocence, and both elements are further compounded by the presence of the camera.

In innocence, the child is presented as vulnerable. Christensen (2000) argues that this sort of reading positions the child "as the dependent and passive object" and "tends to exclude consideration of the cultural and social context in which vulnerability is constituted and to render children's own understandings of themselves and their bodily experiences as unimportant" (p.38). Christensen does not discount certain vulnerabilities of individuals, but like Mayall (1994), she situates children as social actors whose positioning as vulnerable or innocent ignores a more complicated story. In positioning Olivia as naïve to the sexier performances in her dance, her role as the creative, agentive produser is ignored and she is subsequently seen as being acted on, rather than as author of her own text. Olivia's play with her body, the materials, environment and people in the playground is also linked to dancers of the past. The Opies (1985) list numerous games in which the resulting rhyme ends in a cheeky flash, linking many of the dance performances they observed to the performer Maud Allan who "clad in little more than pearls, was scandalizing London with her dance...first performed at the Palace Theatre on 17 March 1908" (p.419). They observed an 11-year-old girl from Liss in 1970, reporting the final moves of a game as "hitch[ing] your skirt up" (Opie and Opie, 1985, p.418), and another nine-year-old girl, stating,

> Everyone, however, was aware that the game was a bit naughty. Outside the circle
> the boys take up vantage points...because when we lift our skirts up the boys can see
> our knickers (p.419).

This is reported as cheeky, but harmless and potentially even positioned as wholesome, hetero-performative play. Olivia's risqué moment was not complicated by an interest from "the boys", nor was it particularly "naughty", but it did involve risk and suggestive nudity with a camera.

Thinking of the playground as a palimpsest (Marsh et al., 2019; Richards, 2014; Seath, 2018) is not to suggest, like the Opies and Gomme, that play is in any way linear, or that Olivia is purposefully interacting with this tradition of play. The link evidences that this form of dancing play has a history, one that needs to be revisited in relation to performances of play today and its gendered implication and assumptions. Such historiography places Olivia's "problematic" dancing-play with her body within a larger context of play and the playground, to demonstrate that this form of play is not brought on wholly by the camera, although there is certainly an aspect of playing to the camera (Willett, 2011). The video-play-text is a captured moment of play, a purposely produced "text of childhood". The dancing, play and parody harken back to earlier forms of similar play, while the digital connectivity links it to future children performing future dances.

However, at St Bobby's Primary, Emily and Lauren also created dancing videos. These video-play-texts involved well-rehearsed dances that were played as a game in the traditional sense – they were rule based, repetitive in structure and had clear boundaries and aims (Juul, 2005). Their video-play-texts were very different to Olivia's free-dance-play-text. Notably, in Emily and Lauren's videos, they also use their bodies as objects – their arms, legs and heads are synchronised and they clap, body roll and twirl together in time. Their bodies in these repeated texts demonstrate purposeful meaning and intention. Their bodies are also, notably, not problematic, not as present and perhaps more self-consciously controlled. Four and five years older than Olivia, the girls appear to be savvier in their performances of dance, in their production of their video-play-texts and, perhaps, in their knowledge regarding the power their bodies have.

Olivia plays out her role as a consumer of culture, embedded and "musically enculturated" in society (Campbell, 1998, p.42). She also demonstrates her agency as producer of dance and video, making meaning with her body and in doing so creating a new text. This new video-play-text is a performance of her play; her everyday texts and experiences. While

Olivia produses her play-video-text as a solo performance, numerous people appear throughout the text. Some of these people are invited: for example, I am invited to produce and approve the music (but am then quickly told to leave); the boys are on occasion invited to play, dance or take objects; the musicians and dancers of the texts she selects are invited in, their words and movements rescripted to become part of the dance. In these invitations, Olivia, like Messi, is creating and imagining a community for her text. However, Olivia deals with many more 'space invaders' than Messi, both adults and children who determine and limit the texts she has access to (and in doing so limit the imagined communities in her play). The final section examines a short moment of interaction that occurred in the first session at Olivia's school, but it focuses on the relationships that are performed and negotiated over a short space of time by her "Space Invaders" (Rowan, Alasdair and Lewis).

III. Making Frienemies: Produsing and Rescripting Friendship

The following encounter takes place once again at Bramble Primary School. The focus shifts from Olivia to her "Space Invaders" to examine a performance of negotiating friendship which occurred in the first session during the introductions. At the time, I was concentrating on learning the children's names and ensuring I completed the tasks I had set out in my research plan. It was not until close watching and re-watching of this exchange that I saw how important this moment was to the participants, who, through a question I posed, were given the chance to (re)establish, in words and gestures, their relationships to each other. The closed question, "How old is everyone?" was intended for collection of basic information, particularly in relation to their official access to websites and apps. However, for Rowan, one of the participants, this question functioned as an opportunity to perform a chosen identity through rescripting a relationship and produsing a community. Rowan's actions then functioned as scripts for two of the other participants, who then re-scripted and prodused meanings of friendship to allow for the creation of a new community, while upholding and not jeopardising existing relationships.

The following extract is devised from an observational video from that session. The video is 40 minutes and 46 seconds long, but this encounter occurs over only 30 seconds. After asking the children's ages, I go around the group eliciting responses, pointing my pen towards each child, saying their name and then writing their age next it:

Me: Oh wait, how old is everyone?

Tom: Ten.

Me: Yeah. How old are you? (gesture pen to Olivia)

Olivia: Eight.

Me: (to myself as I find her name on my sheet) Eight. Who's that? Olivia.

Me: (pointing pen toward Alasdair) Alasdair?

Alasdair: Nine.

Tom: (in a high-pitched voice- indicating disbelief) Whaaat?

Me: (to myself- writing it down) Nine.

Me: (looking up) Tom?

Alasdair: (to Olivia) I'm nine, yeah.

Tom: I'm the oldest.

Lewis: (raising his hand) I'm nine. (gesturing to Rowan and Alasdair) We three are nine.

Me: You're the nines? (I write down their ages). (10:15).

This dialogue occurred all at once, with voices overlapping in a way that is not well represented by the sequential text form, but the gist of the group conversation is captured above. The purpose of my question was a "data collection" exercise, while I envisioned the children's video-making, broader discussion and play as "data generation". My actions and body language here demonstrate my "closed" nature to this question (pointing the pen, writing down ages next to names). However, despite my initial lack of recognition of it as a novice "becoming" researcher, this process was part of co-creating new data, part of establishing the research environment, and all part of the "data generation process". As far as I was concerned, though, this was not a moment for "becomings" for the participants, but rather a statement of "being", and one that I assumed all participants would respond to in a straightforward manner. Even in the preamble above, however, we see the answers being expressed and reacted to in different ways. The oldest participant, Tom, is ready, claiming his age without being asked. He then expresses surprise at Alasdair's response, "Nine", which might have been echoed by Olivia based on Alasdair's statement to her: "I'm nine, yeah". This moment is one where seniority is literally being established through this small declarative statement. Tom reaffirms this by saying, "I'm the oldest". However, as I was concentrating on the types of data I was looking for, my response did not explore these meanings; instead, perhaps like the other children, I simply noted the order, with the performances and productions essentially lost on me until re-watching.

After this initial reporting of ages, the group discussion split in half, with Tom, Olivia and me attempting to change the direction of the conversation to move onto the next topic,

while "the nines" (Rowan, Lewis and Alasdair) were intensely engaged in defining their relationships to each other. The image-vignette below recounts the following 15-second interaction, focusing particular attention on the performances of Rowan, Alasdair and Lewis.

In the screenshot below, Lewis raises his hand to answer my question, stating, "I'm nine." This is the catalyst for the next moment.

Figure 22. "I'm nine" (Lewis). Clockwise from researcher: Tom, Lewis, Rowan, Alasdair and Olivia (back to camera)

The three children sitting together gesture to each other and all announce, "We three are nine!" (SCS1:10:12). Their language and bodies define them as a distinct from the other two participants: Olivia (8) and Tom (10). With this declaration, all three mimic and re-produce each others' gestures – two arms up, fingers spread out, opening and closing their arms in almost mini "hugging" gestures. The three turn towards each other, their backs to the other participants and me. "We three" is strongly backed up by this space of exclusivity.

Figure 23. "We three are nine!" (Rowan)

In the midst of this performance, the child in the middle, Rowan, points to the two others, Lewis and Alasdair, and announces happily, "We're best friends!" Rowan repeats this assertion twice more, pointing to the other two and continuing to make inclusive "cool" hand gestures to demonstrate their connected coolness of being "nine" and "best friends".

Figure 24. Rowan points to Lewis and Alasdair, stating, "We're the three best friends" (10:18).

The other two "nines" had earlier introduced themselves to me as "best friends" (with Rowan present and remaining quiet). They had both happily participated in the "We're nine" celebration and hand gestures, but upon hearing their relationship announced, they exchange glances and Lewis (facing the camera) in particular looks uncertain. After a moment of thought, Alasdair announces to me: "Me and [Rowan] are the best frenemies!" (10:23).

Figure 25. Alasdair: "Me and [Rowan] are best 'frienemies'" (10:23).

The word is tried out and repeated by all three. Lewis exchanges a happy glance with Alasdair. I continue to try to get the group's attention to move on, hardly noticing this display, but Rowan gets the last word in, quietly asserting under my next instructions, "So we're best friends" (gesturing to both) then pointing to Alasdair and then back at himself while Alasdair looks up and points back, nodding in agreement as Rowan pronounces, "Frienemies" (10:30).

Figure 26. (Left image) Rowan to me: "So we're best friends"; (Right image) Rowan to Alasdair: "Frienemies".

Having successfully established the relationship, Rowan then sits back looking comfortable in the armchair. Lewis (left of Rowan) looks just below the camera; his face is clear and while he looks concerned, this expression in the video appears to be one of listening to me announcing the next activity, rather than in response to the other "nines'" conversation.

Rowan is lingering in the moment, clarifying and defining it, while Lewis may have moved on. Alasdair is present and a part of the end clarification and, like Rowan,

afterwards appears to be finished with the conversation, satisfied with the addendum.
Rowan sits back in his chair, both arms resting on the armrests, legs crossed, looking at
me with a grin. Alasdair in the image below leans forward, readjusting his seated
position, body turned away from Rowan and towards me. They are now ready for me to
move on.

Figure 27. Rowan and Alasdair relax while Lewis continues to look thoughtful.

- Bramble Primary School, S1:SC1

The forms of folkloric play in this moment are not as clear as in Olivia's above video-play-text or even Messi's video-play-text, in which we can see performances of physical play activities. However, if we think in terms of the Opies' categories of play, *lore* and *language* are essential elements of what make up the activities of the school yard. In the account above, we see a play with language, with the "lore" of friendships, and a small moment of mischievous resistance to me as I attempt to move the conversation beyond this moment to get to the "real" play. Through play with words, the boys' erratic relationship of friendship and enmity become "frienemies" in an act that both defines the tension within their relationship and resolves it. They are determining the rules and lore of friendship and playfully rescripting codes they have been given in order to appease all parties. The Opies (1959) might have included this form of clever rewording under "Wit and Repartee" (p.61), and it might also count as a "Crooked answer" to Rowan's unspoken question of friendship. Roud (2011) argues that it is through the "verbal lore" of "rhymes and riddles, jokes and repartee, that children learn the rhythms and possibilities of their language" (Roud, 2011, p.413). Certainly, Rowan's final quiet summary of the action is his "having the last word" (Opie and Opie, 1959, p.65). He has positioned himself in terms of authority and he has quietly won a victory by outlasting me and reaching agreement regarding his friendship (albeit reworded). The rest of this section is given to a detailed examination of

this rescripting of language and relationships to understand how communities are imagined, produ*s*ed and performed by children in the post-digital age.

Because my project focused on using creative methodologies to produ*s*e new "spaces for the unexpected" (Ptolomey and Nelson, 2020), I was unattuned to the potential of standard research questions to elicit such impactful performances of identity. Only upon re-watching and reflection was I able to see this moment when the children exercised their agency in relation to the research encounter. I found in the practice of re-watching and analysing these moments that identity performance is always, necessarily occurring throughout the research process and not just in answer to my more probing questions or in the children's video-play-texts. As a result, I found that, just as I needed to define for the study what play looks like in order to recognise it being performed, I also needed to look closely at the research encounters to see the performances of identity-making that were not immediately obvious to me during the encounter. In response, I needed to rescript my own understanding to make space for new directions in the research encounter.

The schooled space (the playground and the classroom) is "situated in a shared social history of children's friendships" (Wohlwend, 2011a, p.11). However, with the introduction of a stranger into this space, Rowan saw an opportunity to disrupt the playground narrative, to re-construe the context he found himself in to re-imagine and re-invent relationships and, in so doing, produ*s*e a community for himself. His repetition of the phrase "We're best friends" was an establishment of fact and the more that it was said, uncontested, the more it became an assertion of a fact rather than a suggestion. However, as Alasdair and Lewis subsequently rescripted Rowan's assertion, the nature of the assertion changed. Alasdair, in turn, took up Rowan's prompt of "best friend" and further rescripted it to represent how he saw their relationship. Notably – perhaps most importantly for Rowan – the "best" was retained, so there was still a special relationship being represented. However, Alasdair offered a more complex and less close description of their relationship. This act of rescripting saw him playing along with Rowan's game. He did not immediately deny Rowan's attempt to rescript their friendship; instead, he recognised the moment and interacted with it. They are undeniably all nine, a fact that had already been celebrated. The inclusive "we" continued to dominate Rowan's claim and Alasdair and Lewis, through their continued body language and verbal interaction, demonstrated that they recognised this community. While Lewis was included by Rowan, his gaze followed Alasdair and he looked to him for direction in relation to the discussion. While Alasdair and Rowan tried out the new word "frienemies" to ensure they were both

on the same page, Lewis appeared to be concerned only with the assertion of "We're the three best friends!". Once this assertion had been questioned and rescripted, he repeated the new phrase, "frienemies" with a smile, then shifted his gaze to me, moving himself out of the discussion break-out group and back to the classroom engagement. Rowan's last assertion of "best friends", amended to "frienemies" to describe himself and Alasdair, appeared to go unnoticed by Lewis. It appeared, for his part, the conversation came to a resolution once Alasdair rescripted Rowan's initial assertion. The 15 seconds during which the question of Rowan's friendship with Alasdair was resolved through Alasdair's clever (and kind) wordplay was a moment of risk-taking and rescripting in play. Performances of friendship with imagined possible communities took shape over these few seconds, demonstrating the "ever-becoming" that occurs in children's play.

This "ever-becoming" relates both to the children as "future-adults" (O'Donnell, 2018; Uprichard, 2008) and in relation to new materialist understandings of "the process of becoming" that focuses on "flow", "process", "flexibility and ontogenesis" (de Freitas and Curinga, 2015, p.259). While the movement and future-looking focus is a necessary and positive frame to work in, particularly with regard to children, there is also an importance in recognising the static process of "being". For it was this very "being-ness" of "being nine" together as a team that created the possibility of "becoming" a community.

The performance and celebration of "being nine" was what brought them together as different from (their past) eight and (their future) 10, and importantly so. The performance of both individual 9-years-old and the community of 9-year-olds was produced through a combination of hand gestures, bodies together, language, and gestures of inclusion (and therefore exclusion of those who are not "nine"), exemplified in Figure 28 below. The three boys performed a community of commonality, but then had to quickly rescript that community in order to make it last.

Figure 28. Closeup of Lewis, Kyle and Alaisdair performing "We three are nine".

As the sessions progressed, the established close relationship between Alasdair and Lewis became more obvious to me. Therefore, upon re-watching, I was conscious of their effort to re-attune Rowan's statement to better reflect the truth. They did not discredit Rowan's assertion, but instead creatively re-worked it to allow for an opening, a bit of wiggle room in what it means to be "best friends" and "nine" years old. Rowan was actively creating and resisting the earlier spoken narrative that Lewis and Alasdair were exclusive "best friends". With the help of the community of age (and potentially the community of gender), Rowan attempted to rewrite his situation. Alasdair, on the other hand, used language to delicately play with the binaries of friendship (best friends? Yes/no?) to open a new pathway of possibility where they could all be happy.

The research playground took on many forms throughout the encounters: from a classroom-discussion set up to happy, playful interactions to complete descent into chaos and everything in-between. In the first session of Bramble, when the "frienemies" interaction took place, we were all still in the beginning process of figuring out our relationships to one another. As a non-teacher and stranger in their midst, I was unsure of my role and ended up somewhere in the realm of teacher-researcher-(adult-in-charge)-play-person. In my "Researcher Reflections" (Chapter Four), I reflected on my more "teacherly" moments as a researcher (Labaree, 2003, p.15). In the 30-second interaction outlined above, the "split" between two distinct classroom groups meant that one group followed a more "classroom" approach, while the other resisted this formal method of interaction until they had resolved their own situation. In the following section, I unpack the second of the two distinct communities that began to take shape (and then, in part, dissolve) throughout this brief encounter.

In the 15 seconds it took for the "Frienemies" discussion to play out and be resolved, the research group split into two. The two images below (Figure 29) demonstrate the geographies of the two separate groups. The first image uses triangles to illustrate the divide, while in the second, hand gestures and gaze demonstrate participation and non-participation in the "classroom" community.

Figure 29. Split discussion: Researcher, Tom and Olivia; Rowan, Lewis and Alasdair.

In the above images, we see two defined group in the one space, the "Owl Nest". In this first interaction, the children had no script to follow for our interactions. What I mean by this is that in subsequent sessions, the children had a sense of how the sessions unfolded. They understood when we would be playing and running around, and when we would be discussing and watching videos. They were able, as a group, to anticipate and perform within the frame of the session. While the design did not always play out in the same order or way each week, the essential components of watching videos and playing with tablets were always expected by the participants. In the moment screenshotted above, however, the sessions remained a mystery. There were a number of other ruptures and changes to the children's normal school day that also meant they did not know what to predict. The group of five children were brought together by the Depute Head and did not normally work together. The room itself – the "Owl Nest" – was a space the junior school area, a completely different building from the students' everyday upper school setting. I had also introduced materials and questions about materials and literacies from home into the space. These changes in environment and materials, alongside the novel group and introduction to me and the research space meant there was space for "becomings", for "lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guttari, 1987) and "spaces for the unexpected" (Ptolomey and Nelson, 2020). Rowan made use of this environment of possibility in his attempt to (re)define his relationship to the others, and they in turn did the same. Rowan's actions were contained within the red triangle in Figure 29 above. We see that Rowan, Lewis and Alasdair's body language is turned in toward each other, facing away from the rest of the group, closed off. The same is evident in the second image in the same figure.

While the interaction of the red triangle has been discussed at length, the interaction in the blue triangle also deserves attention. This triangle is made up of me, Tom and Olivia. Tom and Olivia answered my question regarding their ages early on. I wrote down their ages and then they briefly watched "the nines" perform "We three are nine!" (10:12). However, just as "the nines" got excited and began to more loudly assert their community, Tom

clapped five times with authority in a clear rhythm (two slow claps followed by three quick ones) (10:17). I noticed it and quietly clapped it back at him. He nodded and said, "Or you can do that" (10:22), holding up one hand in an "okay" symbol and pointedly looking at "the nines". Olivia followed suit (as demonstrated in Figure 29 above). Olivia copied Tom, while the three others did not. I acknowledged this "teacherly" tool, however I did not accept the scriptive device. I instead held out my two hands, palms down towards "the nines", talking to them directly with, "Okay, so would you like to play some games quickly?" (10:32). I knew I was offering them something exciting and although Rowan managed to insert his assertation of "Best friends, Frienemies" underneath my question, the room positively responded to my question and we move on to my planned task.

There are a number of things occurring in this moment: "The nines" are creating and resolving a discussion that determines positions in their social world and identities through relationships. Tom, now established as the eldest in the group, is taking charge of the chaos and offering me a recognised script to assert my own control. He assumes (and quite rightly, along with Olivia) that the others will recognise and respect these "teacher-cues". Olivia, in this moment, is happy to follow the teacher-led discussion and, although this will not always be the case, is quite content to listen and see what happens next. However, I am wary in this first session of presenting myself through these cues. My own identity in the space is still being produ*s*ed and I worry that if I take up the cues of a teacher too early, I might lose part of our potentially playful relationship. In not taking up these scripts, I am simultaneously attempting to rescript and produ*s*e new meanings and roles for an adult in these children's space. In subsequent sessions, however, as the abovementioned "decent to chaos" reigns at times, I try out all the "teacherly" actions at my disposal, including shifting the group to a classroom in order to create a more "schooled" environment, as described in Chapter Five.

Performing and producing childhood and childlore in the post-digital age is not necessarily restricted to performing child-like mischievous responses. Tom and Olivia are produ*s*ing children's classroom roles and children's experiences of childhood through their schooled bodies and performances. They are "playing out" classroom lore in their bodies, gestures and language. These performances are still agentive, still moments of rescripting and re-appropriating texts of the classroom, even when they are perpetuating and produ*s*ing what appears to be an aetonormative narrative. Tom and Olivia's performance and production of the classroom go both against and with "the nines'" performances, as the three boys' unruly performances gave Tom and Olivia the opportunity to play the game of being well-

behaved, attentive children. These performances of childhood are interwoven, with words, claps and gestures occurring across the space, interrupting and encouraging more action and interaction between the two groups.

Conclusion

This chapter's focus has been on the individual to examine how they fit as players and children within the broader communities of the playground and childhood. In the above three performances, we see the participants playing into communities that are actual, imagined and created. In the case of Messi, generally othered by the other participants, he performed solitary play that invited literacies and knowledge from people and spaces where he felt valued and included (sports, family, football practice) while also creating a text he was proud of for an imagined audience that appreciated his expertise and work. After creating his video-play-text, he also bravely attempted to form a community with Quinn in defiance of Sam. In the second video-play-text examined, Olivia prodused an environment of play for herself in the middle of the play-space. She also drew on her "out of school" literacies and knowledge, playing songs that doubly functioned to assert her play performance in the space and to demonstrate her everyday texts and social world to the others. These songs both invited and created a community of listeners (who joined in the dance and later remixed the songs in play, as discussed in Chapter Six), while at the same time Olivia's control over the texts meant she established control over her text and was able to negotiate the community she invited in. In the final example of play by the participants, Rowan, Alasdair and Lewis created a community of "nines", making meaning and creating an identity based on their age. Rowan and Alasdair then performed a serious negotiation of their relationship through language play, rescripting descriptors of friendship to create the flexible and complex title of "best frienemies". These texts exemplify the agentive performances of play by individuals who brought their expertise, funds of knowledge and layered literacies to the "research playground" and yet, they are also importantly representative of folkloric play performed across the other 437 video-play-texts and 180 observational videos produced in the research encounter.

The use of images alongside text in the chapter served to enrich and illustrate the descriptions, and also to connect the research stories to the real children. Visuals are important in the way they ground the viewer, connecting these stories to the child. In the three above examples, the children worked to rescript the research environment, play materials and their relationships with one another and me to produse their own experiences

of childhood and communities of play. Their various choices of play demonstrate that through agentive, reimaging of context, children all play a part in produ*s*ing their own experiences of childhood in the post-digital age.

Chapter Eight. Conclusion

This study has examined childhood in the post-digital age *through* play. One reason for this is that it is a delightful and gentle approach to working with young people and learning about their worlds and experiences. Also, importantly, as outlined in the thesis' introduction, there is something intrinsic to the very nature of childhood that scripts a playful response. This is not to argue that adults do not play, but rather that playfulness is part of how we conceive of the child, how we interact with children and, through a combination of nature and nurture, how children respond to the world around them. The three previous chapters examined how children *prodused* their experiences of childhood in performances of play. The focus was on the agentive, creative actions of the children as they negotiated and *rescripted* aspects of their lives that were in many ways determined by their child status, such as their access to everyday texts, restricted movement, behaviour codes and peer relationships. This study has demonstrated that through performances of games, lore and mischief, children are able to take some control of their lives. Children's experiences of childhood have been shown to be not wholly determined by the adults in their lives. In this concluding chapter, I revisit my two research questions –

1. How are children producing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age?

2. What are the implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today?

– in order to weave together the final threads of this exploration of childhood and play in the post-digital age. However, I will first pause to reflect on the extraordinary changes and challenges that have occurred in the past year.

In the final few months of writing, the world was affected by two paradigm shifting events: the COVID-19 pandemic, and the worldwide protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Both these occurrences led to a reconsideration of the digital, childhood and play in the post-digital age with an eye to future research priorities and avenues. To conclude with a look forward, away from the children's video-play-texts of the project, might at first seem surprising, yet this thesis at its core is an examination of children's experiences of childhood. To discuss children's experiences in the post-digital age without contextualising them within the world they live in would ignore much of what makes up children's everyday experiences; the very focus of this thesis. The past few months have reframed many of the questions regarding, for instance, children's right to play, access to play and who gets to play. This thesis has examined how, within adult designed structures,

children were able to perform agency, creativity and negotiation through play. This conclusion follows the same trajectory, focusing on the child and their experiences in play within the wider context of the changing world in order to demonstrate the continued importance of this research inquiry for understanding childhood and play in the post-digital age.

#PandemicPlay: Children, COVID-19 and the Digital

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 has led not only to interruptions to regular work and travel schedules, but also to a swift and aggressive uptake of the digital across the world of work, education and recreation. At the beginning of my doctoral journey in 2016, in conversations both inside and outside academia, I encountered many critical comments relating to children's use of the digital, particularly in relation to screen time. I found that conceptualising the digital as "just another" toy in the toybox was counter to the general narrative and, further, that my theories of play as possible across spaces (including the playground, "schooled" environments and the digital) and geographies (including both actual and imagined communities) where not willingly accepted. However, there has been a fundamental shift in the psyche of society during the coronavirus pandemic, challenging and changing how adults and children use the digital in their everyday lives and the ways in which digital technologies allow us to "stay together, apart".

Screen time, while not a forgotten concept in any way, has taken on a new role in children's (and adults') lives over the past year, and as "most children learn at home remotely" (Jeffreys, 2021), the affordances of the digital as a space of connectedness, education, play and wellbeing are being re-evaluated in numerous research projects and school and workplace initiatives. As Cowan (2020) acknowledges in a recent article on play in pandemic times, the "encouragement of online play contrasts the World Health Organisation's 2019 warnings about 'gaming disorder' and a narrative of gaming addition, suggesting the pandemic is forcing recognition of the value and potentials of digital play" (para. 9). However, as society slowly transitions into a post-vaccine world, there is a risk that this recognition of the positive aspects of digital connectedness in the post-digital age, such as those demonstrated in this research project, will face a backlash with fears and anxieties regarding screen time tied to relief that we can once again meet and play in person. This is already potentially on the cards, with a call from academics for a "summer of play" to mitigate the negative experiences of lockdown on children (Weale, 2021). While this would be condoned by this study, which looks at the creative, agentive work possible through play, particularly focused on embodied interactions and community

experiences of childhood, I fear that such a focus on providing the opposite experience of lockdown for children would reinstate the problematic (and unnecessary) binary between digital and physical play.

Working on the theories of this thesis during the pandemic invited me to reconsider how play and the digital were being rescripted by children (and adults) in response to the "scriptive thing[s]" of the pandemic as they related to environment (stay-at-home orders, distance requirements and subsequent various lockdown rules), materials (face masks, hand sanitiser, COVID symptoms) and people (increased online interactions, staying apart, forming bubbles). I was excited to learn from my sister-in-law in Canada that her children (aged six and nine at the start of the pandemic) were staying connected with their friends, who kept "popping up on screens all over the house" through various platforms and online messenger services, rescripting the home space into a space of potential interaction and encounters. At the beginning of the pandemic, my daughter turned two years old, and while she was essentially unaware of the situation and enjoyed her time at home in play with her parents, she engaged more online with friends, family and television, and I witnessed her rescripting texts from her television shows and digital encounters into her play, adapting and reworking these new games, lore and language around her own context of our flat. Watching *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom* (her preferred show at the time), she learnt tag and was eager to play it with us, and to work TV show's text into her environment, materials and people, having us act as characters from the show as we developed the game of tag into a tag-hide-and-seek-obstacle-course game around the flat.

There is a growing interest in children's experiences of play in the pandemic, with scholars keen to explore

> how play has endured, adapted and responded to these restrictions… [and the] …
> ways in which the virus itself has featured in children's play, and what this can tell us
> about children's experiences of the pandemic" (Cowan, 2020, para. 2).

A new project has recently been launched by the University College London (UCL) Knowledge Lab "exploring how children play during the COVID-19 pandemic" (Institute of Education UCL, 2020). There are also social movements keen to document children's play in these unique times; for instance, experiences of pandemic play are being collected and collated on Twitter by play scholars using the hashtag "PandemicPlay" in an effort to build a digital archive of sorts, sharing stories of children's experiences of childhood through play during the pandemic.

While my own personal circumstances were affected due to childcare centres being closed, mid-writing I came across an endnote in Boyes' (1990) *Reassessment of the work of a Folklorists: Alice Bertha Gomme* that outlined Gomme's work in her role as Secretary of the Committee of organising the *Conversazione*, a major event that "formed part of the International Folk-Lore Congress, organised by the Folk-Lore Society and held in London from the 1-7th October, 1891"; Boyes states that Gomme, "did much of the preparatory work while also coping with an outbreak of chicken-pox among her seven sons" (1990, p.208). While these circumstances are clearly very different, it served as a reminder to me that children's play (and academic work focused on that play) has endured through periods of uncertainty before.

#BLM: Black Lives Matter and Children Produsing Childhood

The second major event was a prescient shift in global awareness of institutionalised and structural racism that arose in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and was followed by calls for academics around the world to reassess their work, looking to identify how these structures play out in their work and professional contexts. In her UKLA Keynote in 2019, Lalitha Vasudevan brought attention to the ways in which children's race determines their differing experiences of play, pointing to the tragic and unpardonable shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice by a police officer who saw Tamir playing with a toy gun and recognised this act not as play, but as a threat. My study of Scottish children's play seemed at first worlds away from this important discourse, and yet, three of my participants were Black and issues of race came up twice in the children's play. The firsts time was when a white child (aged 10) placed a filter on the photo of two of his friends (one Black, aged six, and the other white, aged 10). The filter darkened the photo and as the boy proudly showed off what he called the "darkened photo"; the younger Black boy thought for a moment and then said, "That's racist" (LAC). The remixing and rescripting of Black culture in play was also present in the research playground, including Tom's video-play-text of freestyle rapping to the performance of the Ugandan meme "Do you know dawei?" at LAC. Further, the theories of a "scriptive thing" are drawn from Bernstein's (2011) work on race in children's literature. Race therefore permeates the children's experiences, performances and my analytical lens applied in this thesis.

In reconsidering the historical anthologies, there is a lack of critical discussion about race, particularly in relation to whiteness as the default playing child. Past anthologies from the United Kingdom in particular have focused on class, gender and age – all important factors

that make up children's experience of childhood – while race is not mentioned. Much of the criticism of the field has, until now, been leveraged at the class oversights and the painting of general childhoods while drawing on particular pools of children from distinct social classes. Gomme's 1894 work is often seen as a middle-class perspective on play, and while Boyes (1990) worked to debunk much of this claim, there is an overall feeling of a middle-class experience of childhood, free from work and stress. In the Opies' (1959) text, they state that they deliberately did not collect lore and language from "private, fee-charging establishments", preferring a more general focus "representative of the child population as a whole" (p. 8). However, in that general focus, there are numerous accounts of racialised language directed at Black, Latino, Asian and minority communities (BLAME), and while the population of Latinx people in the United Kingdom in the 1950s was very small, the rhymes imported from the United States also imported the prejudiced language and lore of children.

In more recent years, no large study has focused on race in the United Kingdom. In the *Playing the Archives* (2018) study, one of the playgrounds was both racially and linguistically diverse, but there have been no publications in relation to their findings yet. Through email exchanges, I have discussed with Julia Bishop and Jackie Marsh this lack of focus in the UK and agreed that the closest reference would be a chapter published in Steve Roud's (2011) anthology by Mavis Curtis entitled *The Multicultural Playground*. In the United States, on the other hand, there have been three highly regarded works of folkloric children's play published in the last 20 years, drawing on fieldwork undertaken in the last 40 years: Jemie (2003), Gaunt (2006) and the recently published work by Soileau (2016), which won the 2018 Opie Award and the 2018 Chicago Folklore Prize.

So why highlight these two events here, in the final comments of a thesis that focuses on episodes of play performed in the early months of 2018? This thesis has employed an epistemology of becoming and being, and as the research study enters the world in the form of this text and its accompanying documentary, it will interact with that world, becoming a new text, read according to the context of that time. All the participants' video-play-texts are situated play in a particular time and place, date stamped by their clothing, technology and media, but also through their choices of play, the movements of their bodies, and their relationships to me and others in the playground. Further entrenched in time and place is my reading of these texts and the lenses I choose to apply (Sutton-Smith, 1999). My focus on the participants' agentive production, performances of childhood and relationship to technology speaks to a particular modern time and framing of childhood.

Just as Gomme (1894) presents a late Victorian picture of childhood and the Opies (1959) present a post-war image of children at play, my thesis, the theories I apply and the resulting depiction of my participants and their actions is a representation of childhood in the post-digital age. The post-digital age in which this text emerges has shifted and altered in both subtle and ground-breaking ways over the past five years. Research on childhood, play and the post-digital age needs to take into account such shifts in order to be responsive and reflective of children's lived experiences of childhood today, today. The theories, methodologies and approach to childhood experiences through play offer critical insight into children's lives, and for such research to remain present and affective, it must continue to take into account the world in which we live, and, crucially, what children as agentive, *produsers* and *rescripters* of their own childhood experiences make of it.

Returning to my Research Questions

My first research question asks how children are producing and performing play and childlore in the post-digital age. Answering this question required a definition of play for the thesis, which I created through examining play anthologies of children's games, lore and language from the past 125 years in the United Kingdom. My theorisation of play, presented in Chapter Three, builds on folkloric forms of play as *games* and *lore* and also incorporates *mischief* as a third – and arguably just as traditional – form of play. My theory of play in the thesis is applied to traditional play spaces, including the playground and jungle gym, and also to non-traditional spaces such as the classroom, nurture rooms like the "Owl Nest", music/library rooms, gym halls and all other spaces occupied by the children in this study. This theory could be applied in future studies to the digital landscape of children's interaction to understand performances of play across platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, as well as popular game sites, to examine the playful responses of both the child at home playing the game and their avatar in the game world. The three highlighted forms of folkloric play may in some ways limit the scope of play possibilities, such as when play falls outside of the parameters of what constitutes a "game", "lore" or "mischief", however in my study I found ample flexibility within these three forms of folkloric play to account for a thorough investigation into the children's performances of play across the research playgrounds.

My use of creative methods also functioned to answer the first question. As recounted in Chapter Four and later expanded upon in the three findings chapters, my initial focus on the digital as a "scriptive thing" served to ground the study in the material for the process

of data generation. However, in the analysis process as outlined in "Chapter Four (continued)", I expanded my scope and my understanding of what constituted a scriptive thing. This process brought the thesis into the post-digital age, finding that "how" the children play with the digital as a scriptive tool in play was also how they played with the scriptive prompts provided by environment, materials (immaterial and material) and people (imagined and actual). The digital tools that initially grounded the study in the "digital age" were taken up in the playground as simply another toy from the toybox. Interaction between online and offline play in the playground was also found to be seamless and unremarkable for the children and, as such, an unhelpful paradigm to frame the study. While this was a novel finding with these children, it is supported by theories of the post-digital and similar findings with regard to children's ability to integrate the newest language, play forms and technology into their play acting as remixers, reproducers and rescripters (Bishop and Curtis, 2001; Marsh, et al., 2020; Willett, 2011). Theories of new materialism helped guide the development of this approach to play. Further, this supported my understanding of play as multimodal and requiring a "more than words" approach in an epistemology of seeing and hearing children. The children's creation of their play-video-texts are understood as examples of children performing and producing their own identities, needs and experiences in play as they prodused these texts of childhood.

In reference to my second research question, which explores the implications of children's play choices for understanding childhood today, the thesis' recognition of children as able to produse and rescript aspects of their own experiences of childhood means seeing and respecting children as beings. Recognising these performances of play as acts of becoming and growth meant engaging with children's play choices as a pedagogical process. This thesis positions children's productions as things of value, not only (and importantly) within peer-to-peer relations, but along pedagogical lines. The study and the pedagogical understandings brought to the research encounter also demonstrate the benefits of employing creative research methods that invited "the unexpected" (Ptolomey and Nelson, 2020) and "lines of flight" which, in a paradigm of play, became "lines of fancy". The study examined children's ability to draw on their out-of-school texts and funds of knowledge in an attempt to rescript their everyday texts as "everywhere texts", even when they were deemed inappropriate or "out-of-place" texts within the schooled environments. This study has demonstrated children's ability to take risks in the research playground, inviting such "inappropriate" texts and literacies into the schooled space to question and challenge some of the structures and assumptions about children and childhood that they interact with on a daily basis. The research playgrounds of the study were spaces of

possibility for the participants because they were created in safe, nurturing, familiar environments, but also because they allowed for negotiation and challenging of the schooled space narratives of performance. Play as a method of interaction, engagement and inquiry opened up spaces for exploration and becoming in the research environment, and this project has in turn opened up future possible avenues for research and pedagogical approaches and the application of these theories and methodologies.

TL; DR (Too Long; Didn't Read)

Children continue to produce and perform play and childlore in the post-digital age through rescripting their environment, materials and people around them in their games, lore and mischief as agentive produsers of their own play narratives. The implications of these children's play choices for understanding childhood today are that despite the numerous false binaries that pervade adult behaviours across contexts of school, home and digital spaces, children agentively navigate school discourses and digital literacies in playful performances that demonstrate their knowledge and sophistication of their bodies, safety, agency and literacies.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Play Anthologies

Scottish works of note include: Chambers (1826) *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*; Nicholson (1897) *Golspie: Contributions to its Folklore*; Maclagen (1901) *Games and Diversions of Argyleshire*; Ford (1904) *Children's Rhymes, Games, Songs and Stories*; Briggs and Douglas (1933) *Traditional Singing Games from Scotland and the Border*; Ritchie (1949) *Scottish Home Service Broadcasts*; Ritchie (1964) *The Singing Street*; and Ritchie (1965) *Golden City*; Fraser (1975) *Dae Ye Min' Langsyne? A Pot-pourri of Games, Rhymes and Ploys of Scottish Childhood*.

Further works this study draws on from England include: Halliwell (1841) *Nursery Rhymes of England* and (1849) *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales*; Miss Allen (1882) *Children's Game-Rhymes in Horsham, Surrey*; Udal (1889) *Dorsetshire Children's Games*; Northall (1892) *English Folk-Rhymes*; Pugh (1903) *"Some London Street Amusements"*; Douglas (1916) *London Street Games*; Opie and Opie (1959, 1969, 1985, 1997; and Opie, I., 1993); Roud (2011) *The Lore of the Playground* and Kelsey (2019) *Games, Rhymes, and Wordplay of London Children*.

I draw upon the films: from Scotland—Ritchie, Townsend and McIsaac (1951) *The Singing Street*; England—Daiken (1957) *One Potato, Two Potato*; and Northern Ireland—Hammond (1971) *The Dusty Bluebells*.
In the United States I draw upon the works: Newell (1884) *Games and Songs of American Children* (amended and extended in 1903); Bolton (1888) *The Counting-out of Rhymes of Children*; Howard (1938) *Folk Jingles of American Children: A collection of rhymes used by children today"* (doctoral thesis); Brewster (1953) *American Non-Singing Games*; Abrahams (1969) *Jump-rope Rhymes: A Dictionary*; Knapp and Knapp (1976) *One Potato, Two Potato: The Secret Education of American Children*; Abrahams (1969) *Counting-Out Rhymes: A Dictionary*; Bronner (1988) *American Children's Folklore: A Book of Rhymes, Games, Jokes, Stories, Secret Languages, Beliefs and Camp Legends for Parents, Grandparents, Teachers, Counselors and All Adults Who Were Once Children*; Merrill-Mirsky (1986) *'Girls' Handclapping Games in Three Los Angeles Schools*; Gaunt (2006) *The Games Black Girls Play*; Soileau (2016) *Yo' Mama, Mary Mack, and Boudreaux and Thibodeaux*.

Further studies in the antipodes include Sutton-Smith (1959) *The Games of New Zealand Children*; Turner (1972) *Cinderella Dressed in Yella*.

Appendix B: Ethics Approval from the College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Monday, 27 November 2017

Dear Elizabeth Nelson

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Understanding Online and Offline Playground Culture and Lore in the Digital Age

Application No: 400170023

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: __01.01.2018_____
- Project end date: _____03.10.2019_____
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research:(http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_227599_en.pdf) (Unless there is an agreed exemption to this, noted here).
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:
  http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

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Appendix C: Ethics Amendments Approval

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

College Research Ethics

Request for Amendments - Reviewer Feedback

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

_____

Application Details

Staff Research Ethics Application   ☐   Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application   ☒

Application Number: 400170023

Applicant's Name: Elizabeth Nelson

Project Title: Understanding Online and Offline Playground Culture and Lore in the Digital Age

Original Date of Application Approval: 27/11/2017

End Date of Application Approval: 03/10/2019

Date of Amendments Approved: 23/03/2018

Outcome: **Amendments Approved**

_____

Reviewer Comments

Approved, but given field of the sample and particular locations suggest the Participant information Sheet includes a warning that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee as per 8a of the original ethics application form.

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any enquiries, please email socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk.

Appendix D: Larger version of Figure 2
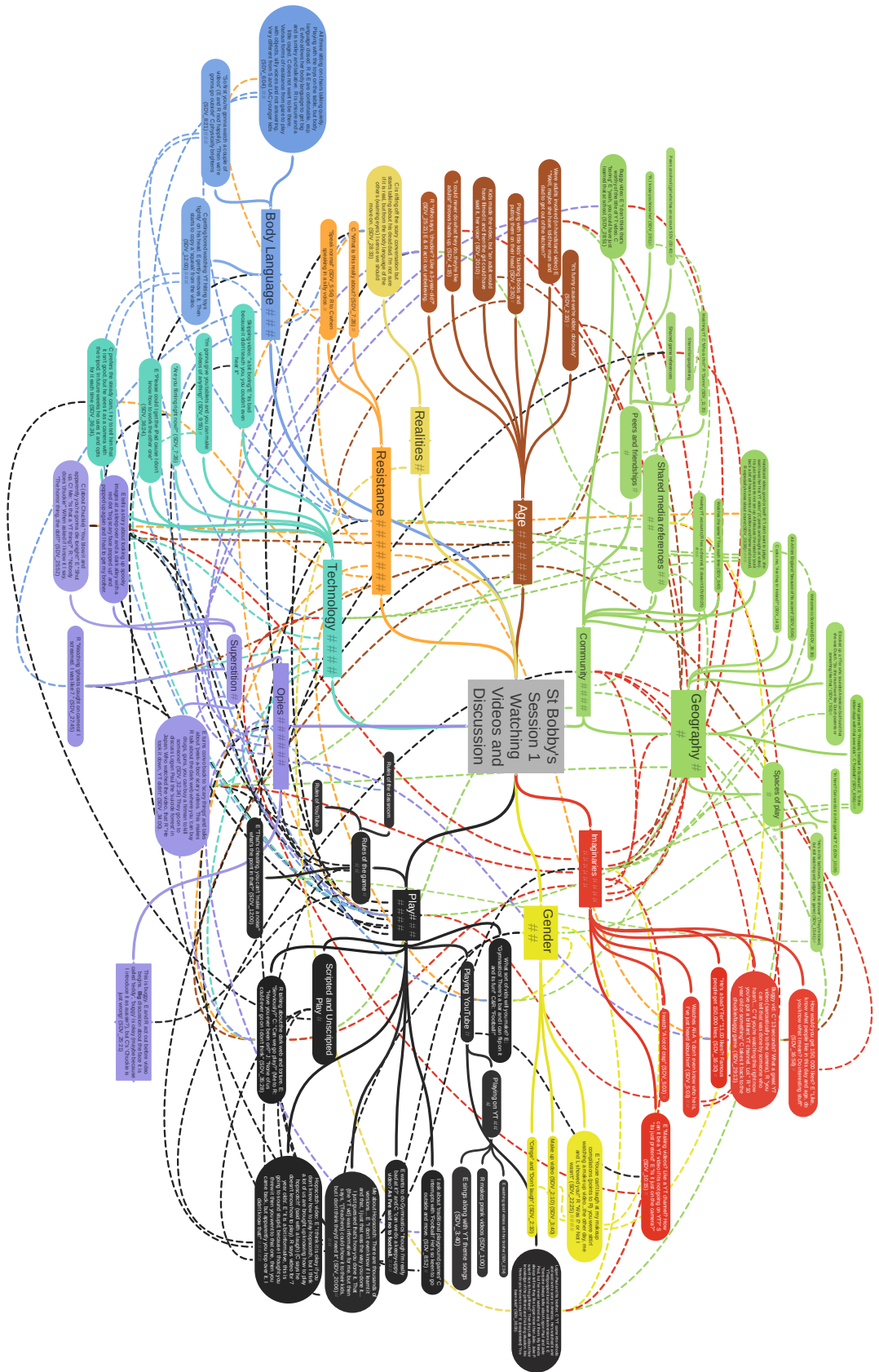
Appendix E: Larger version of Figure 3

Theory of childhood & Play

Performances

Community
Anne Haas Dyson
'unofficial worlds'

Words

Play

Responses

Direct
(teacherly)

movement

Geography
Spaces of play
Landscape of
environment

Stories

PROMPT

silence

Age
-Pride & Cringe
- negotiation & control

Resistance

Indirect
(active resistance)

Bodies

Sounds

Materiality
'every day texts'
-Johnson & Vasudevan
- technological materiality

Imaginaries
- spaces & communities
- Karen Wolhwend
- writing culture 'future
possibilities' from
'imagined past'

Childlore
- Play analogies
(Gomme, Opies,
Roud)

Gender
- how does it
manifest in
boys & girls
- Butler

Appendix F: Data Spreadsheets

Participant Video Catalogue-St Bobby's

#	Name	Type	Length	Style	People	Content	Where
Session 1							
Session 1: V1	VID_20180216_142155.mp4	Video	10:21	Propped up	Connor and Robert	Playing football/basketball.	Big Huawei session 1
Session 1: V2	VID_20180216_142731.mp4	Video	04:28	Propped up	Connor and Robert	Playing football.	
Session 1: V3	VID_20180216_145118.mp4	Video	22:17	Propped up at a height	All the kids	Playing basketball	
Session 1: P1	IMG_20180216_141200.jpg			Selfie	Connor		
Session 1: P2	IMG_20180216_141202.jpg			Selfie	Connor		
Session 1: P3	IMG_20180216_141202.jpg			Selfie	Connor		
Session 1:V4	IMG_0177.mov	Video	00:00	Me holding	Emily		iPad session 1
Session 1: V5	IMG_0180	Video	00:57	Me holding	Emily	Monkey bars	
Session 1: V6	IMG_0181	Video	00:56	Propped up	Emily	Monkey bars	
Session 1: V7	IMG_0182	Video	00:02	Propped up time lapse	Emily	Monkey bars	
Session 1: V8	IMG_0185	Video	00:03	Propped up time lapse	Emily	Monkey bars	
Session 1: V9	IMG_0188	Video	00:25	Propped up	Emily	Cartwheels	
Session 1: V10	IMG_0189	Video	00:17	Propped up	Emily	Cartwheels	
Session 1: V11	IMG_0190	Video	00:21	Propped up	Emily	Cartwheels	
Session 1: V12	IMG_0191	Video	00:00	Propped up	Emily	Adjusting camera	
Session 1: V13	IMG_0192	Video	00:01	Propped up time lapse	Emily	Cartwheels	
Session 1: V14	IMG_0195	Video	00:44	Propped up	Emily	Ropes monkey bars	
Session 1: V15	IMG_0196	Video	00:02	Propped up time lapse	Emily	Ropes monkey bars	
Session 1: V16	IMG_0199	Video	00:05	Propped up time lapse	Emily and Lauren	Ropes monkey bars	
Session 1: V17	IMG_0202	Video	10:36	Propped up	All the kids	Playing basketball	
Session 1: V18	IMG_0203	Video	00:35	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	The cup game	
Session 2							
Session 2:V1	VID_20180223_144600	Video	15:02	Propped up at a height	Connor, Robert, Jamie and Jimmy	Basketball skills	Big Huawei session 2
Session 2: V2	VID_20180223_145546	Video	09:23	Propped up at a height	Connor, Robert, Jamie and Jimmy	Basketball skills	
Session 2: V3	IMG_0226	Video	00:33	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	The cup game	iPad session 2
Session 2: V4	IMG_0227	Video	00:54	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	The cup game	
Session 2: V5	IMG_0231	Video	00:13	Selfie	Emily	Looking at herself moving her ears	
Session 2: V6	IMG_0237	Video	00:12	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Music jokes	
Session 2: V7	IMG_0238	Video	00:13	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Music jokes	
Session 2: V8	IMG_0239	Video	00:08	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Music jokes	
Session 2: V9	IMG_0241	Video	00:06	Propped up	Lauren	Music jokes	
Session 2: V10	IMG_0242	Video	00:16	Held up	Emily and Lauren	Prank peekabo	
Session 2: V11	IMG_0247	Video	00:05	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Musical jokes 'Celtic'	
Session 2: V12	IMG_0248	Video	00:53	Selfie	Emily and Lauren	Vlogging- animal video parody	
Session 3							
Session 3: P1	IMG_20180309_145927	Photo		Selfie	Jude	Dressed up and funny face	Big Huawei session 3
Session 3:V1	VID_20180309_142151	Video	00:17	Held up	Robert, Jude and Lauren	Prank peekabo	
Session 3: V2	VID_20180309_144144	Video	00:26	Held up	Connor, Jamie and Robert	Football skills and prank	
Session 3: V3	VID_20180309_145307	Video	05:31	Selfie	Jude- as Judith Cassboy	Vlogging- parcour, silly language, jungle gym	
Session 3: V4	IMG_0814	Video	00:19	Propped up selfie	Emily	Dancing	iPad Session 3
Session 3: V5	IMG_0815	Video	00:23	Propped up selfie	Emily	Dancing	
Session 3: V6	IMG_0816	Video	00:02	Selfie	Emily	Adjusting camera	
Session 3: V7	IMG_0817	Video	00:05	Held up	Lauren	Prank peekabo	
Session 3: V8	IMG_0818	Video	02:31	Selfie	Lauren	Walking	
Session 3: V9	IMG_0827	Video	00:10	Held up	Robert and Emily	Prank peekabo	
Session 3: V10	IMG_0828	Video	00:08	Held up	Jude	Playing with the camera	
Session 3: V11	IMG_0829	Video	03:07	Held up	All the kids variously	Running feet, walking through the corridors, going to see the boys playing sport and peekabo	
Session 3: V12	IMG_0830	Video	00:28	Time lapse	Emily, Lauren and Jude	Basketball skills, running and monkey bars.	
Session 3: V13	IMG_0834	Video	00:50	Selfie	Emily	Singing 'Dodie -Would you be so kind'	
Session 3: V14	IMG_0835	Video	00:28	Selfie	Emily	Video prank	
Session 3: P2	IMG_0822	Photo		Held up		Corridor	
Session 3: P3	IMG_0837	Photo		Selfie filtered	Emily	Mirror face	
Session 3: P3	IMG_0838	Photo		Selfie filtered	Emily	Mirror face	
Session 3: V14	SDV_0300	Video	00:05	Tripod	The group	Moving the camera out of the room	Stationary cam sessio
Session 3: V15	SDV_0301	Video	00:05	Tripod	Connor	walking down the corridor	
Session 3: V16	SDV_0302	Video	01:27	Tripod	Connor	Basketball skills	
Session 3: V17	SDV_0303	Video	02:17	Tripod	Connor and Jamie	Basketball skills	
Session 3: V18	SDV_0304	Video	04:06	Tripod	Connor and Jamie	Basketball and football skills	
Session 3: V19	SDV_0305	Video	01:45	Tripod	Connor and Jamie	Basketball and football skills	
Session 3: V20	SDV_0306	Video	03:45	Tripod	Connor and Jamie	Basketball and football skills	
Session 3: V21	SDV_0307	Video	13:31	Tripod	Connor and Jamie	Ball through a tyre	
Session 4							
Session 4: P1	IMG_20180316_132904	Photo	-	Selfie	Connor	Full face	Big Huawei Session 4
Session 4: P2	IMG_20180316_134911	Photo	-	Selfie	Connor	Upper brow	
Session 4: P3	IMG_20180316_134912	Photo	-	Selfie	Connor	Upper brow	
Session 4: V1	VID_20180316_134938	Video	00:29	Selfie	Connor	Running around madly about the dinner hall	
Session 4: V2	VID_20180316_140835	Video	01:28	Propped up	Connor, Jude and Stephanie	Feeding friends challenge	
Session 4: V3	VID_20180316_143046	Video	00:07	Propped up	Jude, Stephanie	Setting up for football	
Session 4: V4	VID_20180316_144754	Video	16:39	Propped up	Robert, Connor, Jimmy, Stephanie, …	Football on the court	
Session 4: V5	VID_20180316_144816	Video	00:02	Selfie	Jude	Adjusting camera	
Session 4: V6	IMG_0847	Video	01:03		Emily, Lauren and Stephanie	Chubby Bunny Challenge	iPad session 4
Session 4: P4	IMG_0848	Photo	-	Selfie	Emily, Lauren and Stephanie	Chubby bunny challenge after	
Session 4: V7	IMG_0849	Video	00:29	Selfie/held up	Emily, Lauren, Stephanie and Robert	Chubby bunny challenge spit up	
Session 4: P5	IMG_0850	Photo	-	Selfie	Emily	Chubby bunny full mouth	
Session 4: V8	IMG_0851	Video	01:11	Held up	Emily, other running around	Trying to throw and catch mmallows	
Session 4: V9	IMG_0852	Video	01:01	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Feeding friends challenge	
Session 4: V10	IMG_0853	Video	00:43	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Feeding friends challenge	
Session 4: V11	IMG_0854	Video	00:08	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Feeding friends parody	
Session 4: V12	IMG_0855	Video	00:03	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Feeding friends Harry Potter parody	
Session 4: V13	IMG_0856	Video	00:04	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Feeding friends Harry Potter parody	
Session 4: V14	IMG_0857	Video	00:05	Propped up	Emily	Feeding friends parody	
Session 4: V15	IMG_0858	Video	00:36	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Feeding friends challenge	
Session 4: V16	IMG_0860	Video	00:32	Propped up	Emily, Lauren and Robert	Feeding friends challenge bombed	
Session 4: V17	IMG_0861	Video	00:01	Selfie	Emily, Lauren and Robert	Adjusting camera	
Session 4: V18	IMG_0862	Video	00:12	Held up	All the kids variously	Running up to me babbling	
Session 4: V19	IMG_0881	Video	00:21	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Dancing	
Session 4: V20	IMG_0882	Video	00:42	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Dancing	
Session 4: V21	IMG_0883	Video	00:22	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Dancing	
Session 4: V22	IMG_0884	Video	00:43	Propped up	Emily and Lauren	Dancing	
Session 4: V23	SDV_0312	Video	00:23	Tripod-Carried	All the kids variously	Singing to shoes	
Session 4: V24	SDV_0314	Video	03:12	Tripod	Connor then Stephanie, Emily and La…	Singing to shoes then Chubby bunny girls' team	
Session 4: V25	SDV_0315	Video	13:42	Tripod	All the kids variously	Chubby bunny boys' team then running	
Session 4: V26	SDV_0316	Video	10:48	Tripod	All the kids variously	Feeding friends challenge running around	
Session 4: V27	SDV_0317	Video	09:11	Tripod	Stephanie, Robert, Jimmy, Connor, J…	Football on the court, camera fall	
Session 4: V28	SDV_0318	Video	00:07	Tripod-Selfie	Robert	Message to me 'okay Libby…'	
Session 4: V29	SDV_0319	Video	23:41	Tripod	Stephanie, Robert, Jimmy, Connor, J…	Football on the court	

Researcher Video Catalogue- LAC

#	Name	Type	Length	Style	People	What	Location
Session 1							
Session 1:Stationary Cam1	SDV_0276	Video	00:56:57	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Discussion and watching YT, playing and making videos	Quiet Room
Session 1:Stationary Cam2	SDV_0277	Video	00:22:17	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	G-tig, watching their videos, more playing.	Quiet Room
Session 1:LH1	VID_20180212_112041	Video	00:47:26	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Discussion and watching YT, playing and making videos	Quiet Room
Session 1:LH2	VID_20180212_113716	Video	00:15:29	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	G-tig, watching their videos, more playing.	Quiet Room
Session 1:LH3	VID_20180212_113756	Video	00:00:37	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Getting ready for lunch- still playing	Quiet Room
Session 1:LH4	VID_20180112_113806	Video	00:00:07	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	All leaving the room	Quiet Room
Session 2							
Session 2:Stationary Cam1	SDV_0279	Video	00:28:07	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Watching their videos, playing 'football' with pokemon ball.	Quiet Room
Session 2:LH1	VID_20180212_142326	Video	00:41:34	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Discussion and watching YT	Quiet Room
Session 2:LH2	VID_20180212_144204	Video	00:15:09	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Playing running games	Outside Yard
Session 2:LH3	VID_20180212_150839	Video	00:26:22	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Watching their videos, playing 'football' with pokemon ball.	Quiet Room
Session 3							
Session 3:Stationary Cam1	SDV_0280	Video	01:11:43	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Discussion, watching YT, their videos and football inside	Quiet Room
Session 3:Stationary Cam2	SDV_0281	Video	00:07:45	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Football inside	Quiet Room
Session 3:LH1	VID_20180213_111224	Video	00:34:08	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Discussion and watching YT	Quiet Room
Session 3:LH2	VID_20180213_112111	Video	00:08:24	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Running around time lapse videos	Outside Yard
Session 3:LH3	VID_20180213_114859	Video	00:27:10	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Watching their videos and playing 'football' with a soft ball.	Quiet room
Session 4							
Session 4:Stationary Cam1	SDV_0282	Video	01:08:10	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Discussion, YT videos and Yoga challenge	Quiet Room
Session 4:Stationary Cam2	SDV_0283	Photo	00:30:21	Tripod	Quinn, Sam and Michael	Made up challenge, football 'part 2', girls vs. boys song	Quiet Room
Session 4:LH1	IMG_20180213_113559	Photo	-	Front	Poster	Poster outlining Bob Hughes' types of play	Quiet Room
Session 4:LH2	IMG_20180213_113605	Photo	-	Front	Poster	Poster outlining Bob Hughes' types of play	Quiet Room
Session 4:LH3	VID_20180213_140214	Video	00:33:09	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Discussion, YT videos and Yoga challenge	Quiet Room
Session 4:LH4	VID_20180213_142833	Video	00:25:25	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi	Feeding challenge and chubby bunny	Quiet Room
Session 4:LH5	VID_20180213_150447	Video	00:17:04	Front	Quinn, Sam and Michael	Football 'part 2', girls vs. boys songs	Quiet Room
Session 5							
Session 5:Stationary Cam1	SDV_0284	Video	00:37:52	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Discussion about YT and fun	Quiet Room
Session 5:Stationary Cam2	SDV_0285	Video	00:21:18	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Making videos (timelapses)	Quiet Room
Session 5:LH1	VID_20180214_113450	Video	00:35:14	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Discussion about YT and fun	Quiet Room
Session 5:LH2	VID_20180214_115040	Video	00:08:43	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Making videos (timelapses)	Quiet Room
Session 6							
Session 6:Stationary Cam1	SDV_0286	Video	01:09:34	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Discussion about YT and imagined audience. Making videos (building time	Quiet Room
Session 6:Stationary Cam2	SDV_0287	Video	00:27:07	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Making videos (building timelapses) M chat, Valentine biscuits	Quiet Room
Session 6:LH1	VID_20180214_140922	Video	00:38:42	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Discussion about YT and imagined audience	Quiet Room
Session 6:LH2	VID_20180214_145915	Video	00:48:13	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael and Maidie	Making videos (building timelapses) M chat, Valentine biscuits	Quiet Room
Session 7							
Session 7:LH1	SDV_0295	Photo	-	Selfie	Me	Blurry face selfie	Quiet Room
Session 7:LH2	VID_20180219_173656	Video	00:47:47	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Messi, Me	Editing the videos together, M first then Q, S and M.	Quiet Room
Session 7:LH3	VID_20180219_170230	Video	00:01:40	Front	Sam and Michael and me	Looking for 'mud soup' and deciding football or races	Outside Yard
Session 7:LH4	VID_20180219_170716	Video	00:00:24	Front-Rotated	Noone	Camera on side, atmospheric playground noises	Outside Yard
Session 7:LH5	VID_20180219_170805	Video	00:00:50	Front	Sam and Michael and me	Sam asks permission, Michael indecisive about play	Outside Yard
Session 7:LH6	VID_20180219_170950	Video	00:07:49	Front	Sam and Michael and me	M joins the B ball players, S plays alone making a video of perimeter	Outside Yard
Session 7:LH7	VID_20180219_171901	Video	00:00:11	Front	Sam and Michael	Deciding on what to play/video	Quiet Room
Session 7:LH8	VID_20180219_171915	Video	00:00:13	Front	Sam and Michael	Editing videos with app, other kids want to join	Quiet Room
Session 7:LH9	VID_20180219_172756	Video	00:08:26	Front	Sam and Michael and Peter	Sam and Peter make videos, Michael continues editing	Quiet Room
	VID_20180219_173024	Video	00:01:09	Front	Sam and Michael and Peter		Quiet Room
Session 8							
Session 8:LH1	SDV_0295	Video	00:56:44	Tripod	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Peter, Thomas, Lola	Playing 'pokemon cards challenge' and deciding what to play	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH2	VID_20180226_163505	Video	00:16:53	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Peter, Thomas, Lola	Making movies and deciding what to play	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH3	VID_20180226_164229	Video	00:05:01	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Peter, Thomas, Lola		Quiet Room
Session 8:LH4	VID_20180226_165104	Video	00:06:52	Front	Quinn, Sam, Michael, Peter, Lola	Rotated* Boys make movie about wrestling and Lola does a puzzle alone.	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH5	VID_20180226_170518	Video	00:00:04	Front	Peter d, Sam and Quinn	P starting filming with Q and S bounces his bouncy ball	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH6	VID_20180226_172047	Video	00:15:14	Front	Michael, Sam and Quinn	Playing spin the pen, spell your crush	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH7	VID_20180226_172337	Video	00:00:10	Front	Michael, Sam and Quinn	Rewatch their video	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH8	VID_20180226_172615	Video	00:00:13	Front	Michael, Sam and Quinn	Boys on floor laugh and decide new video	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH9	VID_20180226_173019	Video	00:03:58	Front	Michael, Sam and Quinn	Boys play truth or dare	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH10	VID_20180226_174042	Video	00:03:15	Front	Michaela and Sam and Quinn	Michael sings/yells 'my bf gave me an apple', rewatch as a girl hums it	Quiet Room
Session 8:LH11	VID_20180226_174400	Video	00:03:05	Front	Michael, Sam, Quinn and two girls not in it	Reprise 'I shoved it up his bum' and girls showing me videos	Quiet Room

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