

The micro-politics of Posthuman Early Years Leadership assemblages: exploring more-than-human relationality

Nicola Fairchild

Abstract

Engaging with posthuman theorising this article puts to work a number of concepts to produce generative re-imaginings of Early Years Leadership. In 1992 Deleuze argued that we are witnessing a transition from societies of confinement to 'societies of control'. In societies of control power operates through neoliberal corporate worlds via a process of 'continuous modulation' which encourages a regime of perpetual flows of change revealing new productions of a more posthuman agency. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) I note how the concept of assemblage can be employed to explore leadership. I argue that Early Years Leadership in England is part of a wider set of connections and relations which include human and non-human 'bodies'. The assemblage connects and collects bodies and is not defined by its individual components but by what is produced as these bodies interact. These interactions can be striated which explores certain forms of leadership, however smoother spaces can also be produced which empirically reveals the situational ethics and micro-politics of four early years leaders who are entangled with children, policy, neoliberal framing, quality, curriculum, social and material worlds in their settings and schools. This article broadens current views on Early Years Leadership by taking a more-than-human view of relations between human and non-human bodies as a distributed subjectivity which reworks notions of solely human agency. This production will allow me to question how posthuman leadership and the ethics and micro-politics of connectivity might function in this new form of more-than-human relationality.

Keywords: Posthuman leadership, assemblage, relationality, distributed subjectivity, micro-politics

Introduction

In this article I attend to a (re)thinking of leadership in English Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) which is currently viewed as emergent and situated (Male and Palaiologou, 2015), with a focus on a wider ethic of care (see Rodd, 2013). To do this I engage with posthumanist theorising to propose how the concept of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) can be employed to consider leadership as a more-than-human concern. Paying attention to non-human bodies and how these are in relations with human bodies allows me to broaden existing views of ECEC leadership and subjectivity which then acknowledges the wider complexities found in ECEC work. The existing debates in England surrounding leadership have focussed on successive professionalisation agendas based on the desire to upskill an existing workforce to deliver revised curricular expectations (Lindon et al., 2016) and for workforce recognition (Payler and Locke, 2013). What has followed has seen the ECEC sector define their own pathways to leadership which meets the needs to children, families and other ECEC staff (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2007; Rodd, 2013). This has been coupled with an exponential growth in nursery places and ECEC settings following the implementation of Government funded hours for children who meet specific criteria (Bonetti, 2018). Sims (2017) explores tensions inherent in ECEC leadership within neoliberal market models of education where increasing levels of compliance and surveillance impact leadership behaviours. This article builds on and moves beyond current human-centred debates of leadership and applies posthuman modes of thinking to explore wider social and material processes (see Fox & Alldred, 2017).

Posthumanist thinking allows for the decentring and rethinking of the human subject and its potential for agency where humans engage with the material (non-human) world to reveal more-than-human relations (see Coole & Frost, 2010). Furthermore, exploring posthuman concepts can offer new ethical and political possibilities for fracturing binary dualisms and discourses which separate human and material (non-human) worlds (Braidotti, 2013). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) proposed the concept of assemblage as a collection of heterogeneous bodies which emerge and come into relations around events. These bodies consist of both humans and non-humans and could be drawn from several registers, for example, policy, social, material, abstract entities, and physical (Baugh, 2010). Thinking with assemblages moves the world away from fixed and stable systems which are composed of discrete subjects/objects to a more connected and relational constellation of bodies (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The assemblage is concerned with what these connections do and produce rather than what the elements or bodies are (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Within and through these relational systems flows mechanisms for control (macro-politics) and mechanisms for releasing new potentials (micro-politics), ‘in short, everything is political’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 249). Attending to these new ontological conceptions of bodies, politics and assemblages reveal complex connections which note the influence of the material world on human bodies.

This article is divided into three sections: in the first I explore historical leadership development in England and the influence and development of the market model of ECEC. With the second section I develop theorisations of posthuman leadership where I draw on the notion of the assemblages and smooth and striated space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to explore micro-political relations through which ECEC leadership is materialised. In this way posthuman leadership is expansive in smooth space or controlled in striated spaces where micro-political flows open ECEC leadership potential to new affirmative modes of expression. This is

contextualised using Deleuze's (1992) notion of 'societies of control' which pays attention to new modes of power fluctuations which develop in neoliberal worlds. These are explored empirically and revealed in the third section. Throughout this article the term non-human has been applied to all matter, materials, and the natural world which are not human corporeal bodies (Braidotti, 2013). Additionally, the term more-than-human has been used to consider how objects/things have agency and vibrancy (Bennett, 2010) and how these are relationally co-implicated in human lives (Whatmore, 2006).

Leadership development and childcare markets in English ECEC

In England, the continuing expansion of neo-liberal thinking is affecting and influencing expectations within ECEC. Provision is driven by a statutory curricular framework (DfE, 2017) which is delivered to children between the ages of birth to five years old. Children from birth to the September after their fourth birthday may attend non-compulsory ECEC where provision is split across a range of diverse settings including private day nurseries, children centres, nurseries attached to schools, and childminders. The terms 'private day nurseries, children's centres and nurseries attached to schools' are known globally under a variety of different names for example 'long day care' or 'preschools'; 'childminders' are also known as 'family daycare' where provision is in a home-based environment. Here provision can be sessional or full time for up to 51 weeks of the year as selected by parents. These settings are part of a mixed-market economy with Government, private-for-profit provision and private-not-for profit involvement (Lloyd, 2013). Funding for ECEC places is drawn primarily from two sources: Government subsidies paid per hour for children who meet certain criteria (Bonetti, 2018) and fees paid by parents, either as a 'top up' to Government funding or where their children do not meet the funding criteria. The minimum required qualification to work, and lead practice, in these types

of settings is a vocational accreditation which is equivalent to exit-level high school certificates (for example an NVQ3), although academic qualifications have developed to postgraduate level in recent years (for example Early Years Professional and Early Years Teacher) (DfE, 2017). Once the child passes the September after their fourth birthday children enter compulsory schooling for the Reception Year with teaching underpinned by the same curriculum as non-compulsory provision (DfE, 2017). The Reception Year is fully funded by Government and generally led by qualified teachers who hold either an undergraduate or postgraduate teaching qualification.

The term leadership in English ECEC is complex with many contested factors and meanings which can sometimes be based on wider political agendas. In fact, there has been conflation of the notions of professionalism, professional status and identity, management, and leadership which have confused the sector's understanding of the role of a 'leader' in ECEC. This can be traced back through the historical and situated developments of ECEC which provides different global understandings of the term based on national, political, and social systems (see Miller and Cable, 2011). Initially in England ECEC leadership had close links to government professionalisation agendas employed to 'establish appropriate confidence and professionalism' within the sector (Lindon et al., 2016: 15). This was coupled with a desire to raise standards of practice with the implementation of the Early Years Professional followed by the Early Years Teacher as a means to do this (DfE, 2013). These changes were initiated as part of the introduction of a new curricular framework, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008) and Government funded hours for children who met certain criteria (Baldock et al., 2013). Concurrently these developments were reflected in an exponential increase in ECEC settings to meet the demands for childcare places (Lloyd, 2012, 2013). The impact of neoliberal political systems creates 'education as a product' (Sims, 2017: 2) where

standardised curriculums and assessments become a way to monitor quality and government investment (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018) and I argue that these initial leadership developments were framed by neoliberal, ECEC-as-product discourses.

In England the expansion of ECEC settings were linked to the then Labour Government (1997-2010) focus on reducing child poverty associated with family unemployment (Baldock et al., 2013) based on a model of human capital theory, where ECEC investment was thought to promote social mobility and potential future workers (Heckman, 2000). The role of the ECEC leader was to balance the tensions between implementing curricular frameworks (Lindon et al., 2016), influencing and developing the existing workforce (Rodd, 2013, 2015) and providing interventions which cemented ECEC as part of an educational continuum to develop the child into future worker (Simpson et al., 2015; Sims, 2017). Subsequent professionalisation agendas were driven by policy recommendations for graduate leaders of pedagogy and practice (McGillivray, 2011; Payler and Locke, 2013) although sufficient funding for this has failed to materialise (Bonetti, 2018). More recent policy developments have produce the Early Years Teacher influenced by a more school ready discourse of ECEC practice (DfE, 2013) which has shifted the focus from ‘leadership’ to ‘teaching’ signalling a possible ‘removing of the discretionary decision-making power’ (Sims, 2017: 5) assigned to leadership towards the delivery of a curricular body of knowledge signifying a more performative role (Moss, 2017). Ironically the new status does not confirm the same benefits and recognition of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) required for teaching in Maintained compulsory education; this lack of parity does little to promote those who wish to take a pedagogical leadership role (Hevey, 2013; Bonetti, 2018). Tensions remain as the current requirement for a non-compulsory setting leader are the vocational NVQ3 qualification (DfE, 2017) and sustainability has been questioned

when ECEC settings are part of a mixed market economy where payments for provision are drawn from a split between parents and government funding (Lloyd, 2012; Moss, 2017).

ECEC leadership development has been linked to quality (Rodd, 2013) where effective leadership is expected as ‘the leader inspires changes in the quality of service delivery’ (Sims and Waniganayake, 2015: 190). Scholars have argued good leadership should be inclusive and collaborative (Davis, 2012); distributed and collegial (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2007); and more effective when transformational styles are employed (Lindon et al., 2016). The notion of quality practice and leadership has been problematized in a more neoliberal market model of ECEC (Campbell Barr, 2014; Moss, 2017) and there are difficulties adopting and adapting a standardised leadership style to such a wide and diverse English ECEC sector (McDowall Clark and Baylis, 2012). Sims (2017 :5) argued leaders have an ‘obligation to engage in more active resistance’ to counter the expectations of ‘externally monitored standards [that have] acted to de-professionalise early childhood educators’ which occurs in neoliberal markets. This resistance has started to manifest in England with organisations such as Save Childhood Movement (2014) and Keeping Early Years Unique (n.d.) who are presenting a leadership counter narrative to performative compliance practices required by curricular delivery (Sims, 2017; Moss, 2017; Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018). In this article I argue that by viewing ECEC leadership as an assemblage, different articulations of resistance can be explored. This is situated in Early Years Teacher contexts and by considering the influence of the material world a new ethical and political dimension is produced.

Developing a Posthuman leadership assemblage

Societies of control

Foucault (1977) argued that biopolitics and biopower circulate as disciplinary practice where control is achieved via the subject under surveillance. In ECEC the regulatory requirements can produce performative subjectivities of a ‘good leader’ (see Ball, 2003), however leaders can find ways to resist this (Osgood, 2006). Building on Foucault’s notion of biopolitics, Deleuze theorised the neoliberal turn when he proposed ‘in a society of control, the corporation has replaced the factory’ (1992: 4) with more far reaching networked levels of governance and regulation. Here institutional power was not exercised through disciplinary societies (Foucault, 1977) but via relational networks within and between institutions which afforded individuals a perception of greater freedom, but under multiple levels of control which become self-policing through the effects of modulation. These modulations produced the dividual subject who needed to undergo a regime of perpetual training and (self)assessment. Here the dividual leader could never fully attain the expectations of the control society. This type of leadership sees subjectivities influenced by expected curricular outcomes for children (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018) and the demands of the neoliberal market model (Lloyd, 2012, 2013; Sims, 2017). This article will explore how the ECEC leader can find ways to escape this dividual status and will note the processes of both micro- and macro-politics and how these influence current expectations of the Early Years Teacher. Building on my doctorate (Fairchild, 2017a) I propose a more expansive more-than-human view of subjectivity and theorise this via the leadership assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Leadership assemblages

The conceptual tool of the assemblage is a key part of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) philosophy and is an ontological starting point for the way life proceeds as a series of flows and connections. The term assemblage is derived from the French word ‘agencement’ which

suggests a collection and arrangement of bodies and things (Nail, 2017). The assemblage is defined by the connections that are made between bodies in a seemingly random and indeterminate way. The content and form of the assemblage becomes coded by the way the connections are expressed; bodies are transformed during these processes and this generates connections to other bodies with the cycle of connection and transformation occurring *ad infinitum* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This ability to form combinations and connections as a constellation of bodies has been described as machinic and provides an alternative vision of subjectivity and transcendent structures of identity which are not bound to a unitary form (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Massumi (2015: 52) notes that a 'body' is more than 'the body as a thing apart from the self or subject. I mean that the body *is* that region of in-mixing from which subjectivity emerges'. In this way the 'body' and its agentic potential are recast where the ethics of the assemblage produced an ontology of affirmative connected processes with, as yet, unknown potential. One of the challenges of working with the assemblage is the seemingly random anarchic nature of the connections which appear as devoid from human intentionality. However, Anderson et al. (2012: 174) note 'assemblage thinking allows us to attend to how these often disparate activities become entangled with one another' and this provides the means to unique way to think about ECEC leadership that acknowledges wider more-than-human relations. Massumi (2015: 66) argues that this anarchic randomness is part of the development of philosophy 'nonconscious process is [*more than*] an absence of thought...nonconscious process is the birth of thought'. In this article I employ the conceptual power of the assemble to explore how non-human bodies become embedded and connected to ECEC leaders and the ways in which they influence events is revealed in the empirical data.

Smooth and striated spaces and micro-politics

Segmentarity is how the physical and social world is ordered and compartmentalised (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This segmentarity can be resisted by smooth space which is the space within which connective processes and assemblages are expressed. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) consider how smooth space can be surrounded by striated space (macro-politics), which is a stable system and a product of segmentation (for example, by the State), and vice versa. They debate ‘smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed by striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to smooth space’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 552). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) go on to detail ephemeral smooth space has no memory and can only ever hold micro-histories, micro-sociology and micro-politics, which allows it to be a site for transformation and possibility. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 581) were particularly interested in the tensions between smooth and striated space when they considered ‘how the forces at work within the space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces’. Striated space produces a more segmented society giving rise to a stability which is required for the social world to function. However, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) considered that all aspects of life are in constant motion and movement which reveals the production of micro-politics where life becomes more fluid and ephemeral. The resultant lines of flight are connections which move life in new directions reflecting Deleuze and Guattari’s image of tiny imperceptible ruptures and the impact they have (Conley, 2010).

It could be suggested that the use of smooth and striated space might suggest or reveal a binary with striated seen as ‘bad’, for example over coding the space with more formal or performative

aspects of leadership which Sims (2017: 4) has noted can ‘increase the compliance behaviour of those enacting the framework’. The binary opposite sees smooth space as ‘good’, a chaos space where anarchic movements provide counter actualizations to striated leadership. Lenz Taguchi (2010: 97) details how pedagogic space is marked with these striations ‘materialised as habits, routine behaviours, organisations of time, space and material’. Within ECEC there will always be the need for striated space which produces repetitions in leadership practice which are comfort(able)(ing). The flux and flows between smooth and striated spaces and the micro-political lines of flight they produce will be explored below to consider how more-than-human relational ECEC leadership can be conceptualised and contextualised. This in turn will move notions of ECEC leadership away from contested binarized views of leaders as individuals performatively delivering a curriculum, to a more expansive view of how leadership is drawn from both human and non-human connections through a range of ever-shifting assemblages.

Empirical Entanglements

In the remainder of this article, I explore how posthuman leadership assemblages can be put to work empirically. Data is drawn from my doctoral study where four ethnographic case studies explored how Early Years Teachers and children were in relations with ECEC material and teaching spaces. The data articulated in this article was part of the semi-structured interviews collected during this inquiry. Ethical approval was granted by my institution and the data in this article has been anonymised. I draw on MacLure (2013) who encourages researchers to engage in new modes of data analysis which go beyond usual patterns of coding and data analysis by theme. In this article I focus on the seemingly mundane data fragments which were revealed in the data, on the ‘small but consequential differences’ (Barad 2007: 29) which explore ECEC leadership. In this way data emerged as ‘data pulses, data frequencies, data

intensities’ (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018: 471). I seek to move beyond modes of representational thinking in the articulation of the empirical data. Deleuze & Guattari (1994: 55) argue representation ‘fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation has only a single centre, a unique and receding perspective’. In this vein I do not analyse the data fragments in a traditional sense but consider what is produced within and through the leadership assemblages (see Taylor & Gannon, 2018). This allows me to chart the contact zones of human and non-human relations and ‘fashion some form of address that is adequate to their form’ (Stewart, 2007: 4).

Articulating posthuman leadership assemblages

In this section I draw on four data fragments one from each of the ethnographic case studies. To contextualise each fragment: Claire was a nanny who had originally worked in a Reception class, a private ECEC setting and a toddler drop-in forest school; Sarah was a self-employed childminder who worked in a cluster which included two other childminders; Hannah was a Reception teacher in an all-girls private school; Rose was a deputy manager in a private pack-away sessional Montessori preschool.

Claire – Environmental Learning Leader

As the ‘Environment Learning Leader’ I took groups of [Reception aged] children out of the classroom to provide forest school sessions [...] I supported NVQ students...encouraged them to interact and engage with the children [...] I promoted equality and anti-discriminatory practice [...] I led a change in the attitudes of the teaching staff towards the use of the outdoor environment [...] and obtained funding

from the Board of Governors to purchase all weather protective clothing so children could participate in outdoor learning in all weather conditions.

Multiple iterations of leadership are present in this extract as bodily components of the leadership assemblage; pedagogical leadership, supporting staff/trainees, change management and funding. Claire become embodied and embedded in the territory of the outdoor environment as she transverses the striated space of the classroom and the smoother space of the forest. Lenz Taguchi (2010) proposes 'circular' and 'horizontal' movements to denote the interplay between smooth and striated pedagogical spaces. The circular movements note the coding's and expectation of pedagogy, in this case the predictability of the school classroom where Lenz Taguchi (2010: 100) argues 'it is difficult to let go of habits of thought and taken-for-granted ways of thinking and doing that make us feel safe'. This tension can be sensed as Claire works with NVQ (vocational) students and discusses how she supports them with respectful engagement with children. There are also hints of smoother horizontal space where Claire challenges normative practice and influences the structural pedagogical knowledge of teaching in the outdoor environment. Micro-political flows see Claire encourage the teachers to 'disengage and detach...from habitual behaviours and habits of thought' (Williams, 2008, cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2010: 99) and to see affirmative creative ways to work in outdoor spaces. These lines of flight further influenced the School Governors to secure funding for all-weather clothing for the children. Lorraine (2005: 174) details 'attuning ourselves to life-as-becoming requires disorientating ourselves from establish spatial norms in order to attend to spaces unfolded in the play of movements' and this is exemplified in the flows Claire experiences. Claire's leadership in societies of control see bodies within and through assemblages traverse smooth and striated spaces. These assemblages are not fixed or static but are in constant motion as Claire is connected to learning spaces and environments, pedagogies, working with staff and trainees, outdoor clothing, funding and School Governors. Each of these connections provide

new leadership possibilities for Claire as the micro-political activations reveal agentic more-than-human ways to circumvent dividual subjectivities.

Sarah – Self-evaluation

For my self-evaluation form [*SEF*] I used the format we used to have in business which is ‘Where we’re at, where we want to be and how are we going to get there’ so going through all the areas [...] of child-minding because often you’ll sit there and go ‘Oh that went really well and this didn’t go so well’ but you’ll forget good things you’ve done but another childminder would say ‘Oh remember, that worked really well the thing you set up in your playroom’ [...] the self-evaluation form covers everything from working with parents, the delivery of the EYFS, safeguarding, advertising, our business, are we doing our tax returns [...] we are very much characterised by continuous improvement because when you are self-employed you sort of you are constantly responsible for everything that you do.

As a self-employed childminder Sarah was influenced by market forces as she needed to ensure she could recruit sufficient children to keep her business viable. Sarah had been a childminder for 10 years having worked in marketing before entering ECEC, she employed some of her previous skill sets in her current role. The SEF is a striation and control modulation which was a regulatory inspection requirement for all ECEC settings where controls are ‘a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to another’ (Deleuze, 1992: 2). These modulations overcode ECEC work which promote the striated macro-political space of familiarity and expectations for quality professional practice. Sarah’s leadership is situational and contextual as she creates the conditions for governance and self-regulation, here the SEF documents quality practice and these become comfort(ing)(able) to Sarah which then promotes

evaluation and change in her settings' practice. Paradoxically in societies of control the leader and their practice are never fully attained – one can never be a 'good enough' leader, one can only experience modulations and remain in a constant state of change which is exemplified by the constantly evolving SEF. The striations serve a dual purpose – maintaining control and expectation of good practice and a means of self-scrutiny where freedom to run a business is tempered by pre-set expectations. Sarah's connection within and through the assemblages she experiences challenge her dividual status as micro-political smoothing of this space is generated in professional discussions within the child-minding cluster where collective remembering of the past year highlights the nuances in practice which are not always easy to capture on a static document. Furthermore, smother spaces are articulated in the way pedagogical activities unfold for children revealing the movement between macro-political expectations and micro-political leadership events. Each of these connections is ephemeral and in movement as leadership assemblages change form as a result of the relations which occur between human and non-human bodies.

Hannah – budgets and classrooms

This year we have had 100% of my class are from [the nursery] but next year I believe we have as little as 50% so it changes very much year to year [...] because we [are] a commercial business [...] [parents] want things in a certain ways [...] I have a yearly budget [...] I've still got some [...] left from this year so I'll have to use that up now before I start next year.

The nursery room has been completely restaged, so I did the Reception room over the summer the reception room has been zoned into the EYFS reflecting areas [and] the

nursery has been re-zoned properly. There's more child enticing things in there and they don't even realise that they are accessing what we would think is academic resources.

Hannah is based in the Reception class of a fee paying private school with an attached nursery; the nursery accepts Government funding, but the majority of parents purchase additional hours for their children. This excerpt highlights the challenges faced by school leaders to balance some of the budgetary and accountability requirements of schools from a sustainability perspective when school budgets in England have been reported as being squeezed as part of Government austerity measures (Lloyd, 2012; Moss, 2017; Bonetti, 2018). Hannah discusses the fluctuating nature of her budgets making links to nursery occupancy which in turn is linked to the viability of the classes, commercial needs of the schools. Bodies within and through the assemblage provide striations which 'fix variable elements, produces order and succession of distinct forms' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 556) and these become striated expectations of the classroom, school and leadership practice. This is couched within the expectations of private nursery/school education which sets the requirements for budgeting, classroom set up and resourcing. Lorraine (2005: 174) notes that within wider assemblages we must pay heed of the striations which bind and surround us without completely dismantling them as they are 'the refrains that sustain our homes'. The constant ebb and flow of children from nursery to Reception class are part of the modulations and self-regulation which set the expectations from classrooms and pedagogy. Hannah has been influenced by the budget that she has been allocated and has used this to lead a change to the nursery and Reception classrooms to work with staff to re-zone and resource them. Lines of flight allow space to become smoothed as children are unaware of the pedagogical rationale for the re-zoning. The flow between striated space and smooth space within these assemblages are not articulations of the benefits of a certain type of leadership, they are an acknowledgement that different situational connections reveal tensions and friction between accountability within commercial markets and ECEC

practices. These micro-political movements to more smoother space note wider leadership capacities which challenge dividual politics by the flow between smooth and striated spaces. In this way Hannah disorients herself ‘from established spatial norms in order to attend to spaces unfolded in the play of movement’ (Lorraine, 2005: 174). Her leadership subjectivity moves between smooth and striated space being distributed across a constellation of human and non-human bodies including commercial needs, budgets, classroom spaces, parent expectations, curricular requirements and the way children access the spaces.

Rose – leading pedagogy

I'm Deputy Manager and a SENCO [special educational needs co-ordinator] I do sort of take over bits of the running of day to day stuff, but the paperwork side is sort of like a manager [role], because we're such a small setting [...] I think there is loads of expectations of what a teacher is, from parents who have a big expectation of what their children should do [...] there are mixed message from government so the 30 hours entitlement is supposed to be for parents going back to work [...] then you have another report which is saying, parent interaction and communication skills are the most important thing [...] so the government haven't decided on their priorities.

In this excerpt Rose considered the challenges of being a pedagogical leader. In England there has been a drive to align ECEC provision to schools which reflects the influence of human capital theory and societies of control which framed past policy perceptions of ECEC as inadequate (Lindon et al., 2016). These measures reinforced a new model of ECEC and questioned the role of the Early Years Teacher as the market requirement for ‘childcare’ becomes a principal factor when funding entitlements are part of the wider assemblage connections (Moss, 2017). Tension within the striated assemblage can be sensed as Rose

discusses the mixed policy messages she is experiencing regarding government funding and its links to pedagogy. These have an effect of smoothing the dominant framing of the requirements for working parents to access the 30 hours entitlement, to a more affirmative and holistic pedagogical space of relational interaction and communication. The flux and flow between smooth and striated space are articulated as ‘an infinite succession of linkages and changes in direction’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 574) and these are revealed as Rose considered the job requirements of a Deputy Manager and SENCO; the expectations parents have about how ECEC teaching should be enacted; funding challenges; and mixed message from Government policy. Within and through ECEC leadership assemblages these flows present as micro-political moments which revealed the striations in leadership role and curricular expectations and how this can be disturbed and smoothed by Rose’s questioning. Lenz Taguchi (2010: 96) notes ‘any event can introduce change and difference in our practices, but our willingness to let that happen depends on how we think about learning and knowing and our relationship to that which we understand as reality’. As the space is smoothed Rose can reconfigure her understanding of reality and her potential individual status as she debates and challenges policy expectations.

Intermission

This article does not close with a conclusion but with an intermission which represents the ongoing productive connections within and between assemblages which are never finalised and always already processual. Within the articulation of empirical data I have proposed a reconfiguring of ECEC leadership as a more-than-human distributed subjectivity. These include connections to policy; market forces; practitioners; and children which explore how spaces are produced and expressed by these human and non-human relations. In turn this

reveals the complexity found with ECEC leadership assemblages, in this instance for English Early Years Teachers. These connected constellations move beyond binarized notions of performative or resistance leaders to provide generative re-imaginings of ECEC leadership which transcends traditional views of subjectivity and identity. There are broader ethical and political potentials for employing the conceptual tools of the assemblage, dividuals, and smooth and striated spaces to ECEC leadership which acknowledges diversity and affords non-human bodies a similar position to human bodies. I argue that this is particularly pertinent in ECEC due to the material nature of ECEC settings (Fairchild, 2017b) and by articulating the methodological device of the assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) I am able to connect wider non-human events to ECEC leadership. This still acknowledges the histories of leadership development (Moss, 2013, 2017) and market models (Lloyd, 2012, 2013) to explore and develop theorisations of Posthuman leadership.

Posthuman leadership is not bounded by specific models of leadership, qualifications or national priorities. It is ethically and politically affirmative as it is situated in and through wider assemblage constellations. Ontologically assemblages pay heed to connections and relationality in societies of control (Deleuze, 1992). This attentiveness to power fluctuations that seeks to striate leadership to fit neoliberal market/pedagogical models based on human capital theory provides ways to reimagine an affirmative ECEC leader with wider more-than-human potential rather than a dividual subject to modulation. What is revealed in the four data elements is that spaces are set up and constrained by striated modulations. These macro-political controls provide comfort and stability (Lenz Taguchi, 2010), this familiarity is needed where markets and policy drive pedagogical expectations. However, smoothness is also a complimentary enactment where micro-political line of flight flow within and through ECEC leadership assemblages. These responses to striated control modulations note alternative ways

in which ECEC leadership is expressed. The result is an affirmative and generative leadership entanglement which is a more-than-binary response flowing between policy; markets; pedagogy; leaders; and ECEC settings revealing complexity and more-than-human situated leadership processes.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Eva Mikuska for her thoughtful review of an earlier draft of this paper, I am grateful for her insights and feedback. Thanks also to the editors and peer reviewers for their supportive and collegial comments which have enhanced the final paper.

References

- Anderson B, Keanes M, McFarlane C and Swanton D (2012) On assemblages and geography. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 2(2): 171-189.
- Baldock P, Fitzgerald D and Kay J (2013) *Understanding early years policy* (3rd Ed). London: Sage.
- Ball S (2003) The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy* 18(2): 215-228.
- Barad K (2007) *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Baugh B (2010) Body. In Parr A (ed) *The Deleuze dictionary* (revised edition). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 35-37.
- Bennett J (2010) *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Bonetti S (2018) *The early years workforce: A fragmented picture*. London: Education Policy Institute.
- Bradbury A and Roberts-Holmes G (2018) *The datafication of primary and early years education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Braidotti R (2013) *The posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Campbell-Barr V (2014) Constructing early childhood education and care provision: Negotiating discourses. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 15(1): 5–17.
- Conley T (2010) Molecular. In Parr A (ed) *The Deleuze dictionary* (revised edition). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 177-179.
- Coole DH and Frost S (2010) Introducing new materialisms. In Coole DH and Frost S (eds) *New materialisms. Ontology, agency and politics*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, pp. 1-46.
- Davis G (2012) A documentary analysis of the use of leadership and change theory in changing practice in early years settings. *Early Years* 32(3): 266-276.
- Deleuze G (1992) Postscripts on the society of control. *October* 59: 3-7.
- Deleuze G and Guattari F (1987) *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. (Trans. B. Massumi). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Deleuze G & Guattari F (1994) *What is philosophy?* (Trans. G. Burchell & H. Tomlinson). London: Verso.
- Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *The statutory framework for the EYFS*. Nottingham: DCSF.
- Department for Education (DfE) (2013) *More great childcare. Raising quality and giving parents more choice*. Crown Copyright.

Department for Education (DfE) (2017) *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five*. Cheshire: Department for Education.

Fairchild N (2017a) *Earthworm disturbances – The reimagining of relations in early childhood education and care*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chichester accredited by the University of Southampton.

Fairchild N (2017b) Segments and stutters: Early years teachers and becoming-professional. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 18(3): 294–307.

Foucault M (1977) *Discipline and punishment: The birth of the prison*. London: Allen Lane.

Fox NJ and Alldred P (2017) *Sociology and new materialism: Theory, research, action*. London: Sage.

Heckman JJ (2000) *Invest in the very young*. Chicago IL: Ounce of Prevention Fund in the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy Studies.

Hevey D (2013) *Different but equal*. Available at <http://www.becera.org.uk/docs/Different%20but%20Equal%20EYITT.pdf> (accessed 6 May 2014).

Keeping Early Years Unique (n.d.) *Keeping early years unique*. Available at <https://www.keyu.co.uk/> (accessed 23.3.18).

Koro-Ljungberg M, MacLure M and Ulmer J (2018) D...a...t...a..., data++, data, and some problematics. In Denzin NK and Lincoln YS (eds) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 462–484.

Lenz Taguchi H (2010) *Going beyond the theory/practice divide in early childhood education: Introducing an intra-active pedagogy*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Lindon J, Lindon L and Beckley P (2016) *Leadership in early years*. London: Hodder Education

Lloyd E (2012) The marketisation of early years education and childcare in England. In Miller L and Hevey D (eds) *Policy issues in the early years*. London: Sage, pp. 107-121.

Lloyd E (2013) Childcare markets: An introduction. In Lloyd E and Penn H (eds) *Childcare markets – can they deliver and equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press.

Lorraine T (2005) Ahab and becoming-Whale: The nomadic subject in smooth space. In Buchanan I and Lambert G (eds) *Deleuze and space*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 159-175.

MacLure M (2013) Classification or wonder? Coding as an analytical practice in qualitative research. In Coleman R and Ringrose J (eds.) *Deleuze and research methodology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 164-183.

Male T and Palaiologou I (2015) Pedagogical leadership in the 21st century: Evidence from the field. *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership* 43(2): 214-231.

Massumi B (2015) *The politics of affect*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

McDowall Clark R and Baylis S (2012) ‘Wasted down there’: Policy and practice with the under-threes. *Early Years* 32(2): 229-242.

- McGillivray G (2011) Constructions of professional identity. In Miller L and Cable C (eds) *Professionalization, leadership and management in the early years*. London: Sage, pp. 93-106.
- Miller L and Cable C (eds) (2011) *Professionalization, leadership and management in the early years*. London: Sage.
- Moss P (2013) Beyond the investment narrative. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 14(4): 370 – 372.
- Moss P (2017) What place for “care” in early childhood policy? In Miller L, Cameron C, Dalli C and Barbour N (eds) *The SAGE handbook of early childhood policy*. London: Sage, pp. 256-267.
- Nail T (2017) What is an assemblage? *SubStance* 46(1): 21-37.
- Osgood J (2006) Deconstructing professionalism in early childhood education: resisting the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 7(1): 5-14.
- Payler JK and Locke R (2013) Disrupting communities of practice? How ‘reluctant’ practitioners view early years workforce reform in England. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 21(1): 125–137.
- Rodd J (2013) *Leadership in early childhood: the pathway to professionalism (4th ed)*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.
- Rodd J (2015) *Leading change in the early years*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Save Childhood Movement (2014) *Manifesto for the early years: Putting children first*. Available from <https://www.savechildhood.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PUTTING-CHILDREN-FIRST.pdf> (accessed 24.3.18).
- Sims M (2017) Neoliberalism and early childhood. *Cogent Education* 4: 1365411 DOI:10.1080/2331186X.2017.1365411.
- Sims M and Waniganayake M (2015) The role of staff in quality improvement in early childhood. *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 3(5): 187-194.
- Simpson D, Lumsden E and McDowall Clark R (2015) Neoliberalism, global poverty policy and early childhood education and care: A critique of local uptake in England. *Early Years* 35(1): 96-109. DOI: 10.1080/09575145.2014.969199.
- Siraj-Blatchford I and Manni L (2007) *Effective leadership the early years sector: The ELEYS study*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Stewart K (2007) *Ordinary affects*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Taylor C and Gannon S (2018) Doing time and motion diffractively: academic life everywhere and all the time. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. Epub ahead of print 15 January 2018. DOI: 10.1080/09518398.2017.1422286.
- Whatmore, S. (2006) Materialist returns: practising cultural geographies in and for a more-than-human world. *Cultural Geographies* 13(4): 600–610.