

## **Segments and stutters: Early Years Teachers and Becoming-Professional**

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### **Abstract**

There has been extensive research and analysis of the professionalization of early childhood educators/teachers (Colley, 2006; Grieshaber and Canella, 2001; Osgood, 2006, 2009, 2010 2012; McGillivray, 2011). The recent promotion of a teacher-led workforce in England has further focused discussions on the modelling of early years teachers as professionals. In this paper I develop an alternative analysis using the concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to explore professionalization as a process of becoming. English policy focus has been on constituting early years teachers as reflective and rational subjects and moving toward a more narrow view of professional identity where school ready discourses are prevalent (Fairchild, 2015). My research with early years teachers reveals a complex negotiation and interchange with the demands of professional identity. This is analysed through Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of segmentation to refer to the forms of power which order the early years teachers' professional identity; and stuttering, to develop the forms of resistance and negotiation that suggest a more fluid model of becoming. In particular, my analysis focuses on how stuttering opens-up beyond the limits of a discourse analysis to suggest embodied and material forms of practice that are central to early years teaching. This methodology allows a move beyond 'the mind-matter and culture-nature divides of transcendental humanist thought' (Van der Tuin and Dolphijn, 2010: 155), towards a politics of possibility (Otterstad and Reinertsen, 2015), in which emerging early years teachers are engaged with an embodied and material world.

### **Keywords:**

Early Years Teacher; teacher training; Deleuze and Guattari; becoming-professional; segmentarity; stutters.

## **Introduction**

There has been extensive research into the professional identities of early childhood educators/teachers, which has revealed that these identities are discursive, plural, negotiated, and dependant on the situational context of the professional (Colley, 2006; Grieshaber and Canella, 2001; Osgood, 2006, 2009, 2010 2012; McGillivray, 2011). In England, policy has been focused on developing graduate leadership in early years teaching to address perceived deficits in the child's environment that must be addressed to ensure an adequate workforce (Osgood, 2006, 2009)<sup>i</sup>. Commencing in 2006, the new Early Years Professional Status pathway included progression routes for existing graduate practitioners and new routes for graduate practitioners with limited experience of working in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (CWDC, 2008). In this context of new forms of professionalization, new concerns and debates have emerged. There were initial concerns that new graduates might not be well received by the sector (McGillivray, 2011), that graduate leaders might marginalise those holding a wealth of practice-based experience (Osgood, 2009, 2012), and that graduate leaders were a perceived threat to the already established professional identity of the sector (Payler and Locke, 2013).

There has been much debate over the characteristics of the professional identity of graduates in ECEC. In England much of this centres on Government policy directives where professionalization appears to be based on qualification levels and training (DfE, 2013a, DfE, 2014). There is body of literature which problematizes the development of a single ECEC professional identity (for example Grieshaber and Cannella, 2001; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Urban, 2010a, 2010b; Osgood, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012). Within these conceptualizations professional identity is complex and multiple, regularly shifting and dependant on internal and external factors, for example, personal subjectivity, policy, further training, and exploration of professional practice.

The resultant policy and debates reveal a tension over whether the professionalization agenda has represented an expansive or restrictive opportunity for ECEC (Payler and Locke, 2013). The Government inclusion of certain pathways to graduate leadership (such as those with limited backgrounds in ECEC) has been deconstructed by researchers who consider the hegemonic positioning of professional status with limited professional practice (Miller, 2008; Osgood, 2010; Payler and Locke, 2013). These apparently divisive and hierarchical notions of ECEC professional identity provide the undercurrent for the contemporary dialogue between ECEC specialists, academics, and Government policy (DfE, 2013a; Nutbrown, 2012). This dialogue has led to debates as to what key skills and attributes quality practitioners should possess. In England, these debates have culminated in the State-mandated Teachers' Standards (Early Years) (DfE, 2013b) as the professional requirements for Early Years Teachers (DfE, 2015) as graduate leaders of practice. The recent recommendation of a teacher-led profession has resulted in the metamorphosis of the Early Years Professional to the Early Years Teacher, following a more school ready, adult-led notion of teaching in ECEC (DfE, 2013b). This change in focus has opened a space to consider wider debates surrounding professional identity and how this can be influenced while in training.

It is in this context that I carried out research into the experience of Early Years Teachers, through a small-scale research project examining the experience of students undergoing early years teaching training in the south of England. Drawing on the work of Deleuze (1990, 1994, 1997) and Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 1987), I explore the students' experiences as those of 'becoming' professional (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Instead of a linear model of the reflective practitioner in training steadily developing a professional identity based on attainment of professional standards (DfE 2013b), a more complex and unstable process is revealed. These experiences contrast with attempts of policy and professional bodies to order the process of attainment and achieving a certain kind of professional identity, which

can be analysed in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘segmentarity’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). While these policies consider professional identity a ‘life-long process’ (CWDC, 2008; DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014), what was found was a ‘segmentation’ in which professional identity is tracked and limited to a constricted form of reflection and individual identity.

The data revealed Early Years Teacher’s experiences of ‘stuttering’ (Deleuze, 1997; MacLure, 2010) as moments of perplexity and resistance which unsettle these segments. In these moments, Early Years Teachers come into contact with the limits of a professional identity conceived as processes of individual and internal ‘modulation’ (Deleuze, 1992). What is revealed by this ‘stuttering’ is not only a fracture in discourse or language but an opening to experiences of embodiment and materiality that are crucial to early years teaching. The result is a shift away from models of the humanist and rational subject towards an emergent subjectivity entangled with materiality and entities that are both human and nonhuman.

### **Becoming-Professional**

Professional identity can be used to define how a professional should act and behave and can set minimum requirements for members of professional groups. There are often tensions between the level of autonomy and leadership professionals can display in regard to these minimum requirements (Crook, 2008). Such views often assume the centrality of an autonomous human subject, one with the capacity to decide their future, to use their agency to ‘act professionally’, and to demonstrate the capacity to negotiate the social world to achieve a professional identity. Here, focusing on early years teaching as a site of new models of professionalism, I reframe the debate through the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), which

challenges and undermines modern conceptions of ‘centred’ subjectivity and agency (St. Pierre, 2004).

The construction of the subject has been described by Coole and Frost (2010) as a social production rather than a social construction. Drawing on Goodchild (1996), this kind of thinking:

is not a question of anti-humanism, but a question of whether subjectivity is produced solely by internal faculties of the soul, interpersonal relations, and intra-familial complexes, or whether non-human machines such as social, cultural, environmental, or technological assemblages enter into the very production of subjectivity itself (Goodchild, 1996: 151).

Deleuzo-Guattarian subjects are remade as a continual becoming as they are enmeshed and connected with other bodies, nature and the material world (Gibson, 2006). Becoming is identity in constant flux rather than being seen as fixed or stable (Braidotti, 2002), the subject as active and productive without being fixed to any of the relational elements in which it is entangled.

Considering the dissolution of the subject, Deleuze asks ‘how the individual would be able to transcend his [sic] form and his [sic] syntactical link with the world’ (Deleuze, 1990: 203). The work of Deleuze (1990, 1994, 1997) and Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 1987) draws an ontological distinction between being and becoming. The being subject is the rational subject, the ‘traditional notion of self looked at, and rationally appealed to, from the so called top down approach’ (Semetsky, 2006: 27). This shift involves a move away from the ‘subject’ considered as a representation of her/his ‘own’ identity, and towards the ‘subject’ as dissolved in a process of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). A becoming subject is one who is in constant flux as connections are made, dropped and re-made with other bodies. A body here is

more than the corporeal body and could include the more than human, for example matter, the environment, and the nonhuman; as Baugh (2010: 35) suggests it could quite easily be applied to ‘a body of work, a social body or collectivity, a linguistic corpus, a political party, or even an idea’. Becoming leads to subjectivity as a ‘qualitative multiplicity which does not presuppose identity but is being produced in a process of individuation which is always already connective’ (Semetsky, 2006: 27). However, the work of Cumming (2015) draws a relationship between being and becoming, where ephemeral moments of becoming can be revealed as she explores ‘a conceptualisation of *being* as a momentary part of a constant process of *becoming*’ (Cumming, 2015: 56; emphasis in original).

Becoming is also more than the constant (re)production and interconnections between bodies, the term specifically refers to the zone of indiscernibility that exists *between* the interconnections. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceptualise this by considering the moment of pollination between the orchid and the wasp, at that intense moment the ‘discernibility of points disappears’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 342). It is (on)(in) these borders of becoming-orchid becoming-wasp where these encounters occur and each subject becomes indiscernible, at this point of transformation becoming affects both and ‘becoming is something between the two, outside the two’ (Smith, 1997: xxx). Furthermore, becoming allows for the production of difference. In this instance difference is more than ‘difference from the same’ (Stagoll, 2010: 74), it is ‘difference-in-itself’, which challenges representational thinking. By focusing on the ‘singular, and the unique circumstances of production’ (Stagoll, 2010: 76), the experience of Early Years Teachers in the moment of their unique and individual becomings can be revealed. In this paper the encounters with data reveal how the early years teacher: child couple can be the vehicle for becoming-professional, which considers more than pedagogical entanglements by allowing for openings from the material and more than human world.

Deleuze (1994) argued difference is positive and productive and allows for an exploration of new ways of becoming. There is no direction to becoming, no movement towards a particular point or context, more the sense of being on the threshold of something; akin to standing at a point in space and time with multiple pathways which can be explored. The nature of becoming constitutes a 'zone of transformation' (Hickey-Moody and Malins, 2007: 6) where a body experiences changes and engenders further becomings elsewhere. The ontology of becoming moves the subject from the stable and transcendent rational self (of being) to a constantly changing configuration of the human and more than human world. The productive connections Early Years Teachers make while training with other practitioners, the material world, children, academic writing, policy, and the ECEC environment allow them to consider new ways of exploring their developing professionalism.

### **Segmentarity**

Segmentarity allows for the exploration of how the social, material, and spatial world become compartmentalised and ordered (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari detailed different aspects of segmentarity: as binaries (dualisms such as social class, men and women, adult and child); as circular (concentric circles which form around the body, ordering processes around a centre); and linear (segments which reflect a journey in time and space) (1987: 246-7). Furthermore, they suggested that segments might belong to an individual or group and are not fixed temporally; the body can pass through a number of segments which are 'bound up with one another, even cross over each other, changing according to the point of view' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 244). Segments interact to form flexible operations of ordering and control (coding), but can also interfere with each other, creating complex spaces of navigation.

To unpack these forms of segmentarity further, binary segments take the usual form of binary opposites, although Deleuze and Guattari (1987) detail that duality is the result of structures that are not inherently binary in nature. They consider that in modern society duality is (re)produced as State societies operate by binarized choices, and that questioning these structures involves not asking ‘whether the status of woman, or those on the bottom, is better or worse, but the type of organization from which that status results’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 246). Similarly with circular segments, the rigid concentric segments focus on a centre of power and resonate together resulting in an intensity that becomes organised and stratified, the ‘State is constituted...by a concentricity of distinct circles, or the organization of a resonance among centers’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 247). Finally the linear segment is relational to itself but also to others; here each segment is unable to enter the state of becoming or becoming-with other segments. The result is an overcoding and normative form which forecloses production of difference and set the form, substance and expression of the segment.

In early years teacher training this segmentation can be explored through the notion of the training pathway, which already implies an ordering and direction. The traditional method of training in ECEC involved the linear segmentarity of a pathway moving from apprentice to expert, based on a model of vocational training and qualifications (Payler and Locke, 2013). It is communities of practice which support, monitor, and decide, the ‘successful’ transition from novice to expert (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, segmentarity is not only linear in terms of a rigid path, but also a binary segmentarity, with the division between student and practitioner. The student is unable to carry out certain duties until classified as a professional, and is dependent on the power of the practitioner as subject of knowledge. Finally, this segmentation is also circular, as communities of practice enforce a circle in which the student as novice remains on the periphery of the setting with respect to knowledge and skills, only moving towards an expert when appropriate experience has been revealed (Lave and Wenger,



1991). At different stages of training novices may experience binary, circular, or linear segments singly or relationally as they journey towards expert qualified practitioner. Each Early Years Teacher encounters this segmentarity in different ways and in different forms, as evident from the data.

Segmentaries are not simply restrictive, but they can be ‘rigid’ or ‘supple’, which reflects what the segment produces (Bonta and Protevi, 2004). With rigid segments society becomes overcoded, where rules and structures for existence, interaction, and production are defined (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Rigid segments are also described as molar segments which organise, manipulate, and reproduce aspects of society based on pre-arranged blocks (Goodchild, 1996). Supple segments are more flexible and allow for movement away from rigid aspects of overcoding and control. The supple segment is also entitled a molecular segment, which becomes a site for creative processes and small micro-political acts which detail how bodies can act differently (Conley, 2010; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Goodchild (1996) explored how Deleuze and Guattari use the molar and molecular to reflect on differences between processes within society, but cautioned that rigid/supple molar/molecular segments should not be viewed as binaries such as good/bad, psychological/social, global/local. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 251) also counsel that one should not consider that ‘a little suppleness is enough to make things “better”’. Furthermore, the nature of rigid/molar and supple/molecular should not be distinguished by size; however, the supple/molecular processes work in smaller groups and can be referred to as micro-processes. As there is fluid movement between the segments there is also fluid movement between rigid/molar and supple/molecular, which reflects the vital and dynamic nature of processes within the social and material world. It is this dynamism and complexity that is at work in Early Years Teachers’ negotiations of both rigid and supple segments.

## **Segments and Stuttering in Practice**

In 2014 I undertook a small scale research project exploring the learning and teaching journeys of students enrolled in early years teacher training in the south of England. All participants (n = 12) had completed a route which required limited prior professional practice experience. The training pathway was a one year full time course comprised of weekly placement opportunities and academic sessions at their relevant University. The participants had all successfully completed training between the years 2010 to 2014 and were invited to attend a semi-structured interview or provide a written narrative. Participants were recruited by inviting all who had successfully completed an early years teacher course at a university in the south of England, and who would have been on placement within a wide range of ECEC settings. The focus of the interviews/narratives was to encourage the Early Years Teachers to reflect on and discuss their experiences during training both on practice placement and at the University. All data has been anonymised and pseudonyms have been allocated to each participant as part of University ethical approval.

Central to this analysis is the encounter with processes of segmentarity and the response of the stutter. Stuttering is used to refer to a process in which language becomes derailed from a linear process of producing meaning and opens to a process of becoming (Deleuze, 1990). The stutter was introduced by Deleuze (1997) to consider how language can disrupt representational thinking. The relationship between language and action had already been conceptualised by Deleuze and Guattari as ‘the moment language is no longer defined by what it says ... but what it causes to move, to flow, and to explode’ (1983: 158). Reading a text is not simply an act of interpretation geared to the production of meaning, but an act of experimentation which produces something new (Deleuze, 1997; Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). For example, within a contemporary qualitative research context, MacLure (2010: 6) has explored the concept of making language stutter as a way to ‘unsettle the foundations and

structure ... in order to release something unrecognisable' during the analysis of data. She encourages researchers to take notice of the '*bodily* engagements with language' (MacLure, 2010: 7; emphasis in original).

The data for this project was read closely as a means to trouble the language contained in the transcripts. In the readings, areas which glowed were identified. MacLure (2013: 661) describes the concept of glow as 'The glow seems to invoke something abstract or intangible that exceeds propositional meaning, but also has a decidedly embodied aspect'. Here I take my cue from these readings of the moment of stuttering, to not only to consider the body in terms of the human, but also the material and nonhuman bodies that appear at the point of the stutter. The next sections explore encounters with both segments and stutters which were revealed within the data.

### *Encountering segments*

Early Years Teachers in training were, and still are, required to demonstrate professional practice against a range of professional standards (CWDC, 2008; DfE, 2013b). Part of the requirement is to demonstrate leadership and the ability to change practice whilst in training. Furthermore, the Early Years Teacher, post accreditation, was originally expected to be a change agent and upskill the existing workforce (CWDC, 2008). This requirement detailed the separation between academic and vocational roles which produced a rigid binary segment of the graduate and the non-graduate. The resultant outcome was potential seniority and a mark of quality professional practice based on academic qualifications. The production of a graduate: non-graduate binary was subject to tensions when the non-graduate had more professional practice experience than the graduate in training (the Early Years Teacher).

The following four excerpts from the data consider the Early Years Teacher entanglements with segments. Laura was one of the only graduates in her placement setting.

Prior to Laura there had been no Early Years Teacher in training in this setting. The result of this new encounter was the emergence of tensions between training and setting policies, with the exposure of a rigid segmentarity. This excerpt details Laura's first placement within a committee run preschool:

The first one [nursery], they had a very strong authority system so they couldn't just take on a student who wanted to do a lot of different activities, especially safeguarding and policy changes was very challenging because they couldn't have just let you change policies without the governors being told and they couldn't let the students go to one of the meetings as it was not done that way, it was very difficult.

In this excerpt Laura considered how it was difficult to be a student within a committee run preschool. The policies described by Laura are rigid segments, a binary, as they detail the right/wrong ways to practice in the setting and the normative expectations contained within them. Moreover the segments are also circular, where the nursery policies are at the power centre of the circular segment. This leads to the policies having influence over surrounding concentric circles which define interactions between practitioners, parents, children, and the nursery environment. Furthermore, coding details how meaning and values are applied to practice and the repetition of these policies result in overcoding which sets the dominant form of a body's (practitioner's) actions. In this instance the policy overcoding produces rigid segmentarity, which is troubled by Laura who is on the fast-track graduate training route. This is further complicated by the student: practitioner binary segment where the tension between academic qualifications, limited professional practice knowledge, and the normative expectations of a student in the setting are revealed. The outcome of this encounter showed it became difficult for Laura to resist the influence of the rigid segments which help to maintain the status quo with respect to who could recommend amendments to policy and practice. The

severing of connections between Laura, policy and segments in the preschool disrupted any potential connections and movements of becoming-professional. This is manifested as Laura feel's she does not have the opportunity to become more involved in supporting diverse ways to practice due to her student status as this status was marginalised by the policy segments.

Ava's placement was a nursery class attached to a school. She discussed the formal nature of the environment which replicated some of the normative aspects of school classroom practice. Within the nursery classrooms the children wore school uniforms and spent a greater proportion of their time on adult led interventions whilst sitting at desks. Furthermore, there were structured sessions such as Physical Education (PE) and French, which necessitated a physical move to another space within the school. Although the children in the nursery class were exposed to the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS) (DfE, 2014), it may have seemed a more formal environment than other placements available. The excerpt below details the rigidity of the segments with respect to messy play:

I was in a school setting so there was quite a hierarchical traditional management structure which was very difficult to negate ... But a lot of negativity was about the messy play and that kind of thing. There was one teacher who did not want that in her classroom other than sitting and painting with little girls and there was no other messy play at all – other than the odd water tray in the garden in the summer for an hour and that was it.

The nursery classes were full of segmentary processes, the binary segments detailed the relationship between the teacher and the child with the power centre resting with the teacher. In addition, the circular segments relating to the policy and practice surrounding the teacher and child defined the nature of play and learning that was acceptable within the school. Finally the linear segments revealed the progression of learning expected over time where the child is

expected to make progress against the EYFS Early Learning Goals (DfE, 2014). Within the school nursery classes the influence of these segments sees the expectations of the ‘professional’ solely based on supporting children to progress academically via a more formal approach to teaching. The molar nature of the segmentarity confined messy play to an early years teacher ‘sitting and painting’ indoors with a selected group of girls. Furthermore, messy play in this instance became the opposite of the dyad messy: neat – messy play becomes neat sedate play. In addition, during the summer months messy play equated to a water tray in the garden for a limited period of time. In this except, existing nursery class teachers were a product of the coding of these segments and presented as a professional in control of learning opportunities, which ran counter to the expectations of learning through play (DfE, 2014). Furthermore, the segmented child was the child as scholarly learner, neat and ordered as opposed to messy, playful and unruly. These segments reframe becoming-professional as a teacher and the instigator of scholarly learning promoting a departure from a more play-based approach. The impact of this foreclosed wider experimentation with the material world of messy play and the associated supple view of learning from the more than human.

Isabelle had been employed as an unqualified member of staff in her setting before she joined the Early Years Teacher training pathway and she discussed the challenges brought by joining the course and being on placement within her own setting:

Some people found it very hard – the idea that I was going from not qualified to being qualified... it was more of an attitude rather than not allowing me; and you come away feeling you can’t ... I kind of tried to talk to people in staff meetings and talk about what I wanted but ... I found it hard to articulate it. I tried to not talk about my course and what I was training to do; I had to almost ignore that factor – at work and just be one of the team but silently tried to plant the seeds

and get people to think it was their idea and try not to do the big ideas, but to do it silently, a bit like an undercurrent was the best way to go about it really.

Again the binary segments are revealed as Isabelle considers the relationship between herself, perceived as an unqualified member of staff, and other members of the team who held vocational qualifications. The segments overcode in subtle ways with no clear way to identify the barriers that Isabelle experienced as she described a ‘feeling’ rather than a concrete event. Her only recourse to resisting this overcoding was to remain silent about being a student, to take on a cloak of invisibility and by doing so her intensity was magnified as she sought ways to make the segments suppler. Isabelle found language lacking when she tried to engage with the team, suggesting attitudes and undercurrents were produced when she was present. Although initially these segments seemed to be rigid and molar, it becomes apparent that there is suppleness as Isabella harnessed these undercurrents to move away from discussing the needs of her training programme. This resulted in her talking about ‘planting seeds’ in the excerpt which suggested an emerging relationship with the material world.

Olivia had been a volunteer in ECEC settings whilst undertaking Undergraduate study prior to joining the Early Years Teacher training course. Her second placement was a ‘pack away’ setting<sup>ii</sup>, which needed to be staged each day. With Olivia, supple, molecular segments were apparent her second placement:

My Manager at \*\*\*\*\* Pre-School wanted desperately to get fresh ideas for the nursery, and an extra pair of hands. She asked me to do everything that she didn’t have time to do and because it was a small setting I was given a lot of responsibility. I was fortunate enough to have key children, partake in observations, planning; I was actively encouraged to make changes as long as they benefitted the long term goals of the nursery. I think you need to take your

time when it comes to introducing change. I do the same now, even as a Deputy Manager, you need to earn people's trust before you start changing things. Otherwise, people get the wrong impression and become hostile and un-cooperative.

In this excerpt Olivia demonstrates how supple/molecular segments allow opportunities for her to engage. On the surface she could have faced similar challenges to Ava and Laura, for example in her first placement she had discussed how binary segments and the student: practitioner dyad stopped her from acting and the hierarchy within the setting was maintained.

In her second placement, structure was maintained as the Manager allowed Olivia to engage in projects she wanted completed, however, Olivia was given more of a free rein. As there was limited access to the outdoor space, Olivia described one incident where she set up a sensory activity of a large tray of mud in the hallway to allow children to explore and play. She talked about how all the children wanted to be involved and enjoyed the activity, and the culmination of this meant there was mud everywhere. Her engagement with the material world highlighted her becoming-professional with a movement away from expected norms of mud kitchens being used outside. Olivia introduced large quantities of mud indoors and this action induced supple molecular movements within the segments. The stutter in this excerpt shows how becoming-professional allowed her to transgress traditional notions of indoor/outdoor play, and the entanglement of mud, children, and early years teacher produced new opportunities for experiences outside of expected boundaries.

### *Encountering stutters*

As seen in the previous four excerpts of data, segmentarity, especially in its rigid form, involved the production of certain forms of acceptable and unacceptable materiality, especially in relation to 'messy play' and to the construction of the limits of the classroom space. Here I



select some moments of ‘stuttering’ that revealed the emergence of new and disruptive forms of materiality. In these excerpts, Early Years Teachers became involved in the production of new encounters with materiality and nonhuman actors at the limits and edges of forms of segmentarity. At these points molar organisations become fluid, and new molecular materialities are produced.

Ava discussed the stutter moment that occurred at her school nursery placement. She was able to engender suppleness within the segments when she worked with a child who chose not to speak. Their engagement with messy play became a bodily process and initially required no speech:

There was one particular child ... he was virtually mute in the nursery but was very chatty at home so I picked up on his interests. Combined that with the least messy sensory play I could find and he really responded well and I could move up and up to messier play and she watched him come out of himself and he was really chatty and he joined me with the phonics and the sounds, she could not get him to sound out his sounds, so I did big musical games in the hall, like we did statutes and then added to sound out a snake ‘SSSSSS’ and spiders and that kind of thing and he would giggle and be a part of it ... so she videoed that (my activities) and showed it to the parents ... that was quite an accolade being recorded to show parent ... and slowly you can’t ignore that however negative you are towards that person and don’t want to bring the things in...she just loosened up and did start to bring them in. And the other teacher (I worked across both classrooms) was so excited, she would bring things to me and say ‘I thought I might do this, this and this ... I haven’t done this for years but’ and I think having me there helped her do it.

By moving out of the classroom into the hallway, Ava disrupted the linear process of learning and encouraged messy play and engagement with space as a means to transform the micro-processes of learning. Ava was able to produce a new dynamic of messy play within the school by connecting with the child and the least messy sensory play she could successfully achieve in the school. This stutter moment engendered a deeper material engagement as the level of messy play increased and her becoming-professional connected with other teachers as the segments became suppler. Furthermore, Ava's stutter moment detailed the early years teacher: child couple where both teacher and child becomings are revealed in the material entanglements. These stutter entanglements are produced as teachers and children explore messy play and the hallway which exert an influence over their human bodies; where teachers feel encouraged to develop their practice and the child felt more comfortable with their speech.

The movement into the hall took the encounter from the classroom into a new space and it was easy to imagine the 'SSSSSS' sound echoing around the hall. In the learning moment Ava can be imagined as becoming-teacher becoming-hall, and this molecularisation produced a new experience with both the child and the remaining teachers who hooked into the becoming-teacher; and their own engagement within and between this encounter moved practice in different directions. Ava becoming-teacher is a molecular movement within the superimposed nursery class segmentarity that revealed an ephemeral newness as she and the child were enmeshed in a more material world as a micro-engagement in her practice placement.

Emily had worked in secondary schools (11 – 18 years old) and having children had encouraged her to want to change career and work in ECEC. In this excerpt Emily considered aspects of her University sessions and how these had impacted what she wanted to achieve on her placement:

...we learned about the forest school as our lecturer had her own forest school so it was really interesting to hear about that and I have since taken my own children down there as well ... even if you can't do the forest school in the setting there are aspects of it you can do. What I want to do at this placement – they have lots of grounds and I want to start making like fairy dens and get lots of wood from our local woods here and get them to make dens and build things.

The connected bodies in this excerpt include Emily, University sessions, forest school and Emily's own engagement with the natural world. As a secondary school teacher the chances for engaging in forest school activities may have been limited by more rigid segments based on curricula expectations. The interconnectedness described in the excerpt above produces the desire to enact the pull of the natural, material world within her placement. Becoming-professional is revealed in the moment when she becomes open to the relationships between humans and nature. The movement of becoming is manifested as the molecular suppleness of the segments allow her to explore outdoor play, with the stutter moment showing how wood and (fairy) dens reveal new possibilities. This new encounter with materiality prompted her to discuss how her shift of thinking showed a desire to make wider connections with materiality in her placement. There is a sense that a more material, physical, sensory engagement can enhance her work with young children.

In the final excerpt Emma considered a placement she had attended within a community run preschool in an inner-city area which served families who had a lower socioeconomic status. She explained that the children and staff all came from the local community and that there was a great 'heart' in the setting which, she felt, came from the history of the setting and its relationship with the community:

I saw everything as an invisible fly on the wall ... there was a little boy carrying a bag of stuff and she said 'oh that would be alright if he was a girl' and I asked her if she had heard of schemas before and she said 'something plopped on my desk about that' ... well by chance I bought in a bag with lots of lids and tops in and put in on the floor and bam there were schemas in action. Anyway a little boy was carrying a bag and his mum said 'Oh he does that at home – he has these bags and they put things in it and carried them around' and I was able to speak to his Mum and reassured her.

From Emma's first comment it is easy to get a sense of the potential segmentarity she encountered, the motif of being invisible is mentioned in a similar way to Isabelle's comments. Emma experienced becoming-professional as she initially challenged segmented gendered views of a boy child's play. Her encounters with the material world revolved around 'a bag of stuff'. In these engagements the bag becomes the point of departure, the zone of indiscernibility, which connects Emma, the material world, the setting, and the children. At one point the bag is Emma's, filled with 'lids and tops', detailing a pedagogic encounter she has with the children; next it reflects the boy carrying the bag around the setting, pushing back against gendered norms of play, then it becomes a connection point between Emma, the boy and his mother. The bag allows Emma to explore different becomings and reveals the multiple connections between Emma and the placement setting. Here becoming-professional becoming-bag released a host of micro-processes which started to chart the more than human material movements within the setting and reveal the molecularity of the segments which can be sensed by Emma's initial comment. This is exemplified as the bag influences different ways to view teacher, child and parent engagements where being 'invisible' is the catalyst for these exchanges.

## **Conclusion: Professional Matters**

The Early Years Teachers' encounters that I have explored in this paper highlight the emergence of new relationships with others, human and nonhuman, that take place at the limits of segmentarity. They reveal the various forms of segmentarity encountered in these settings, both rigid and supple. These teachers tried to negotiate with rigid segments and to render them suppler, but those rigid segments foreclosed particular interactions and experiences of materiality and contact. The excerpts showed a series of conflicts and tensions that occurred in the process of becoming-professional, which tended to be glossed over or dismissed in the usual segmentary understanding of the achievement of professional identity.

In contrast to a human-centred model of professional identity with its emphasis on reflective subjects in control of their learning and experience, the moments of stutter reveal how new encounters can be produced which involve encounters with new forms of materiality: from the limits of the 'supple' segments of 'messy play', to the various forms of 'natural' space and encounters with the limits of the 'rigid' segment of the classroom. In contrast to the discourse of critical reflection (CWDC, 2008; Anderson, 2014), which can be seen at work in the reflective engagement of these teachers; a fluid and vital becoming that resists such a self-modulated segmentary model is evident (Deleuze, 1992, 1994), where the move back into an individual's psyche re-inscribes the identity of self and forecloses the wider engagement with the material world. At the moment of stutter the psyche opens-up beyond the self into new encounters with the children, with play, and with materiality. Here re-inscription onto the segmented psyche gives way to new inscriptions that open to new forms of relation, both with and beyond the human.

The result of this analysis is that from within discourse, new possibilities of 'Posthuman' theorising, which links the human to the nonhuman and material can be seen. This

is particularly evident in the experience of early years teaching, in which the environment and materiality are key to experiences that may be lost within discursive and policy constructions of professional identity (Crook, 2008; CWDC, 2008; DfE, 2013b), and discursive constructions of development and learning for children (Sylva, et al., 2004; Mathers, et al., 2007; Siraj, et al., 2015). The early years teacher: child couple, like Deleuze and Guattari's wasp: orchid couple, form a new indiscernible point in which becoming between the two goes beyond the two into multiple and molecular relations with the material and the nonhuman.

### **Acknowledgements**

My thanks to Jayne Osgood for her feedback on an earlier draft, she encouraged me to follow Haraway and 'stay with the trouble' and this pushed me to re(engage) with the paper. Sincere thanks to the anonymous peer reviewers whose supportive and insightful comments resulted in the final version of this paper. Also to my doctoral supervisors – Janet McCray, Vini Lander and Benjamin Noys who have given me constructive feedback on this paper and supported my entanglement with Deleuze and Guattari which has resulted in my final PhD thesis. The data used was part of a research project into learning and teaching which was partially funded by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and my thanks to Vida Douglas for her support.

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<sup>i</sup> In this paper I consider professionalization policy and practice in England. It needs to be acknowledged that there has been devolution of policy to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; however, the ECEC policy and practice for these nations are not included in this paper.

<sup>ii</sup> In England a ‘pack away’ setting is a term which generally describes a sessional preschool following the EYFS (DfE, 2014). These types of settings are generally located within a village hall and require staging and re-staging of furniture and resources on a daily basis.