

**MAKING VISIBLE
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS'
WAYS OF NEGOTIATING COMPLEXITY**

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Certificate of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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25/3/2015

Acknowledgments

Doing a PhD has been my dream for over 20 years. Now that I am nearing the end of my PhD candidature, I realise the extent to which this journey has been far from mine alone. Rather, it has involved many people for whom this was not a dream, but who nevertheless committed to walk with me as I completed mine. I feel very fortunate to have so many of these people in my life and thank all of them deeply and sincerely.

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*NB Original dunce cap image was unavailable for reuse for copyright reasons. Image has been recreated for purposes of publication.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the research contained in this doctorate was obtained from the Charles Sturt University Human Research Ethics Committee (2011/001).

Abstract

This thesis is about ways that early childhood educators in the Australian context negotiate complexity in early childhood practice. In Australia, workforce challenges such as staff shortages, retention and pay inequity appear intractable. The implementation of extensive curricular, quality standards and workforce reforms is underway, and early childhood educators play a central role in achieving desired policy goals as part of these reforms. However, current policy approaches offer few targeted strategies for supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce in the long term. It is crucial, therefore, to seek additional possibilities for addressing this important issue. This thesis explores the complexity of early childhood practice as a source of support and sustainability.

The complexity of early childhood practice has been acknowledged in policy documents and research literature for some time. However, there has been little explicit empirical attention to the nature of this complexity and educators' experiences of it. Hints of connections between complexity in early childhood practice and seemingly entrenched early childhood workforce challenges are evident in some studies, while others use post-structural research strategies to explore complex issues in early childhood pedagogy. This thesis connects these lines and methods of enquiry and argues that making visible some of the ways educators negotiate complexity may be a way of helping to generate new possibilities for supporting and sustaining the workforce.

To investigate these possibilities, the research study addresses the question: how do early childhood educators negotiate complexity in early childhood practice? To this end, two groups of early childhood educators (a total of 10 participants) took part in focus group discussions, arts-based enquiry, and individual research conversations. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, *rhizoanalytic* strategies were used to read focus group and interview transcripts, visual and affective data, and existing research literature and Australian early childhood policy documents. The readings made visible elements of complexity that were both anticipated (such as discourses and subjectivities), and unanticipated (such as bodily logics, and the productive potential of the imperceptible in early childhood practice). It was also evident that workplace and policy contexts were inextricable parts of the complexity of early childhood practice, and were interrelated with educators and practice in mutually affecting ways.

These interrelations of educators, policy and practice are conceptualised in the thesis as *assemblages*, which Deleuze and Guattari describe as combinations of elements, such as

people, places, sensations, discourses and materials, that come together to perform particular functions. Using these ideas to focus on how elements combine, and what they produce, has enabled new ways of thinking about the politics of being an educator, and opportunities for preparing and supporting educators in ways that acknowledge the complexity of early childhood practice. Making visible some of the ways educators negotiate complexity has also suggested possibilities for policy approaches that acknowledge ‘less tangible’, but nonetheless productive aspects of early childhood practice. At the same time however, the readings indicate the necessity of both systemic and localised responses in order to generate effective approaches for supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce.

List of publications and presentations arising from doctoral research

Publications

Article 1.

Cumming, T., Sumsion, J., & Wong, S. (2015). Rethinking early childhood workforce sustainability in the context of Australia's early childhood education and care reforms. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 9(2), 1-15. DOI: 10.1007/s40723-015-0005-z

Article 2.

Cumming, T., Sumsion, J., & Wong, S. (2013). Reading between the lines: An interpretative meta-analysis of ways early childhood educators negotiate discourses and subjectivities informing practice. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14(3), 223-240. DOI: 10.2304/ciec.2013.14.3.223

Article 3.

Cumming, T. (2014). Challenges of 'thinking differently' with rhizoanalytic approaches: A reflexive account. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(2), 137-148. DOI: 10.1080/1743727X.2014.896892

Article 4.

Cumming, T., Sumsion, J., & Wong, S. (2014). Early childhood practice and refrains of complexity. *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 35(1), 80-95. DOI: 10.1080/09575146.2014.937796

Article 5.

Cumming, T., & Sumsion, J. (2014). Imperceptibilities, possibilities and early childhood practice. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(4), 368-377. DOI: 10.2304/ciec.2014.15.4.368

Article 6.

Cumming, T. (2015). Early childhood educators' experiences in their work environments: Shaping (im)possible ways of being an educator? *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education* (Special Issue: Early Childhood Landscapes and Portraits in Complex Times), 12(1), 52-66.

Presentations

- Cumming, T.** (2011, December). *Between 'training' and 'retaining': Crossing boundaries in early childhood professionalism*. Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Researching Across Boundaries, Hobart, Tasmania.
- Cumming, T., Sumsion, J. & Wong, S.** (2012, May). Always in Transition? Australian Early Childhood Teachers' Experiences of Negotiating 'Identity'. In *Negotiating Identities in the Transitions of Early Career Teachers: International Perspectives*. In invited international symposium conducted at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Vancouver.
- Cumming, T., Sumsion, J. & Wong, S.** (2012, December). Sustaining the early childhood workforce: Exploring some 'less tangible' aspects informing practice. In *Attracting and Retaining Early Childhood Teachers*. Symposium conducted at the joint international conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, and the Asia Pacific Educational Research Association, Regional and global cooperation in educational research, Sydney, Australia.
- Cumming, T.** (2014, September). From degree to disillusionment: Qualifications and early childhood workforce retention. In *The early childhood workforce: Myths, realities and challenges*. Symposium conducted at Early Childhood Australia Conference, Melbourne.

Statements of contribution of authorship

Authorship contribution - Article 1

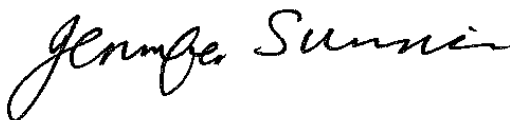
As co-authors of the article entitled: *Rethinking early childhood workforce sustainability in the context of Australia's early childhood education and care reforms*, we confirm that Tamara Cumming has made the following contributions:

- Conceptualisation of the paper
- Review and interpretation of the policy documents and research literature
- Analysis of data for review
- Writing, editing and revision of the manuscript

Furthermore, we agree to the inclusion of the paper in this doctoral research submitted for examination.



Tamara Cumming 25/03/2015



Jennifer Sumsion 25/03/2015



Sandie Wong 25/03/2015

Authorship contribution - Article 2

As co-authors of the article entitled: *Reading between the lines: An interpretative meta-analysis of ways early childhood educators negotiate discourses and subjectivities informing practice*, we confirm that Tamara Cumming has made the following contributions:

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- Review and interpretation of the literature
- Analysis of data for review
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Furthermore, we agree to the inclusion of the paper in this doctoral research submitted for examination.



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Jennifer Sumsion 25/03/2015



Sandie Wong 25/03/2015

Authorship contribution - Article 3

As author of the article entitled: *Challenges of 'thinking differently' with rhizoanalytic approaches: A reflexive account* I confirm that I made the following contributions:

- Conceptualisation of the paper
- Analysis of data for review
- Writing, editing and revision of the manuscript

Furthermore, I agree to the inclusion of the paper in this doctoral research submitted for examination.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamara Cumming". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Tamara" written in a larger, more prominent hand than the surname "Cumming".

Tamara Cumming

25/03/2015

Authorship contribution - Article 4

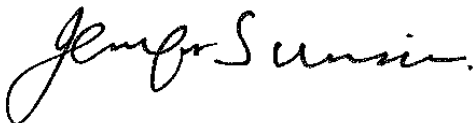
As co-authors of the article entitled: *Early childhood practice and refrains of complexity*, we confirm that Tamara Cumming has made the following contributions:

- Conceptualisation of the paper
- Analysis and interpretation of the data generated through the research project
- Writing, editing and revision of the manuscript

Furthermore, we agree to the inclusion of the paper in this doctoral research submitted for examination.



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Sandie Wong 25/03/2015

Authorship contribution - Article 5

As co-author of the article entitled: *A politics of imperceptibilities, possibilities and early childhood practice*, I confirm that Tamara Cumming has made the following contributions:

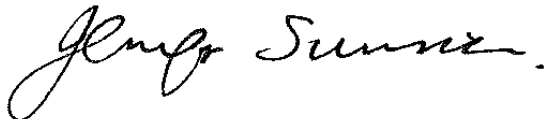
- Conceptualisation of the paper
- Analysis and interpretation of the data generated through the research project
- Writing, editing and revision of the manuscript

Furthermore, I agree to the inclusion of the paper in this doctoral research submitted for examination.



Tamara Cumming

25/03/2015



Jennifer Sumsion

25/03/2015


Authorship contribution - Article 6

As author of the article entitled: *Early childhood educators' experiences in their work environments: Shaping (im)possible ways of being an educator?*

I confirm that I made the following contributions:

- Conceptualisation of the paper
- Analysis of data for review
- Writing, editing and revision of the manuscript

Furthermore, I agree to the inclusion of the paper in this doctoral research submitted for examination.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamara Cumming". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'C'.

Tamara Cumming

25/03/2015

List of abbreviations

ACECQA	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DE	Department of Education
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EC	Early childhood
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
ECEs	Early childhood educators
ECDW	Early Childhood Development Workforce
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
EYWS	Early Years Workforce Strategy
ILO	International Labour Organization
IofM and NRC	Institute of Medicine and National Research Council
NCAC	National Childcare Accreditation Council
NSW	New South Wales
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
SCSEEC	Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VET	Vocational education and training

Glossary of terms

This is a glossary of ways that terms are understood in this thesis.

Affect

A Deleuzo-Guattarian way of thinking about *affect* is as the potential of a body (human or other-than-human) to change the capacity of other bodies to act. An example of affect in research data could be a participant reporting ways that others' behaviour, or choices make a range of other things more or less possible. A Deleuzian concept of affect is the space between "feeling experienced by the embodied human subject...and changes to what [the human] can do" (Hickey-Moody, 2013, p. 79).

Assemblage

Combinations of people, places, sensations, discourses, materials and so on that stabilise, de- and re-stabilise and perform particular functions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The collective capacity of an assemblage exceeds what any one part could achieve alone. This thesis deals with assemblages of policy, educators, workplaces, discourses, as well as assemblages with particular functions – such as research assemblages (see Part 3) and practice assemblages (see Part 4).

Attrition

Attrition occurs when educators leave work in the early childhood education sector altogether (Sumsion, 2003).

Being

Being is a momentary expression or stabilisation of otherwise shifting and relational processes of becoming (Lenz Taguchi, 2011). Nothing ever is alone, only in relation to other things (Mol, 2002).

Becoming

Processes of becoming are always in motion, however, not moving towards a particular or predetermined point. Becoming is always on the threshold of something, or somewhere else (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013).

Complexity

Complexity gestures to: the many elements that constitute or shape early childhood practice (seen as an 'open system'), and, the interrelated processes of these elements combining in assemblages through which early childhood practice 'works', and through which ways of being an educator are shaped.

Difference

Difference is understood in this thesis as “the particularity or ‘singularity’ of each individual thing, moment, perception or conception”– or a “difference in itself” (Stagoll, 2010, p. 74).

Discourse

Discourses are codified, sometimes dominant ways of thinking and speaking about things (Foucault, 1980). Discourses can have productive, as well as repressive potential.

In-home care

A carer providing care to a child in that child’s home, most often when the child (or others in the home) have a disability, or another family member has a disability reducing their capacity to care for the child. May also be available to children living in rural or remote areas, or when no other services are available during the work hours of a child’s primary carer (Productivity Commission, 2014).

Less tangible

In this thesis, ‘less tangible’ (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2005) aspects of early childhood practice are those relational, affective, sometimes ‘hidden’ (Goodfellow, 2003) aspects that are difficult to observe and measure, yet that also seem to play an important role in how early childhood practice works.

Long day care

Centre-based children’s services providing full or part-day services for children aged birth to five years (Productivity Commission, 2014).

Micro- and macro-politics

Micro and macro-politics are conceptualised as types of forces that act to regularise or stabilise (macro-politics) or to disrupt or reorganise (micro-politics) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Mobile children’s services

“Mobile Children’s Services provide flexible, responsive and innovative services to children and families experiencing social, geographic, cultural or economic isolation or a combination of these.” (Mobile Children’s Services Association, 2014). These services often take the form of playgroups that are operated in community facilities.

Multi-purpose services

Children's services that include co-located long day care, preschool, family support or other allied health professional services (Productivity Commission, 2014).

Post-structural

As a philosophy, post-structuralism is concerned with non-representational thought. That is, "it does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation[:] subject, concept and being" (Massumi, 1987, p. xii), seeing these instead as entwined and mutually productive with the "fabrication of realities" (MacLure, 2013, p. 167).

Preschool

Centre-based services delivering programs for children aged four or five (in Australia, the year before children generally begin school) (Productivity Commission, 2014).

Reading intensively

Reading intensively is a tactic of rhizoanalysis (Honan, 2004). Reading intensively involves reading for *affect* - moments of intensity in which seems to be a shift in the capacity of a body (human or other-than-human) to act (see Articles 3 and 6). Readings can be made of ways that elements of assemblages combine and produce change. These elements might include the textual, material, less tangible, human and other-than-human.

Rhizome

In the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) a *rhizome* is a figure characterised by multiple, proliferating connections between diverse modes such as the '...linguistic ...perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p. 8). The rhizome has no pre-determined structure, and can be entered at any point. Accordingly, rhizomatic thinking challenges causal or linear views of relationships between acts or ideas that are often represented and stabilised through *arborescent* logic (tree-like, hierarchical models).

Rhizoanalysis

Rhizoanalysis involves experimenting with connections between things, exploring how they work, and what is produced through connections (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The purpose of a rhizoanalysis then, is not to categorise, or to develop a generalizable theory. Rather, a rhizoanalysis enables a way of thinking differently "...that might produce previously unthought questions, practices, and knowledge" (Mazzei & McCoy, 2010, p. 504).

Subjectivities

Subjectivities are “provisional, contingent [and] constructed...” ways of being (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007, p. 23).

Turnover

Turnover occurs as educators leave one workplace for another (Sumsion, 2003).

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Part One:

Introduction to the thesis and the Australian early childhood education policy context

Introduction to the thesis

The provision of universally accessible, high quality¹ early childhood education has, for many years, been recognised as supporting good outcomes for children, for families, and for economic productivity (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2012). One of the elements that contributes to high quality early childhood education is a stable early childhood workforce (International Labour Organization, 2014). However, finding ways to effectively support and sustain the early childhood workforce – especially through large-scale policy initiatives – has been elusive across many national contexts, including Australia. How then, might new possibilities be generated?

One way of generating new possibilities arises from the increasingly familiar refrain of ‘the complexity of early childhood educators’ practice’ in policy documents, and much of the research literature. This refrain reinforces the idea that early childhood practice is indeed complex; yet has there has been little elaboration or exploration of the nature or experiences of complexity in educators’ practice. This thesis aims to make visible the complexity of early childhood practice, and educators’ experiences of complexity, as a means of generating new possibilities for supporting and sustaining the workforce. It does so by reporting on a study guided by the research question: *How do early childhood educators in Australia negotiate complexity in early childhood practice?*

This research question is also informed by my ongoing interest in the professional practice of educators. Working as an ‘untrained’ educator first exposed me to the many pressures and frequently competing messages that shape educators’ practice. This interest was later extended through my undergraduate degree in sociology that culminated in a research project and thesis in 2006. That project investigated ways that discourses of empowerment circulated amongst a group of educators working in an early intervention and inclusion agency. At the conclusion of that project, questions remained, such as: How might the

¹ The concept of ‘quality’ is highly contested in early childhood education (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Van Laere, Lazzari & Peeters, 2012). Logan and Sumsion (2010) classify these debates around their underpinning modernist or post-modernist perspectives. Accordingly, they suggest that modernist conceptions of quality seek to establish definable, measurable factors of quality – as in Clifford, Harms and Cryer’s (1998) influential Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale. By contrast, post-modern perspectives on quality in early childhood education advocate for recognition of the deeply subjective and contextual nature of quality, and the validity of multiple views of what quality is, and how it might be evaluated (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007). In Australia, the National Quality Framework (Australian Children’s Services Education & Care Authority, 2012) is based on two key documents. Firstly, the National Quality System, which establishes seven key areas across which the quality of early childhood services is judged. The second key document is the Early Years Learning Framework (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009). This document provides practice guidelines acknowledging the contextuality of quality, and the important role of educators’ practices. In this way, quality in the Australian context draws on modernist and post-modernist perspectives of quality.

discourses circulating in educators' work environments affect their sense of self? How might educators sustain their agency in the face of multiple challenges? These questions remained with me, as I continued my work as a research officer in a children's services organisation.

In 2009, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* [EYLF] (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009) was released. This framework constituted Australia's first national early childhood education curriculum guidelines. I was struck by – what seemed to me – a dizzying and complex array of suggestions for ways educators could promote children's learning. I wondered how educators might manage to bring together combinations of all the actions, styles, dispositions, theories and knowledges that the EYLF mentioned. As I thought further along those lines, I began to be interested in how educators negotiated the discourses and sometimes mixed messages, produced by documents such as the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). Drawing on my earlier research project, I also wondered how educators might negotiate elements of complexity in their work environments.

Initially, I took as the basis for my investigation the growing body of literature concerned with ways discourses and subjectivities might inform educators' practice. I approached this literature with a Foucauldian-derived interest in how educators were reported to have negotiated relations of power circulating through discourses. This methodology appeared to me inadequate, however, for making sense of the complexity that seemed evident in educators' accounts of their practice. Other possibilities were evident in the rhizoanalytic methodological approaches used, for example, by Olsson (2009) and Honan (2004). Accordingly, I turned to the work of Deleuze and Guattari for its potential for making sense of ways complex combinations of elements come together to produce change. In particular, Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of *assemblages*, *macro-* and *micro-politics* and *rhizoanalysis* opened new possibilities for enquiry that is oriented to making visible complexity at work in educators' practice.

Conceptualising complexity

The conceptualisations of complexity in this thesis are therefore underpinned by three main ideas: Firstly, ideas of complexity as complicated, involved, intricate or composite (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2012); secondly, that complexity involves elements that are “entwined [or] twisted together” (Heylighen, 1996, n.p.) – that is, interrelated and mutually affecting; and thirdly, Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) ideas of complex systems (such as social

systems). According to Deleuze and Guattari's thinking, complex systems are constituted by flows (or forces) that may stabilise (macro-politics), de-stabilise (micro-politics) or take things in new directions entirely (lines of flight) (Bonta & Protevi, 2004). By extension then, complexity in early childhood practice is conceptualised in this thesis as an interrelatedness of multiple elements – both human and other-than human – that move in stabilising, de-stabilising, or altogether new ways.

Overview of the research project, methodological approaches and analytic strategies

This research project has been designed in keeping with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) key concerns with how things work, and what they produce. Therefore, rather than only identifying or defining complexity in early childhood practice, the study focuses on *how* educators negotiate complexity. The project is informed by a rhizomatic methodology that draws on ideas from Deleuze and Guattari, and upon research approaches described by Honan (2004), Olsson (2009) and Pacini Ketchabaw (2013).

Ten educators participated in the study which involved four phases of data generation: an initial focus group discussion (two groups, each with five participants); individual participant generation of visual materials; individual interviews and a follow-up focus group discussion (with each of the two groups). Data generated included recordings of focus group discussions and individual interviews, transcripts of these discussions and interviews, photo collages and artwork, and affective data (such as gestures, tones of voice, or silence). These data were analysed using strategies of reading intensively (Masny, 2012), plugging in (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) and mapping (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013).

My readings of the data, along with those generated by participants through the phases of the research project, enabled exploration and elaboration of refrains of the complexity of early childhood educators' practice. These readings made visible elements of complexity, multiple ways that educators negotiated complexity, the productive potential of less tangible aspects of early childhood practice, and ways that workplace and policy contexts were inextricable parts of the complexity of early childhood practice. On the bases of these insights, I argue for reconceptualisations of the ways educators' subjectivities are shaped, and expanded approaches to policy making and pre-service education that acknowledge the nature and experiences of complexity in educators' practice. These then, are ways that findings from the research project might contribute to efforts to better support and sustain the early childhood workforce.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is presented as a series of six articles. All of the articles report on the research study, and have been published in peer-reviewed journals (please see the contribution to authorship forms on pages xii-xvii for details of my leadership of and contribution to each article). For this reason, referencing styles differ due to the need to conform to each journal's preferred style. In addition, the need to include some context for each article has resulted in some repetition of details such as those of the research project, methodological approaches and analytic strategies.

An exegesis articulates the six articles into a coherent thesis. It does so by, for example, orienting an article in relation to the research question, or updating literature published since the articles were published. An outline of the five parts of the thesis and the location of each article follows.

Thesis outline

Part 1 comprises this Introduction, along with Article 1. Article 1 – ‘Rethinking early childhood workforce sustainability in the context of Australia’s early childhood education and care reforms’ (*International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 9(2) published online 11 March, 2015) – is a policy analysis. It describes the international and Australian early childhood workforce policy and research contexts that frame the thesis. In addition, it establishes two possibilities for developing other possibilities for supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce – rethinking discourses of sustainability, and using innovative methodologies in research practices concerned with the early childhood workforce.

Part 2 comprises Article 2, and a postscript. Article 2 – ‘Reading between the lines: An interpretative meta-analysis of ways early childhood educators negotiate discourses and subjectivities informing practice’ (published in *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14(3), pp. 223-240) reviews research literature concerned with ‘less tangible’ aspects of early childhood practice in research literature. Findings from the analysis make visible a highly complex set of strategies that educators have used to negotiate relations of power in their work. The findings also identify limitations of existing methodological approaches to research concerned with educators’ practice. These limitations suggest the productive potential of turning to other approaches for exploring complexity in educators’ practice. In the postscript I discuss the rationale for my shift from a primarily Foucauldian orientation

to the research question, to one based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari. I also update the literature reviewed in Article 2, and draw on that more recent literature to extend the analysis.

Part 3 comprises a detailed introduction to the methodology, approaches and ethics of the research study, along with Article 3, and a postscript. Article 3 – ‘Challenges of ‘thinking differently’ with rhizoanalytic approaches: A reflexive account’ (published in *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(2), pp. 137-148) – describes how I operationalised Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of rhizome to explore complexity in educators’ practice, and the challenges this posed to my research practices. In the postscript, I expand upon ways the worthiness of rhizoanalytic strategies can be judged, given that standards of research ‘quality’ such as transferability, credibility or dependability have little application to research practices aiming to consider how things work, and what these produce (Lather, 1993).

Part 4 comprises Articles 4, 5 and 6, and a postscript. The three articles in Part 4 present readings of the data generated through the research study. Article 4 – ‘Exploring refrains of the complexity of early childhood practice’ (published in *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 35(1), pp. 80-95) – presents readings of data illustrating complexity at work in educators’ practice, and the subjectivities produced through ways of negotiating complexity. It also presents readings of data illustrating how complex interrelations of elements produce change. Article 5 is titled: ‘Politics of imperceptibilities, possibilities and early childhood practice’ (published in *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(4), pp. 368-377). This article focuses on one aspect of the complexity of early childhood practice – those that are hidden or ‘less tangible’ – and identifies some of the ways that these aspects of early childhood practice work. Article 6 – ‘Early childhood educators’ experiences in their work environments: Shaping (im)possible ways of being an educator?’ (published in *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity*, 12(1), pp. 52- 66, special issue on early childhood education) draws on additional data from the research study, focusing on one educator’s experiences in her work environment. This data is read through research literature relating to workforce challenges, and Australian policy documents. The readings of (im)possible ways of being an educator shaped by the work environment are then used as prompts for thinking differently about workforce stability and sustainability. In the postscript to the three articles, I synthesise their findings and contribution in relation to the overall concerns of the thesis.

In **Part 5** – A Closing – I synthesise the arguments presented in the thesis, and highlight contributions of the study to the research literature. I also suggest implications for three areas warranting further consideration: educators’ subjectivities, workforce sustainability, and the use of rhizomatic methodologies in educational research. In addition I suggest a number of possible future research directions. These possibilities concern: the development of educators’ capacities for negotiating complexity in early childhood practice; the reconceptualising of relationships between educators and children; and, the production and negotiation of tensions in early childhood workplaces. In concluding, I argue for the need for ongoing attention to and action regarding the complexity of early childhood practice.

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Article One

Cumming, T., Sumsion, J., & Wong, S. (2015). Rethinking early childhood workforce sustainability in the context of Australia's early childhood education and care reforms. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 9(2), 1-15. DOI: 10.1007/s40723-015-0005-z

Part Two:

Literature Review

Article Two

Cumming, T., Sumsion, J., & Wong, S. (2013). Reading between the lines: An interpretative meta-analysis of ways early childhood educators negotiate discourses and subjectivities informing practice. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *14*(3), 223-240.

Postscript to Article 2

Since conducting the literature review reported in Article 2 in 2010-11, I have located six recently published articles that meet the criteria for inclusion in the original interpretative meta-analysis. These additional articles, published during the period 2012-2014, were located using the same search and analytic strategies reported in Article 2. Details of the research studies reported in these articles are summarised in Table 2 below. On the whole the findings of the studies reported in these articles closely aligned with the findings of the original interpretative meta-analysis. For instance, strategies of emotional self-regulation or sacrifice in order to ‘fit-in’ to ideas of professional behaviour were evident in Page and Elfer (2013). Similarly, Hu, Torr and Whiteman (2014) reported on educators struggling with compromising pedagogical principles in favour of building partnerships with families who wished their children to speak English only in early childhood settings. The studies also made visible other ways that educators negotiated complexity in early childhood practice – for example, the emotional complexity of enacting attachment pedagogies (Page & Elfer, 2013), and the need for “being open to dealing with uncertainty” (Lazzari, 2012, p.257) as an inherent part of early childhood practice.

Similar to many studies reported in Article 2, four of the six more recent studies (Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin & Vanderlee, 2013; Lazzari, 2012; Messenger, 2013; Roberts-Holmes, 2013) were concerned with issues of professionalism. These studies offered additional insights to existing literature concerning: the complexity for educators of negotiating inter-professional practice with practitioners from other disciplines (Messenger, 2013); ways of conceptualising professionalism that do not rely on credentials or qualifications alone (Harwood et al., 2013); or disjunctures between the apparent status offered by a credential (the UK Early Years Professional Status) and educators’ experiences of professional status in practical terms (Roberts-Holmes, 2013).

The more recent studies also offered insights that inform thinking in the current thesis. Lazzari (2012, p. 252) for example, focused on ways that educators (in the Italian context) undertook collective decision-making and continuous learning as means of challenging what she described as “neo-liberal influences”. These examples indicate the possibilities for “small everyday encounters, [to be] significant to the processes of change” (Blaise, 2013, p. 189) in the same way that Fenech, Sumsion and Shepherd (2010) and Karlson and Simonsson (2010) reported educators’ ways of negotiating discursive complexity in the original interpretative meta-analysis. Together, findings from these earlier and more recent

research studies inform and bolster arguments made in Article 2 for the value of continued exploration of educators' ways of negotiating complexity.

Further, Roberts-Holmes (2013) reports the limiting influence of educators' workplaces on their ability to shape preferred, professional ways of being. These findings suggest that educators may not always be "in control and the author of his or her own experience and meaning" (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2010, p. 27) – despite holding credentials defining their professional status. Attention to ways educators negotiate complexity in early childhood practice therefore also needs to be tempered with attention to ways other elements of complexity – such as workplace or regulatory environments – are implicated in educators' capacities to bring about change.

Insights reported in Part 2 of the thesis (including those made in this postscript) therefore make a number of contributions to the overarching argument of this thesis. Firstly, they make visible some of the elements of complexity of early childhood practice, and ways that existing studies report educators negotiate elements of complexity. Secondly, the insights contribute to a conceptualisation of the complexity of early childhood practice as an assemblage of elements. This conceptualisation enables a shift in focus beyond simply identifying elements of complexity and their connections, to looking at what is produced through the connections. This emphasis on movement, on what connections of things may produce, rather than only on what they are (Olsson, 2009), is a key part of generating possibilities for better supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce. Thirdly and relatedly, the insights reported in Part 2 illustrate some of the politics of being an educator. In particular, that ways of being are not only shaped by levels of qualification or experience, but are always in relation to the other elements with which an educator is connected in the complexity of early childhood practice. These contributions form the basis for the next part of the thesis, in which I outline the methods of data generation and participants in the study, and methodological approaches. Article 3 provides details and challenges of the rhizoanalytic strategies used to explore the question: How do educators in Australia negotiate complexity in early childhood practice?

Additional studies published since 2012

Author/s	Year	Country	Participant location (as identified by the original authors)	Research topic	Number of participants in study	Data collection methods										Qualification (where specified)	
						Interview	Group-based discussion	Survey	Arts-informed	Stimulus	Observation	Document analysis	Reflective statement	Statistical data/validated scale	Non-degree	EC-related degree	
Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin & Vanderlee	2013	Canada, South Africa, Nigeria	Not specified	Teachers concepts of professionalism	25	X											
Hu, Torr & Whiteman	2014	Australia	City	Using home language in EC settings	5	X											X
Lazzari	2012	Italy	City	Teachers concepts of professionalism	60		X										
Messenger	2013	UK	Regional	Professional and inter-professional cultures	12	X										X	X
Page & Elfer	2013	UK	Urban region	Emotional impact for educators of their interactions with children	5	X	X						X			X	X
Roberts-Holmes	2013	UK	Region	Educators' perceptions of their professional status in relation to holding Early Years Professional Status	77		X	X					X			X	X

Table 2 Additional studies published since 2012

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Part Three:

Methodology

Introduction to Part 3: Methodology

In Part 3, I outline the methodological approaches that guided the research project, and describe the methods and strategies used for recruiting participants, for addressing ethical considerations, and for generating and analysing data (I have also dealt with questions of method in Articles 2, 4, 5 and 6). In Article 3 I give a more in-depth account of the rhizoanalytic strategies used to analyse data generated through the research project, and a reflexive account of challenges encountered in putting to work these approaches in the conduct of the research. The article also includes a discussion of ways the concept of *immanent ethics* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) informed my approach to ethical issues encountered during the research project. A postscript to Article 3 addresses in further detail ways that the worthiness of my rhizoanalytic methodological approaches might be assessed.

Methodological considerations

The aim of the research project was to generate new possibilities for supporting and sustaining the workforce. Investigating the research question ‘how do early childhood educators negotiate complexity in early childhood practice?’ therefore required methodological approaches capable of generating possibilities, rather than (for example) testing theories, or developing models. These imperatives lead me to consider methodological approaches informed by post-structural theories. Rationales for using post-structural thought to inform research practices in broader educational research literature also seemed to have many points of resonance with my own research project. For example, post-structurally-informed research has been identified as especially relevant for exploring the creation of the conditions for the formation and manifestation of social practices, patterns and subjectivities (Søndergaard, 2002), to “expose limited thinking in the field [of educational research]” (Hodgson & Standish, 2009, p. 309), and to disrupt the taken-for-granted (Søndergaard, 2002).

Rhizomethodology

The generative use of post-structural theories – and particularly those of Deleuze and Guattari – in research concerned with early childhood pedagogy and practice (such as Lenz Taguchi, 2007; Olsson, 2009; Giugni, 2011; Pacini Ketchabaw, 2013) also gestured to the possibilities for using similar ways of thinking in my own research project. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concepts of *rhizome* – and processes of rhizoanalysis – seemed to offer a productive way of approaching my investigation of ways educators’ negotiated complexity.

Rhizoanalyses are different in every instance of use, and always in the process of becoming. They are “designed as the process of constructing a problem proceeds” (Olsson, 2009, p. 183), experimenting with connections between things, exploring how they work, and what is produced through connections (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The purpose of a rhizoanalysis then, is not to produce knowledge about phenomena, but to think differently about things in order to make possible “previously unthought questions, practices, and knowledge” (Mazzei & McCoy, 2010, p. 504). However, as Honan (2004) points out, and the variety of manifestations of rhizoanalyses bear out (see for example, Masny, 2012; Angell, 2014; Stratigos, 2015), there is no methodological model based on Deleuze and Guattari’s work. I discuss my development of rhizoanalytic methodological approaches for my research project throughout this introduction to Part 3, as well as in detail in Article 3.

Data generation considerations

From a Deleuzian perspective, there is no assumed “...given, [or] real world (data) that can be gathered together (collected) and described (analyzed and known)” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 225). For this reason, I use the term *data generation* or *production* rather than *data collection*. My selection of appropriate methods for generating data was informed by existing literature, and by the work of other researchers working with ideas from Deleuze and Guattari. I was prompted to think beyond verbal and text-based methods for example, by Sumsion’s (2007, p. 323) contention that supporting workforce sustainability: “...is an indisputably complex challenge requiring the strategic mobilisation of a wide range of theoretical, political and practical resources... responses to this challenge, to date, have been generally unimaginative and ineffective”. Taking on ideas from Deleuze and Guattari during the interpretative meta-analysis (Article 2) also encouraged me to think about using inventive methods and creative concepts (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013) to explore educators’ ways of negotiating complexity.

The methods for generating data – focus groups, visual enquiry and interviews – were therefore chosen for their potential to make visible some of the “complexities, nuances and contradictions” (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013, p. 675) of educators’ experiences, through group and individual engagement. My decisions about data generation methods were also informed by an understanding that the purpose of using multiple methods was not to seek a pre-existing truth, nor to confirm a particular idea by its confirmation in multiple sources. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 5) contend, using multiple methods can be (mis)understood as triangulation, that “reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question, [however] objective reality can never be

captured”. By contrast, I think of my use of multiple methods as a way of illuminating the research question through multiple ways of seeing, and through multiple voices. These ‘ways’, ‘seeings’ and ‘voices’ are those of myself as researcher, participants, and other elements combining in data assemblages.

Findings of my interpretative meta-analysis (as reported in Article 2) also suggested the appropriateness of using multiple methods of data generation for investigating educators’ ways of negotiating complexity. Of the 38 studies reviewed, 29 used multiple methods of data collection – eight using a combination of individual interview and group based discussions and three using individual interviews and arts-informed enquiry. Moreover, 11 studies (of the 38) used critical or post-structuralist-informed theoretical approaches along with multiple methods for data generation. Similarly, in a review of literature concerned with educators’ wellbeing, Hall-Kenyon, Bullough, MacKay and Marshall (2013) found that using a wide range of data sources was appropriate for attending to complex aspects of educators’ practice.

Although I have selected established qualitative research methods, as I discuss below, I have endeavoured to disrupt and rethink the “habitual practices associated with ...particular data collection method[s]” (Honan, 2014, p. 1) in order to generate new insights into ways educators negotiate complexity. One way I have done this is to think about the relations between the methods of data generation via Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas of assemblages. Livesey describes *assemblages* (from a Deleuzian perspective) as: “complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories, that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning” (2010, p. 18). While the ‘constellation’ can be broken apart into constituting elements, the collective capacity of an assemblage exceeds what any one part could achieve alone. In the same way, I conceptualised the methods of data generation as elements that worked to illuminate the research question through their combinations – for example, combinations of data generated through the initial and follow up focus groups, or the visual materials and research conversations. Nind and Vanha (2014) describe a similar design in their project (with people who have intellectual disabilities), reasoning that having initial, then follow-up focus groups would allow participants to “bring thinking done in and since previous dialogic encounters into later focus groups enriching the dialogue and giving them more control”. They envisioned this in-between time as a “reflective space” that would also give their participants time to engage imaginatively and creatively with data, and to create

materials to bring to later group discussions, thereby “enabl[ing] ideas to flow between focus groups” (p. 4). In the same way, I envisioned the initial and follow-up focus groups as offering participants the opportunity to consider, reflect, create, talk individually with me, then revisit the dialogic space with other participants in the follow-up focus group. In this way, using multiple methods for generating data enables readings of what is produced through connections of different forms of data, in order to illuminate the research question, and the same readings could not be produced through the use of a single method alone.

Research design

The research project was conducted in four slightly overlapping phases: an initial focus group discussion (of two groups, each with five participants); individual participant generation of visual materials; individual interviews and a follow-up focus group discussion (with each of the two groups). Twelve educators initially volunteered to take part, however due to illness and travel difficulties for two of these volunteers, only 10 actually took part in the project. The analytic strategies used with data generated through the research project were drawn from Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) idea of the rhizome, and of rhizoanalysis, and were informed by Jackson and Mazzei’s (2013) strategies of plugging in, and Masny’s (2012) descriptions of reading intensively.

Recruitment and participants

Recruitment efforts began with an invitation to students of Charles Sturt University’s [CSU] Bachelor of Teaching (birth to five years) degree. The number of participants recruited for the project was informed by the studies reviewed in the interpretative meta-analysis (Article 2). An average of 15 participants were involved in the majority of the studies reviewed, therefore I anticipated recruiting between 10 and 20 participants. The Bachelor of Teaching (birth to five years) degree is offered by CSU to educators with an existing qualification at diploma level, wanting to become qualified at degree level. This cohort (of over 500 students) was first approached in response to literature suggesting that the experiences students have during their preparatory programs can: “...shape the ways in which they take up, resist, or negotiate the dominant discourses about teaching, learning and being an early childhood educator” (Sumsion, 2005, p. 214). Based on the subjects required for the Bachelor of Teaching degree, I also reasoned that this cohort of educators would have some familiarity and engagement with theoretical perspectives (such as Foucault’s ideas about relations of power and discourses) through their coursework, as well as practical experience with which to contrast and illuminate theoretical perspectives. My decision was also informed by Edwards’ (2005) specification of university level

qualifications in education, and a minimum number of years' experiences as the basis for recruiting educators to her project.

As the initial recruitment efforts yielded only four volunteers, I broadened recruitment channels. A further six participants were recruited via invitations to participate (see Appendix 1 for an example) distributed by email to the membership of two early childhood organisations. These were the New South Wales State branch of Australian Community Children's Services – an organisation advocating for children's access to high quality, not for profit children's services, and, the Sydney-based Social Justice in Early Childhood group. Two of the six participants also invited colleagues to join the research project, bringing the total to 10 participants. In an attempt to attract further participants, an invitation was emailed to a Sydney-based children's services provider with whom an existing research relationship existed, however this approach did not yield additional participants.

Ten educators participated in the research project. A short profile of each of these participants is included in Appendix 2, and illustrates some aspects of their diversity. In summary, all 10 participants were women, and at the time of the project were living in New South Wales (Australia's most populous state). Two participants were diploma-qualified (a two-year qualification gained through a vocational education and training institution), with another two undertaking university study to upgrade their existing diploma to degree qualifications. Six were already degree-qualified in early childhood education. Of these six, two were studying for additional degree qualifications (one in teaching English to adults, and the second in small business management). Seven participants were located in Sydney (Australia's largest city), and three in regional communities (with respective populations of around 30,000, 70,000 and 240,000). Nine of the participants were working in the early childhood sector at the time of the project. Seven were working in centre-based services (long day care, preschool and multi-purpose services), one in in-home care, and one in mobile supported playgroup services. One educator had recently left her position in a long day care centre to study English language teaching. The educators ranged in age from early 20s to mid-50s, and had been working in the sector for between one and 34 years. Throughout the thesis, all participants are referred to via pseudonyms.

Data generation

Data generation commenced once five participants had volunteered, and while recruitment of additional participants continued. The phases were undertaken sequentially, beginning

with an initial focus group. Following each of the initial focus group discussions, participants produced their visual materials. Approximately one month after the initial focus group discussion, I met individually with each participant for the research conversation. The follow up focus group discussions took place approximately six weeks after the final research conversation was held. For each of the two groups, all phases were completed within three months of the initial focus group discussion. The total duration of the data generation phases was five months, from October 2012 to February 2013.

Table 3 below, summarises the corpus of data generated through the research project – including recordings and transcripts of spoken words, recordings and notations of affective data, and the visual materials produced by participants.

Phase		Details	Data generated		
1.	<i>Initial focus group discussions</i>	2 x initial group discussions with 5 participants/group	2 hours of discussion/group	103 transcribed pages	Affective data
2.	<i>Visual enquiry</i>	10 x participants produced visual materials in their own time	9 x photo collages 1x original artwork		
3.	<i>Research conversations</i>	10 x one-to-one conversations 8 x in person 2 x by phone	15 hours of conversation (total)	259 transcribed pages	
4.	<i>Follow up focus group discussions</i>	1 x discussion with 4 participants 1 x discussion with 5 participants	2 hours of discussion/group	88 transcribed pages	

Table 3 Data generated through the research project.

Focus groups

Focus group discussions were selected as a method of generating data, as they “rely on group processes” through which participants “interact with each other as well as the moderator” to make collective sense of key issues (Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson & Carlson, 2014, p. 329). Group processes and interactions between educators were also important in my research project due to the highly relational character of early childhood practice. Indeed, as Sumsion (2002, p. 869) has also contended, developing better understandings about workforce sustainability requires further exploration of “the interplay between personal, relational and contextual influences”.

The collective possibilities afforded by focus groups therefore seemed likely to generate insights into how educators negotiate complexity by “allow[ing] people to speak in both collective and individual voices” and, “to articulate their particular experience” whilst also

addressing the politics of their shared experiences” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 325). Additionally, from a Deleuzian perspective, focus groups seemed to allow for participants and researchers to address what happens between the ‘collective’ and the ‘individual’ by focusing on how things work, and what they produce. That is, what might a particular exchange between participants produce in terms of: the shared complexity of their exchange, the relationship in that moment, in combination with what preceded and followed, and the sensations it produced for themselves and others?

I decided on two groups of five participants each, rather than one group of 10, in order to allow more space for all participants to contribute over the 1 or 1½ hours of the discussion. As there was no intention to compare participants’ accounts on the basis of demographic features, the assignment of participants to each of the two groups was partly random, and partly purposeful. In one case for example, participants employed in the same workplace requested they be allocated between the groups as they anticipated this would allow them to speak more freely. Consistent with my commitment to inclusivity I also encouraged participants to identify any access or dietary requirements ahead of their participation. One participant subsequently identified herself as deaf, and as using hearing aids. In order to better facilitate the inclusion of the participant, and in consultation with her about the best means to do so, Australian sign language (Auslan) interpreters were present at the first focus group discussion.

As mentioned in Article 6, an expert facilitator was invited to co-facilitate the focus group discussions with me. This decision was taken partly because having multiple facilitators can allow for the documentation of aspects of discussion (for example, participants speaking over the top of each other) that might otherwise be missed in transcription of words (Kidd & Parshall, 2000), or to notice aspects of non-verbal communication that would be lost if not noted or recalled by facilitators who were present. Moreover, as Kidd and Parshall (2000) comment, less experienced moderators (like myself) sometimes lack the skills to make space for conversation between participants. In addition, as Kidd and Parshall also contend, exchanges between participants (such as agreement, disagreement, commiseration or comparison) “are fundamental processes that influence the nature and content of responses as the group progresses” (p. 294). It was therefore important to take steps to open space for multiple, intersecting perspectives between participants to be heard, and for affective data (such as looks, gestures, sensations, emotions) to be generated.

In terms of selecting facilitators for focus groups, Franz (2012) suggests that skills and background play an important role in how well focus groups generate the type and depth of data desired. For these reasons, I invited Dr Joy Goodfellow to conduct the groups with me. Dr Goodfellow is an Adjunct of the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education at CSU. She has many years experience facilitating focus groups, as well as extensive knowledge of the Australian early childhood sector. She had also written about hidden aspects of the complexity of early childhood practice – notably practice wisdom (Goodfellow, 2003) and presence (2008), though from a more humanist theory of the subject than I was working from. I felt that our shared interest in these aspects of complexity, but from different perspectives, could help to generate more diverse data than if I had worked alone. Dr Goodfellow was the main facilitator of the first of the two initial focus groups, acting as a mentor, assisting me to gain insights and practice with strategies for eliciting and mediating discussion. I took the lead in facilitating the other three group discussions, with Dr Goodfellow offering additional probes, and helping to ensure all participants had the opportunity to contribute.

I developed prompts for the focus group discussion, along with notes that would be provided to participants ahead of their participation in the initial focus group discussion. The prompts and notes (included as Appendices 3 and 4 respectively) were informed by the style of “critically reflective questioning” that Giugni (cited in Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 54) used to “contest, theorise and critically reflect” on her practice and work for social justice and equity. The notes given to participants ahead of the initial focus group discussion drew on insights gained through the interpretative meta-analysis (Article 2) about ways educators negotiated discourses and subjectivities. However, in the prompts and notes, I framed these concepts for participants as “recognising and responding to mixed messages” (see Appendix 4). This decision was made for two reasons. Firstly, the idea of *mixed messages* gestured to my interest in the multiple, sometimes conflicting discursive and ‘less tangible’ aspects of practice, and messages about ‘right’ ways of being an educator, and doing early childhood practice. Secondly, the idea of *recognising and responding to* (mixed messages) seemed to give a practical sense of what might be involved in ‘working with’ mixed messages, and thereby focusing on ways of negotiating, rather than on what was being negotiated.

After formulating prompts for discussion, Dr Goodfellow and I met to talk through the ideas I wanted to introduce for discussion in the focus group, and to consider the number

and order of prompts. Needing to make my thinking visible to Dr Goodfellow (who led the first of the two initial focus group discussions) prompted consideration of the style of group and the role of the facilitator in the discussion. As Ryan et al. (2014) suggest, facilitation of focus groups (such as those in my research project) whose purpose is to generate data “constructed from shared ideas, opinions, beliefs, experiences, and actions” is typically “free flowing,...to allow participants to...build collective sense”, rather than to administer a more strict question and answer structure. In addition, I was most interested in hearing about the ‘less tangible’ aspects of complexity, making it important to “pay equal attention to what people say and what they do not say” (Ryan et al., 2014), or what is implied, to help make visible these sometimes tacit or taken-for-granted ways that participants negotiated complexity. I also piloted the questions with another PhD candidate (Tina Stratigos) familiar with the aims of my project, and also working in the area of early childhood education. Tina offered impressions of what she understood was being asked in each prompt, and gave examples from her own experiences of early childhood practice as sample data, enabling me to see what adjustments to the prompts might be necessary in order to best address my research question.

Visual methods

Arts-based approaches were used to gain insights into ways educators negotiate complexity in early childhood practice, as they offered possibilities for “invok[ing] beyond-text sensations... that are ineffable and invisible using conventional text-based methods” (Prosser, 2011, p. 488). In addition, arts-based approaches seemed likely to offer participants a non-verbal “tool for thinking” (Prosser, 2011, p. 488) about and expressing their ways of negotiating complexity, and potentially “elicit deep and interesting talk about subjects otherwise too complex to explore” (Birkeland, 2013, p. 456). For example, Lomax (2012) used photographs produced by young people living in council housing estates in the UK (along with their accounts of the making and meaning of the images), to disrupt dominant deficit discourses shaping and limiting ideas of what living on an ‘estate’ means. Lomax noted that using photography produced by the young people “ma[de] visible children’s lives from their perspectives, rendering meaningful what might otherwise be invisible to adult viewers and co-researchers” (2012, p. 227). This capacity for ‘making visible’ aspects of participants’ lives that might otherwise remain tacit made arts-based approaches to data generation especially relevant to my own concern with ways educators negotiate complexity.

Deleuze saw great potential in the capacity of art-making activities such as “music, literature, the cinema, and modern painting” (Kramp, 2012, n.p.) for disrupting the stabilising forces of accepted knowledge. At the same time, he is reported to have had neither “interest nor... confidence in [the] potential [of photography] to create new concepts or relationships” (Kramp, 2012, n.p.). As examples given above suggest however, it has been possible for researchers working in the area of early childhood education to use photography (and other forms of art) as part of assemblages that have successfully generated what Kramp described as “new concepts and relationships”.

In my research project, participants were encouraged to use photography as a visual method as this is a commonly used medium for arts-based research (Bown & Sumsion, 2007). In addition, given the extensive use of photography for documentation in early childhood settings, I reasoned that participants would likely have access to cameras, and could potentially make photographs as part of their work (as ethically appropriate).

Participants were briefed about the production of visual materials via a short presentation at the end of each initial focus group discussion. Participants were provided with a written guide (see Appendix 5), along with examples of visual materials. Of the visual materials produced by participants, one was an original artwork made of mixed media (see Article 4 – Marilyn’s artwork), two contained original photography (see Articles 5 and 6 – Vanessa’s and Lara’s photographs), and seven comprised montages of images (of symbols, signs and photographs) obtained through internet searches (using terms such as ‘exclusion’, as in Article 6).

In Articles 4, 5 and 6, I have used a variety of terms to describe the methods used by participants for generating visual materials. For example, in Part 3 of the thesis (that deals with the methodology and methods used for the research project) I refer to “arts-based approaches”, in Article 3 “arts-informed enquiry” (p. 3), and Article 4 “visual enquiry” (p. 5). In Articles 5 and 6 however, I refer only to the visual materials generated by participants, rather than naming the method of their production. These variances reflect, in part, my conceptual shifts over the course of the research project, in particular, in how I conceptualised visual materials as data and how I analysed this data (which I discuss in detail in the section on analytic strategies, below). In addition, the methods used by participants for generating visual materials did not necessarily exemplify the application of any particular ‘arts-informed’ approach. It seemed more appropriate then, to use the term

‘visual methods’ to describe the way data was produced, and to refer to what was produced by participants as ‘visual materials’.

Individual interviews

Interviews enable focused discussion with individual participants about their ways of negotiating complexity. The decision to interview participants individually was made to help offset the effects of any difficulties they might have contributing to the group discussions (a common effect in focus groups) (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). At the same time, as I detail below, I was aware of critiques of the atomising potential of individual interviews (see for example, Scheurich, 1995; Honan, 2014), and post-structural contentions that everything is relational – “nothing ever ‘is’” alone (Mol, 2002, p. 54). The implication of this onto-epistemological assemblage was conceptualising individual participants as always connected to the groups – or assemblages – of which they were (also) part. These might have included the focus group, their workplaces and the sector, families, or groups with whom they had undertaken study, for example.

Interviews were conducted at a time and in a place convenient for participants: three were conducted in meeting spaces within public libraries, two in cafes, two in facilities nearby participants’ workplaces, one by Skype, one by telephone, and one in a meeting room at a Charles Sturt University facility. All interviews were recorded with a small digital recorder, and spoken words were transcribed using the same transcription service that transcribed all focus group discussions. The meetings with each participant resembled conventional interviews, in that they were “purposeful conversations” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 239), for which I prepared material for discussion, and during which participants were invited to discuss their experiences of negotiating complexity. However as Scheurich (1995, p. 244) argues, without researcher reflexivity, ways interviews are conducted, and the treatment of the materials produced, can perpetuate the idea that “reality can be accurately known through careful, comprehensive, systematic study”. To maintain consistency with my rhizo-methodological approaches I therefore mediated my approach to, and conduct within interviews by using Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987, p. 23) ideas of “mental correctives” (details of this approach, and examples of its use are given in Article 3).

One example of this mediating process was that, in recognition of the “...complexity, uniqueness, and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 241), I prepared an individualised ‘lines of enquiry’ document ahead of each interview (see Appendices 6 and 7 for examples), rather than formulating an interview

guide to be used with all participants. To do this, I used the rhizomatic strategy of ‘reading intensively’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 – described in detail in Article 3) to draw together aspects of the initial focus group discussion that seemed to ‘jump out’ in relation to each particular participant. These aspects might have included, for example, comments by or to the participant, agreements and disagreements, gestures, intense exchanges, looks or more nuanced combinations of these aspects. In Appendix 6 for example, I have shown aspects relating to participant ‘Di’ by using highlighting and bold text, and have noted further possible lines of enquiry in text balloons alongside the relevant text. I then compiled prompts relating to Di from across my reading of the focus group discussion, to draw upon in the subsequent individual interview with her (this list of possible prompts for discussion is given in Appendix 7).

Although it was my readings of focus group materials that often guided conversation, in the same way that Mazzei (2013, p. 736) describes of her mediation of conventional interview practices, my intention was not “to arrive at meaning but to map connectives, to think about how things worked together”. This was especially the case with the visual materials that participants produced (and which I did not usually see) ahead of the interviews. Through the participants’ introduction of their visual materials into the conversation, the (often) researcher-dominated relations of power that can inhere in interviews (Honan, 2014) were somewhat disrupted. In addition, the introduction of the visual materials prompted connections and insights that I could not have produced through my readings of focus group materials alone.

Analytic strategies

Rhizoanalysis and reading intensively

As mentioned in the rhizomethodology section above, the analytic strategies used with data generated through the research project were drawn from Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) idea of the rhizome, and of rhizoanalysis. Rhizoanalysis is not a cohesive, replicable approach to analyzing data. Rather, each rhizoanalysis operationalises Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas of the rhizome in unique ways, by connecting up data fragments, and reading what is produced through these assemblages.

A key tactic of rhizoanalysis used in the research project was reading intensively. Article 3 included some indications of how I used this tactic in the project, including ways I endeavoured to work with its challenges. Therefore here, I give more detail on the concept of reading as a tactic of rhizoanalysis. Reading is a term mostly associated with literacy,

and with the interpretation of a written text to establish its meaning (Masny, 2012). As a tactic of rhizoanalysis, “reading is about sense [but] sense is not about interpretation” (Masny, 2012, p. 82). This conceptualisation gestures to Deleuze’s idea of sense as an event – an actualisation of the coming-together of an assemblage of elements, but also, the production of possibilities for what the assemblage of elements might become (Masny, 2012). Accordingly, as an analytic strategy, reading is not an act of interpretation of the meaning of a collection of elements, but an attempt to map some of the possibilities for becoming produced through the combination of those elements.

In this way, readings of data are always contingent, and always open to different ‘sense’ being made. For example, Renold and Mellor (2013, p. 27) used assemblages of fragments of audio and visual recordings, field notes and drawings to explore children’s ways of “doing gender” in early childhood settings. In another example, Pacini Ketchabaw (2013, p. 222) “disrupts and politicizes” transitions in early childhood settings by connecting a video of an art event, concepts with theorists including Deleuze and Guattari and the photographic artwork of Leah Oates. In these examples (as in my own analyses of data), contents are not interpreted for meaning or symbolism, but are connected up with other elements to generate readings of the possibilities produced.

The idea of mapping connections (mentioned above) is an intrinsic part of rhizoanalytic strategies, however as Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of mapping is not the production of a static or replicable “image of the world” (1987, p. 12). Rather, mapping is a process of “experimentation in contact with the real” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 13) via exploring what is produced or made possible when elements are combined. In terms of a research strategy, mapping then, “is not only a task of investigating what there is...but is also concerned with unpacking what might be” (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013, p. 125). The emphasis of rhizoanalytic strategies on making new connections and reading for possibilities therefore accords with the purposes of my research project – to gain insights into ways educators negotiate complexity in early childhood practice, and to generate new ways of supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce.

Reading visual data

I initially expected to analyse visual materials produced by participants to uncover the ways in which participants made knowledge and meaning through their everyday experiences and encounters (Cole & Knowles, 2008). However, as I began processes of reading intensively (discussed in detail above), I shifted away from conceptualising the visual

materials as representative of the participant's experiences, and approached the visual materials as elements that could be 'plugged in' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) to other data, in order to generate readings of what their connection produced. Therefore, the visual materials, the processes of their making, and discussion of the affect they produced (in the interviews and focus group discussions), were all part of the 'data' connected with the visual materials, and read as part of data assemblages.

As with other fragments of data, the visual materials were analysed by processes of reading intensively. In Article 6 for example, I have mapped my reading of data produced by and with Lara as collages, as well as offering written readings. The collage on page 135 endeavours to illustrate some of the senses made – that is, the possibilities produced – through readings of Lara's collage. These senses were made by Lara prior to my seeing the original collage, made as we talked about the collage together, and made as I later plugged-in Lara's collage with affective, vocal and written fragments from the transcripts of her contributions to initial and follow-up focus groups and the interview. In this way, the visual material was read as an assemblage of elements in itself, as well as for what was produced as the collage was connected-up with other elements as part of a data assemblage.

Subjectivities and data analysis

From a Deleuzian perspective, processes of data generation can be conceptualised as entangling researchers, participants and data in assemblages of understandings of reality (*ontologies*), ideas about what knowledge is and how it is produced (*epistemologies*), and methodological approaches. Barad describes the interrelatedness of these entanglements as *onto-epistemological*: "practices of knowing in being...because we [researchers] are of the world", rather than "standing outside the world" (2007, p. 185). For these reasons, I conceptualised my role in data generation as similarly entangled with other elements of the research assemblage. In Article 3, for example, I discuss some of the challenges of these entanglements in relation to participants whom I knew prior to the research project.

I also conceptualised my role in data analysis in a similarly entangled way – as an *assemblage converter* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 358) who connects-up, plugs-in and reads multiple aspects of data generated through the research project. I alone attended all group and individual discussions, and subsequently had access to all transcripts, recordings and visual materials. I also took in visceral prompts – moments of intensity in which capacities for change (*affect*) seemed to be made more or less possible. These occurred, for

example, in “tone, intensity, and rhythm” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 240) of participants’ spoken words, or the veracity or flow of their gestures or facial expressions (Mazzei, 2013). I documented moments of affect such as these on transcriptions of focus group discussions and interviews (see Appendix 8 for an example), and drew on this affective data in my readings. As I discuss in Article 3 for example, I drew on moments of affective intensity to inform my readings of educators’ ways of negotiating complexity. My readings were also informed by participants’ readings. That is, instances in which participants read or made sense of their own experiences in terms of the group discussions and research conversations in which they participated, and of their own and others’ visual materials created as part of the project.

Research ethics

The ethical considerations for my project were based upon the principles of integrity, respect for persons and groups, beneficence, and justice, published in Australia’s *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], 2007). Guidelines concerning research with human subjects provided by the CSU Research Office were also consulted. Based on CSU’s human research ethics guidelines, I assessed my research project as having potentially ‘more than minimal risk’ for participants. The basis for this assessment was my intention to approach current CSU students with invitations to participate in the project, via their online subject forum sites. According to guidelines supplied by the CSU Human Research Ethics Committee (2015), particular care needs to be exercised in research contexts when “a dependent relationship between researcher and subject does (or could be argued to) exist”. In particular, they highlight the potential for university staff members’ invitations to participate, being perceived as coercive by students. In order to mediate any such effects, I was not involved in teaching duties during the recruitment and data generation phases of my research project. Moreover, in accordance with guidelines supplied by CSU’s Human Research Ethics Committee, I stipulated in my information statements that participation was purely voluntary and that there were no connections between participation and coursework assessment (see ‘Information for participants’ in Appendix 9).

Another potential risk for participants was the unknown effects of exploring power relations, taken-for-granted discourses, or discourses that had personal resonance or meaning for participants. I acknowledged and addressed these possibilities in the information statements by outlining the limits to personal disclosure required, and gave information about the counselling services available to students of CSU, and by Lifeline (a

free, telephone and online crisis support and suicide prevention service) to other participants. Once these issues were considered, and appropriate materials drafted, the proposal was lodged with, and approved by the CSU Human Research Ethics Committee (certification of their approval appears on page vi) before recruitment commenced.

Once volunteers agreed to participate, information statements (see Appendix 8) were supplied to them by email, and their consent obtained in writing at the initial focus group discussion for each of the two groups. Participants were offered the opportunity to take part in some or all of the phases of the research project as part of the initial information statements for the project (see Appendix 8), and written consent to participate in subsequent phases was sought from and given by participants prior to the commencement of each phase (consent forms for participation in the interview, arts-informed and focus group phases are included as Appendices 10, 11 and 12).

In line with CSU guidelines the information statements provided participants with the opportunity to withdraw from the focus group, or from the project at any time, and without giving a reason, should they wish to do so. In addition, participants could choose to withdraw the visual materials produced as part of the project, or their interview materials, from the body of data. However, due to the conversational nature of focus groups, participants were not offered the opportunity to have their contributions to discussion removed if choosing to withdraw from the project. All participants consented to the conditions of participation, and there were no requests to withdraw contributions to the project. All but one participant took part in all four phases of the project. This participant – ‘Marilyn’ – was unable to attend the follow up focus group. Participants were also advised that the focus group discussions and interviews would be audio-taped and transcribed.

Transcription services were contracted in accordance with CSU’s guidelines on the use of transcribers for confidential interviews and confidentiality agreement. Transcripts of relevant focus group discussions and individual interviews were emailed to all participants for their review, along with a request for any corrections. No requests for corrections or retractions were received from participants.

In addition to these measures for addressing ethical considerations (and in keeping with a rhizomatic approach to the research project), my approach to ethics during the conduct of the project was informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of *immanent ethics*. This is a way of thinking about ethics as relative and relevant to particular situations or relations, which Deleuze distinguishes from morality, and describes as “a set of constraining rules...that

judge actions and intentions in relation to transcendent values...[such as] good and bad” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 100). In Article 3 (which follows), I discuss this concept further, and give examples of immanent ethics at play during the conduct of the research project.

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Article Three

Cumming, T. (2014). Challenges of ‘thinking differently’ with rhizoanalytic approaches: A reflexive account. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(2), 137-148. DOI: 10.1080/1743727X.2014.896892

Postscript to Article 3

In Article 3, I discussed specifics of thinking and doing differently with rhizoanalytic approaches, and gestured to the complexity of assessing the worthiness of research using these approaches. As a postscript to Article 3, and partly as a precursor to the data readings that follow in Part 4, I will expand on two ways the worthiness of my readings might be assessed. The first of these is plausibility, which may be thought of as credibility, or, trustworthiness (Tracy, 2010). A rhizoanalytic reading might be assessed as plausible for example, if a reader can make sense of its propositions (Honan, 2010). However, the sense that is made cannot be assessed as ‘credible’ according to an external standard or measure. Rather, because the sense that is made by each reader will be different, the sense that is made is intensely context-sensitive (Lather, 1993).

A second and related way in which the worthiness of rhizoanalytic readings might be assessed, is through their ontological commensurability (Dufresne & Masny, 2005) – the use of concepts in ways that demonstrate a consistent worldview. Attention to ontological commensurability can be seen in this thesis in the ways the underpinning ontology of Deleuze and Guattari’s work is consistently put to work. As discussed in Article 3 for example, asking questions of participants in ways that might generate that which is not already known or implied (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) might be said to have ontological commensurability.

In terms of the thesis therefore, Article 3 makes visible the processes through which I analysed data, and the ways I have worked with theory to generate readings that are plausible and commensurate with Deleuze and Guattari’s ontologies. The next part of the thesis includes three articles in which readings of data are put to work to explore educators’ experiences of complexity in early childhood practice.

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Part Four:

Readings of data

Article Four

Cumming, T., Sumsion, J., & Wong, S. (2014). Early childhood practice and refrains of complexity. *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 35(1), 80-95. DOI: 10.1080/09575146.2014.937796

Article Five

Cumming, T., & Sumsion, J. (2014). Imperceptibilities, possibilities and early childhood practice. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(4), 368-377, DOI: 10.2304/ciec.2014.15.4.368

Article Six

Cumming, T. (2015). Early childhood educators' experiences in their work environments: Shaping (im)possible ways of being an educator? *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education* (Special Issue: Early Childhood Landscapes and Portraits in Complex Times), *12*(1), 52-66.

Postscript to Part 4

Articles 4, 5 and 6 contribute a number of insights to the research question: *How do educators in Australia negotiate complexity in early childhood practice?* The first insight concerns the elaboration of key concepts underpinning the research question. For example, readings of data included in these articles give some insight into the nature of the ‘complexity’ that ‘educators in Australia negotiate’. Complexity is shown to be at work as ever-changing combinations and interrelations of elements such as people, places, sensations and discourses. Similarly, concepts of ‘early childhood practice’ in the research question have been expanded via the idea of practice assemblages – through whose combined forces and capacities change happens in early childhood settings.

The concept of practice assemblages also gestures to ways of thinking differently about the shaping of educators’ subjectivities. Rather than conceptualising educators’ subjectivities according to discourses (such as professionalism), or, as autonomous, always-agentic individuals, the readings of data offered in the articles suggest ways that educators’ subjectivities are negotiated within conditions of possibility. These conditions are produced through exchanges of macro- and micro-political forces – between colleagues, within a work environment, with families, with children, and with policy and regulatory bodies. Educators’ ways of negotiating complexity can therefore be understood as part of combined forces and capacities that produce change, but which can also produce more and less possible ways of being an educator.

A second area of insights concerns the ways of negotiating complexity made visible through the readings of data. Some of the ways educators’ negotiated dominant discourses confirmed those noted in the interpretative meta-analysis (Article 2), such as the example in Article 4, of an educator consciously fitting herself into sanctioned territories of child-centredness. New insights also arose from making visible educators’ ways of negotiating ‘less tangible’ aspects of practice, including combinations of the relational, visceral and sensory as especially evident in Article 5. In this way, educators’ ways of negotiating complexity have been shown to include cognitive and affective elements, which work together through practice assemblages to affect change.

A third way the articles illuminate the research question is in relation to the politics of complexity. While the combined forces and capacities of practice assemblages bring about change in early childhood settings, exchanges of macro- and micro-political forces between an educator and other elements – such as work environment – can enable or diminish capacities for negotiating complexity. Moreover, exchanges of micro- and macro-political forces through in-between spaces of imperceptibility can (as discussed in Article 5) produce less desirable subjectivities, and limited possibilities, for some educators. Therefore, whilst complexity in early childhood practice is an always-moving force, this force does not always produce desirable effects for educators.

In the following and final part of the thesis – the Conclusion – I draw out the contributions made by the study as a whole to existing literature and policy debates. I then outline possible implications of the study for practice, policy and methodological approaches. I also offer a number of possible research directions that extend upon insights arising from the research, then make concluding comments.

Part Five:

A closing

A Closing

The research project reported in this thesis has investigated the question: *How do educators in Australia negotiate complexity in early childhood practice?* Part 4 of the thesis outlined a number of new insights generated through the research project. This concluding section now identifies contributions of the project as a whole to existing research literature and policy documents. It also suggests implications of the project for thinking differently about educators' subjectivities, for pre-service education, for supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce, and for the use of rhizomatic methodologies in educational research. I conclude with suggestions for four possible future research directions, and thoughts concerning educators' ways of negotiating complexity.

Contributions of the project to existing research literature

My discussion of contributions to existing research literature is framed according to two areas of insight arising from the project. The first area is making visible the complexity of early childhood practice; a second area is making visible educators' ways of negotiating complexity.

1. Making visible the complexity of early childhood practice

A key contribution of the project is the elaboration of the often taken-for-granted refrain of 'the complexity of early childhood educators' practice'. By putting to work concepts of assemblages, and macro- and micro-political flows, the project made visible elements of the complexity of early childhood practice, and some of the ways that these elements of complexity worked together to produce change. The project therefore contributes further examples to existing research highlighting the complexity of educators' roles (Raban, Ure, & Waniganayake, 2003), of classroom practices (Hsieh, 2004), and the work of teaching young children (Hatch & Benner, 2011). Although the research project is small in scale, insights arising from the research project expand upon these earlier accounts by focusing on how complexity works, and what effects it produces. In this way, the research project contributes a new way of thinking about early childhood practice as constituted through the ways that elements work together to produce difference and change.

The project also contributes to the research literature concerning the politics of complexity in early childhood practice. As examples in Articles 5 and 6 make visible, these politics can produce more and less desirable effects for educators. These insights contribute the kind of less "romantic notions of practice" that Noble and MacFarlane (2005, p. 54) and Sumsion

(2003) have suggested may be more helpful in supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce.

2. *Making visible educators' ways of negotiating complexity*

Making visible ways that educators negotiate complexity is a second contribution of my project to existing literature concerned with educators' practice. The focus on *how* educators' negotiated complexity has, for example, made visible the transformative potential of the micro-politics of early childhood practice. In similar ways that Blaise (2013) and Olsson (2009) made visible through their research then, findings from the research project provide examples of ways that educators' small reworkings of the everyday (Rose, 1999) can disrupt the often assumed dominance of large-scale macro-political forces (such as policy) over what happens in local settings and interactions.

In addition, the research project makes visible some of the ways educators negotiated complexity. These ways of negotiating included cognitive and relational aspects that are often acknowledged in existing research literature (see for example, Robson & Fumoto, 2009; Widger & Schofield, 2012), as well as those visceral or affective ways that are less recognised. In these ways, insights from the project broaden understandings of ways educators might negotiate complexity beyond the cognitive and relational. At the same time, attention to affective elements of complexity, and how these elements work in combinations with others in practice assemblages, adds a new perspective to literature exploring 'less tangible' aspects of educators' practice (as for example, explored by Krieg, 2011; Goodfellow, 2012).

The project has also demonstrated how some of the methodological challenges of making sense of the complexity evident in educators' accounts can be addressed by utilising Deleuze and Guattari's concepts. In this way, insights from the research project contribute to a growing body of research in Australia (for example, Sellers, 2015; Stratigos, 2015) and other national contexts (for example, Angell, 2014; Evans, 2015) concerned with putting to work post-structural thinking to explore, open up and further develop possibilities for educators' pedagogy.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the 'sense' that I have made of educators' experiences of complexity is partial, and based on readings that necessarily entwine my own interests, concerns and resonances alongside those of the participants. Although these

processes of sense-making are ontologically commensurate with Deleuze and Guattari's work, they can only be claimed as some of many ways of making sense of complexity.

Contributions of the project to policy discourses

Making visible complexity in early childhood practice, and ways educators negotiate complexity, can also contribute to policy discourses. For example, in the Australian context, refrains of the complexity of early childhood practice are evident in policy documents such as the Australian Early Years Workforce Strategy (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood [SCSEEC], 2012), and underpin the Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF] (DEEWR, 2009) and National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2012). The research project has elaborated on these existing refrains by making visible Australian educators' experiences of negotiating complexity in their everyday practice, and by conceptualising relations between educators and policy and work environments in innovative ways. By highlighting these openings to complexity across policy documents, and making visible ways policy and educators can be mutually-affecting, insights from the research project could offering educators possibilities for working with these openings to complexity in policy discourses, in their own practice.

Implications

I now propose some of the implications arising from investigating educators' ways of negotiating complexity. Implications are presented in relation to five areas: educators' subjectivities, approaches to policy making, pre-service education, supporting workforce sustainability, and using rhizomatic methodologies in educational research.

1. Educator's subjectivities

Insights arising from the project have implications for ways of thinking about being an educator – in terms of the shaping of subjectivities, and, dominant discourses of professionalism. In making visible educators' ways of being in assemblages for example, the project offers a conceptualisation of subjectivities as shaped through the constant exchanges of macro- and micro-political forces. However, the politics of these exchanges challenge ideas that exercising resistance and agency are always possibilities for educators (Ortlipp, Arthur & Woodrow, 2011). Indeed, educators' capacities for shaping preferred ways of being can be limited by other elements of practice assemblages (such as for Lara in Article 6), just as they can enable the production of preferred ways of being (such as for Vanessa in Article 4).

These are ways of thinking differently about the shaping of educators' subjectivities that do not rely upon concepts of identity formation (Thomas, 2012), or discourses that are perceived as available to educators (Ortlipp, Arthur & Woodrow, 2011). This is significant insofar as concepts of identity or subject position can limit subjective possibilities (as Olsson, 2009 also argues) to those inhering in particular identities or subject positions – for example, those of teacher or educator (Ortlipp, Arthur & Woodrow, 2011; Gibson, 2013). As I now go on to discuss, these ways of thinking differently about educators' subjectivities also imply the need for macro- and micro-political forces to actively enable educators to shape preferred subjectivities – through, for example approaches to policy making, and pre-service education. In addition, action on these suggestions may have, I argue, implications for workforce sustainability.

2. Approaches to policy making

One implication of the project for policy makers and regulatory bodies (particularly in the Australian context) could be to support aspects of quality standards that open space for educators' negotiation of complexity. Actions that keep open these spaces for complexity in early childhood practice could assist in resisting pressures to revert to more technicist approaches to regulation, which were widely perceived to characterise the operation of Australia's previous regulatory framework in its final years (Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson, & Goodfellow, 2007).

The new insights into complexity in early childhood practice generated through the research project could also be used to further develop the existing openings to complexity in Australian early childhood education policy documents. Examples of such opportunities could include government-championed recognition of the complexity of educators' practice, and, promoting ongoing professional learning amongst educators, to support and sustain them in negotiating complexity in their practice. Both of these areas have been identified as priorities in the Early Years Workforce Strategy (SCSEEC, 2012) for example, again, presenting openings to complexity that could be expanded using insights from the research project. Moreover, discourses of complexity in the National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2012) currently concern children's learning, and families' lives. These could be expanded to explicitly recognise the complexity of educators' practice.

At the same time, by making visible educators' ways of negotiating complexity, the research project might inadvertently contribute to the production of new technologies for defining and limiting the possibilities of early childhood practice (as cautioned by Jensen,

Broström & Hansen, 2010 in relation to the Danish context). New technologies could include for example, technico-rationalist agendas specifying and measuring 'best practice' in negotiating complexity, that could close off, rather than open out conditions in which possibilities flourish. Policy approaches therefore need to attend to these politics (Dahlberg & Moss, 2012) by balancing regulation with the creation of conditions that enable educators' ways of negotiating complexity.

A way of balancing needs for regulation and conditions of possibility could be to rethink relations between existing Australian policy documents with concepts such as assemblages and complexity. For example, thinking about the National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2012) and the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) as elements in a policy assemblage with educators and work environments, could produce new possibilities. The documents could be read through each other, and in relationship with educators' experiences – mapped onto each other in the way that Giugni (2011) describes mapping her practice onto key concepts of the EYLF, for example. Possibilities could be enabled for negotiated, professional judgment-oriented practice that also works with key regulatory aspects of the National Quality Standard to produce change.

3. Pre-service education

Insights arising from the research project also highlight the importance of fostering educators' capacities for negotiating complexity. The politics of complexity made visible through the research project gestured to the capacity of some educators' for thinking and practising expansively, while others appeared more comfortable adopting a more stabilising approach. Whilst, as Grieshaber (2010) recognises, negotiating complexity is not an easy nor familiar approach for many educators, the possibilities offered by a more open approach to practice seemed to have benefits for supporting and sustaining a number of the educators who participated in the research project. Making visible educators' ways of negotiating complexity to the field at large, might help others become more open to actively engaging with negotiating complexity, rather than seeking to simplify and stabilise it. This in turn might assist educators to reconceptualise their work and potentially, the rewards they perceive they gain from it.

In addition, insights from my own research project, as well as in existing literature (Krieg, 2010; Hatch & Benner, 2011) suggest that beginning educators may have particular difficulty negotiating complexity. Despite pressures in some contexts, including Australia, for a subject content-focused curriculum to meet the requirements of program accreditation

bodies (Tuinamuana, 2011) it is important that pre-service programs continue to emphasise the integration of theory and practice, and ways of negotiating their sometimes mixed messages. Drawing on examples from Nordic university curricula as discussed by Lenz Taguchi (2007) and Karila (2012), students could be offered opportunities to recognise and reflect upon their negotiation of complexity during their practicum, and to receive ongoing support to further develop and sustain these capacities over time.

4. Supporting workforce sustainability

As reiterated throughout the thesis, meeting the challenge of supporting and sustaining the early childhood workforce has remained elusive across many national contexts – including Australia. Making visible the complexity of early childhood practice offers a number of implications for this seemingly entrenched problem. One possibility might be advocacy for, and dissemination of examples of educators’ experiences of negotiating complexity. This suggestion responds to calls in the Early Years Workforce Strategy (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 9) for the dissemination of “stories and case studies of professional practice” and promoting the “importance, rewards and career opportunities of being an early childhood educator” as a means of “enhancing public perceptions of the [early childhood] profession” (p. 8). Promoting the complexity of early childhood practice in these ways might also be helpful for attracting educators to the sector who are seeking a career requiring intellectual work as well as care and technical skills (as noted also by Sumsion, 2004). Entering the field with these expectations could potentially minimise the disillusionment of romanticised ideals, or unanticipated complexity, that sometimes seem implicated in educators leaving the field (as reported for example, by Noble & Macfarlane, 2005; Sumsion, 2003). This possibility may be of particular importance in the Australian context, where policy initiatives rely on a consistent supply of these graduates in order to meet objectives (as discussed in Article 1), yet where difficulties recruiting and retaining degree-qualified educators seem intractable.

The interrelatedness of elements of complexity in early childhood practice – including educators, policies, children and parents – made visible through the research project, gestures to the potential value of thinking differently about the concept of workforce sustainability. Anand and Sen’s (1994, n.p.), concept of sustainable human development (emphasis in original) could prove useful in this regard. According to Anand and Sen: “human development is defended as a goal in itself; it directly enhances the capability of people to lead worthwhile lives, so there are immediate gains in what is ultimately important, while safeguarding similar opportunities in the future”. In this way, workforce sustainability can be conceptualised as in the mutual interest of educators, families,

children and national economies (as also discussed in Article 1). Thinking of the sustainability of the early childhood workforce in this way also has implications for discussions of educators' rights to fair pay and conditions. According to the principles of sustainable human development mentioned above, fair pay and conditions would sustain educators' wellbeing in an immediate sense, whilst also sustaining their capacity to remain in the workforce and enhance the capability of others.

5. Methodology used in educational research

A fifth area for which the research project has implications concerns the use of rhizomatic methodologies in educational research. As suggested in Articles 3-6, and reiterated above, putting to work ideas from Deleuze and Guattari has been key to making visible the complexity of early childhood practice, and educators' ways of negotiating complexity. The insights generated through the research project, and the means of their generation through textual, affective and visual processes, show the possibilities afforded by expanding the methodological repertoire available to educational researchers (as also advocated by Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Webb, 2014).

The use of post-structural approaches to think differently about early childhood education has been criticised on the grounds of relativism and ambiguity (a critique noted by Lenz Taguchi, 2007). However, in light of the complexity of early childhood practice made visible through this research project, I argue that the relativism and ambiguity of post-structural approaches are entirely appropriate for thinking differently about early childhood practice, and, for generating new possibilities to support workforce sustainability. Indeed, using a rhizomatic methodology has made it possible to generate possibilities for addressing the seemingly intractable problems of workforce sustainability.

Caveats

1. Onto-epistemology and dissemination conventions of academic writing

In addition to proposing implications of the research project, I now offer some caveats. Firstly, in relation to methodological considerations, and as I discuss in paper 3, there are ongoing challenges to disseminating examples of thinking differently. One challenge concerns the difficulty of maintaining commensurability between the underpinning onto-epistemology of rhizoanalysis and the conventions concerned with the dissemination of academic writing. For example in relation to Article 1, the journal that had accepted the manuscript required me to use headings consistent with their classification of the article as a 'case study'. Headings required by the journal (such as "Discussion and evaluation")

suggested a positivist stance to data – a sense that data are phenomena that may be examined and assessed neutrally. This stance was inconsistent with my own post-structural orientation (informed by the work of Deleuze and Guattari) to things constantly becoming, and to readings of data that are partial and subjective. In accepting the journal's presentation requirements, was I thereby compromising the onto-epistemological underpinning of my work? Jackson and Mazzei (2013, p. 262) recognised similar problems when using post-structural theory in their own empirical research. They said, for example, that "A recognition of the limits of our received practices does not mean that we reject such practices; instead, we work the limits (and limitations) of such practices". With this approach in mind, in the case of Article 1 therefore used questions as sub-headings ("A highly qualified workforce?" (p. 17), and "A professional workforce?" (p. 18) as a way of challenging, rather than completely acceding to conventions of journal publication. In this way, I endeavoured to retain some onto-epistemological commensurability with Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the constant emergence of things, whilst working the limits, and limitations, (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013) of conventions shaping the dissemination of academic writing.

2. Human and other-than-human elements of assemblages

A second caveat to the proposed contributions and implications of my research project concerns human elements of research assemblages. A key part of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of assemblages is the decentredness of the human subject, and the opportunities afforded by thinking about ways other-than-human elements of assemblages combine and produce change. This thesis, and its constituting elements (Articles, introductions and postscripts and closings), has taken as its focus, ways that educators negotiate complexity. While this focus has enabled a response to an enquiry in a way that attends to the requirements of Doctoral research, to some extent it has minimised attention to the ways other-than-human elements of assemblages are implicated in the complexity of early childhood practice. Some of these other-than-human elements have been acknowledged – for example, regulatory discourses (page 105), and the productive potential of the unknown (page 108), and of emerging digital technologies (p. 136). Nevertheless, further attention could have been given to ways that materials, technologies or spaces (for example) seemed to be implicated in the complexity of early childhood practice.

3. Arts-based enquiry

Visual materials seemed to offer participants an other-than-verbal way of expressing their experiences of negotiating complexity. As well as working as “tools for thinking” (Prosser, 200, p. 488) for the participants who produced the visual materials, they also prompted new thinking amongst other participants (such as in relation to Marilyn’s artwork, on page 103). At the same time, it could be argued that visual materials appear secondary to textual materials - in particular transcripts of spoken words – in my analyses and the thesis as a whole. My own comfort and fluency with textual and non-verbal means of communication ahead of visual materials may have contributed to this. Nevertheless, readings of Marilyn’s artwork in Article 4 made visible the complexity of educators’ practice, while readings of Vanessa’s photograph in Article 5 illuminated the productive potential of the imperceptible.

In addition, the processes of the generation of the artworks receive little attention. This is mostly due to the focus on what the visual materials might produce as part of data assemblages rather than on the processes the participants undertook to generate the visual materials. An exception to this was Lara’s account (in Article 6) in which the visual materials and the visceral, past, present and emotional entangled in their making were catalytic in producing readings of (im)possible ways of being an educator. It might be fair to say then, that while the thesis draws upon many readings of written materials, readings of visual materials have also been important to making visible ways that educators negotiated complexity.

Future research directions

Throughout my PhD candidature, I have consistently encountered the puzzlement of those not involved with early childhood education at the idea of a PhD focusing on educators themselves. This puzzlement has given me the opportunity to advocate for the complexity of educators’ practice, and has strengthened my conviction of the importance of making this complexity visible. As I now discuss, I hope to continue this work in both my teaching and research activities. I offer four possible research directions: investigating and fostering educators’ capacity for negotiating complexity in early childhood practice; negotiating complexity in inter-professional work; thinking differently about educators’ ways of being with children in practice assemblages; and, exploring micro-political tensions in educators’ workplaces.

1. Investigating the shaping of educators' subjectivities within practice assemblages

As mentioned above, insights arising from the research project gesture to possibilities for reconceptualising ways that educators' subjectivities are shaped by conditions of possibility, and as part of practice assemblages. Further investigation of the shaping and expression of educators' subjectivities within practice assemblages could offer immediate and ongoing insights to participating educators. At the same time, implications for larger-scale changes to teacher education and ongoing professional learning could also be generated, along with further implications for supporting workforce sustainability.

2. Negotiating inter-professional complexity

Inter-professional work (with speech therapists, child protection officers and social workers, for example) (Wong, Sumsion & Press, 2012) is another aspect of complexity in educators' practice that could be further investigated. Fostering educators' capacity for inter-professional work has been identified as a priority area in the Australian Early Years Workforce Strategy (SCSEEC, 2012). However, as existing research suggests (Cumming & Wong, 2012; Cartmel, Macfarlane, & Nolan, 2013;), further attention is required to ways issues such as professional hierarchies make it difficult for early childhood educators to work effectively in inter-professional ways with others. In order to generate more sustainable ways of working, a similar approach to that used in my research project could be used to make visible ways that various professionals negotiate complexity in inter-professional practice. The concept of practice assemblages might also prove useful for thinking differently about what could be produced through interrelatedness in inter-professional teams.

3. Relational assemblages

Another aspect of complexity in early childhood practice that could be explored further concerns educators' relationships with children. Possibilities for thinking differently about educators' ways of being with children and families could follow on from experiences such as Di's (reported in Article 5), who described a sense of joining her feelings to a child's feelings to evoke calm. Pelo (2014) has also noted educators' ways of joining their attention to the child's attention as a way of generating rich experiences. Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of assemblages (and the concept of practice assemblages) could be a way of exploring these ideas further. New accounts of educators' ways of being-with children could be generated, along with further insights concerning the subjectivities produced for educators and children through these ways of being-with. This line of enquiry could generate new ways for educators to conceptualise their relationships with infants in

particular, where verbal communication cannot be relied upon as a means of effecting change.

4. Workplace focus

A fourth possible research direction concerns ways that work environments enable or restrict conditions of possibility for educators. As Whitebook and Ryan (2011) have advocated, focused research attention on early childhood workplaces is critical to generating ways of better supporting workforce sustainability. Accordingly, a future project could for example, focus on some of the micro-political tensions concerning hierarchies of qualifications, age and experience that were hinted at in educators' accounts shared in Articles 4, 5 and 6. An approach drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari could enable insights into ways that these tensions are produced and negotiated, and what effects are produced for educators, and for the work environment as a whole. Insights generated through a project such as this could potentially inform action research with a particular group of educators working together, ongoing professional learning, pre-service education, or perhaps support workforce sustainability.

Concluding thoughts

By exploring educators' ways of negotiating complexity, the research project reported in this thesis has made visible the complexity of early childhood practice, educators' capacities for negotiating complexity, and the politics of these negotiations. Openings to complexity and recognition of the negotiated nature of early childhood practice currently remain part of policy documents such as the Australian Early Years Workforce Strategy (SCSEEC, 2012), National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2012) and Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009). However, as in many other national contexts, the changing political climate in Australia will play a major role in how early childhood practice is conceptualised (Logan, Sumsion, & Press, under review), and funded (Brennan & Adamson, 2014). Discourses of early childhood education as a workforce participation and productivity strategy are intensifying under Australia's current, conservative federal government. In this context, conceptualisations of early childhood practice as a technology to meet these predominantly productivity-focussed goals could become dominant.

Sustaining conditions of possibility, and openings to complexity in policy discourses and documents are therefore, important aims for future research. Part of this thinking needs to include ongoing attention to how educators are being supported in the complexity of their practice. Support and sustainability need to be addressed during pre-service education and

ongoing professional learning, as well as through everyday support in work environments, and via policy approaches that make and keep open space for complexity to thrive. However, in keeping with insights from the research project concerning the interrelatedness and mutual affectivity of macro- and micro-politics, keeping conditions of possibility open also requires the recognition of the complexity of educators' practice by educators themselves, as well as policy makers, the public, and those owning or managing work environments. Recognising the productive potential of complexity in the micro-politics of early childhood practice therefore needs to be matched with macro-political action that also supports and sustains conditions for possibilities to flourish.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Invitation to participate



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Email: tcumming@csu.edu.au

16 September, 2012

Dear Social Justice in Early Childhood Group member

I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD research project, which is about ways that early childhood educators in Australia negotiate discourses and subjectivities informing their practice. I am looking for about 15 participants from across NSW, who are working as educators (with any or no qualifications), or as directors in children's services. To find out more about my project, and how you could be involved, please read through the full information statement attached to this email message.

If you would like more information about the project, please don't hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns. Or, if you would like to take part, please reply to me by email: tcumming@csu.edu.au by September 30, 2012. I will then contact you by email about a suitable location and time for you to join in one of the focus groups, and to ask for some basic details about your experience. Please note, I will ask you to sign a formal consent to participate at the first focus group meeting.

Many thanks for your time!

Tamara Cumming

PhD Student

Charles Sturt University

Appendix 2. Participant details

Group 1

‘Esther’

Esther has worked in the early childhood sector for over 20 years in long day care centres and occasional care. At the time of the study she was working in a large regional city providing in-home care to children. Esther was qualified at diploma level and was undertaking degree studies in early childhood teaching. Esther had a hearing impairment (she identified as deaf), wore hearing aids, and signed using Australian Sign Language (Auslan). She joined the research study via the email invitation posted on CSU early childhood education subject forums.

‘Kerry’

Kerry had been working in the sector for 34 years, most of this as the director of a multi-purpose children’s centre (providing pre-school, long day care, occasional care and supported playgroup services from one setting) in a regional area. Kerry was qualified at degree level in early childhood teaching, and was also undertaking degree level studies in business administration. She joined the research study via an email invitation circulated through the Association of Community Childcare Services [ACCS] (New South Wales state branch).

‘Kelly’

Kelly had been working in the sector for less than a year, having graduated with her degree in early childhood education the previous year. She had worked briefly in a primary school, and was working in a regional long day care centre as the room leader of a 0-18 month room. Kelly joined the research study via an invitation from Lara.

‘Lara’

Lara had been working in the sector for a year, having graduated with her degree in early childhood education the previous year. She had also worked as a child development officer for a family day care scheme and vacation care. Lara was the room leader of the two-three year old room, and second in charge in a long day centre in Sydney. She joined the research study via the email invitation circulated through ACCS.

‘Vanessa’

Vanessa had been working in the sector for 20 years, in long day care and preschool services. She had also undertaken consulting to early childhood services, and had taught at university and in vocational education and training colleges. Vanessa was qualified at degree level and was working at a preschool in Sydney. She joined the research study via an email invitation circulated through the Social Justice in Early Childhood group.

Participants in Group 2

‘Di’

Di was a room leader of a birth-two years room at a community-based long day care centre in Sydney, where she had been working for under a year. Di had moved to Australia in 2007 from South Africa, where she had been a primary school teacher. After arriving in Australia, she completed diploma-level studies, and has since worked with under-three years groups in long day care centres. Di joined the research study via the email invitation circulated through ACCS.

‘Lyn’

Lyn was an educator working in the same birth-2 years room as Di, and had been working at this long day care centre for 17 years. She had worked at another centre operated by the same organisation for 8 years, as well as in other long day care and vacation care services. Lyn had moved to Australia from New Zealand, and had qualified at diploma level in Australia. Lyn joined the research study via the email invitation circulated through ACCS.

‘Monica’

Monica had worked in the early childhood sector for 30 years, and for the previous 8 years had been working at the same long day care centre as Lyn and Di (though not at the same time as Di). Monica had moved to Australia from New Zealand, and was qualified at degree level. Monica had been working in the sector for 30 years until 2011, when she returned to study for a Masters Degree in teaching English to adults. Monica joined the research study via an invitation from Lyn.

‘Marilyn’

Marilyn was working as the director of a long day care, a role she had been in for about nine months. She had been working in the early childhood sector for 34 years, beginning as

a cook, then after completing diploma level studies, as an educator and administrator.

Marilyn also held a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts), and had provided art programmes based on the Reggio Emilia philosophies to children's services. Marilyn joined the research study via the email invitation sent out through ACCS.

'Sharlene'

Sharlene had been coordinating and operating mobile children's services for the previous 9 years, and prior to this, had worked in long day care, preschool, occasional and in-home care for two years. Sharlene was qualified at diploma level and at the time of the study was undertaking degree studies in early childhood teaching. She joined the research study via the email invitation posted on CSU early childhood education subject forums.

Appendix 3. Focus Group Questions

- 1) Do you ever get mixed messages about 'right' ways of being, thinking or doing your work in early childhood education?
 - If you do, where do those messages come from?

- 2) What is it like to experience these types of mixed messages?
 - What feelings can it bring up?
 - Are there things you feel you should say or think, even though you would prefer not to?
 - Are there things you feel you shouldn't say or think, even though you would like to? (If so, can you give some examples of these things?)

- 3) How would you describe your response when you experience mixed messages?
 - For example, do you give priority to some ways of being, thinking or doing?
 - Do you ever try to disrupt or resist these messages about 'right' ways to do, think or be?

- 4) What choices have you seen yourself as having?
 - How did you come to these choices?
 - How did you decide on a response?

- 5) What have been some of the consequences - for yourself and for others?

Appendix 4. Notes for participants



18 February, 2013

Dear

I have prepared the following notes to give you some background information for our focus group discussion. Can you please read through them, along with the focus group questions, before we meet? There is no need to make, or bring notes with you, this material is just to give you an idea of what we might talk about, and to prompt reflection.

Mixed messages and discourses

In our focus group, I would like hear about your experiences of recognising and responding to 'mixed messages' about 'right' ways of being, thinking or doing your work in early childhood education.

Mixed messages can come about when different 'discourses' are at work. Discourses are ways of thinking and speaking about particular things (e.g., early childhood practice). Through discourses, we come to see and understand the 'thing' in particular ways, and sometimes, in limited ways.

French philosopher Michel Foucault (b.1927- d.1984) wrote a lot about discourses. He would say that discourses shape early childhood practice by (for example) giving messages about 'right' ways to be a professional in early childhood education.

Different discourses (e.g., about quality, regulation, risk, professionalism, care, social justice) give different messages, and sometimes these discourses are contradictory. Translated into early childhood practice, this can mean that early childhood educators sometimes have to negotiate mixed messages about the 'right' way to be, think or do things.

Foucault also argued that some discourses are dominant, in that they tend to overshadow other discourses. But he also believed that it was possible to resist and reshape discourses. If Foucault was right, then we probably have more scope to make informed choices about our approaches and our actions than dominant discourses and messages seem to suggest.

Preparing for the focus group

Ahead of our discussion, can you please reflect on some times that you may have experienced 'mixed messages' about 'right' ways of being, thinking or doing your work in early childhood education? For example, there might have been experiences you had within a workplace; while you were studying and working; or as you completed study and began working. Other times that mixed messages become apparent can be when new theories become popular in the field, when rules or governments (or both!) change, as new staff come and go, or as your life experiences are affirmed or challenged in your practice with children and families.

As you think of a situation, you might like to consider what mixed messages you got about 'right' ways of being, thinking or doing, where you think they might have come from, and how you have responded. For example, can you think of specific examples of some of the strategies you used?

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Did you feel you had a choice about how you responded? What were some of the reasons that you responded as you did? What were some of the consequences?

An example from my experience

Here is a reflection on my own experiences of 'mixed messages' to give you an idea...

I started my first job in early childhood education as an 'untrained' childcare worker in a preschool. This preschool was in a wealthy area, and some of the staff were very 'old school' in their attitudes. Our director was not 'old school' though, she was really into anti-bias curriculum, and always looking for ways to introduce social justice. This didn't go down especially well with the parents, who couldn't understand why their children would need to know about Aboriginal culture (for example), and it didn't go down very well with the 'old school' staff who thought the director was being too politically correct. I felt really stuck in the middle, because I found the director hard to get on with, but I agreed with some of her ideas, and I found it easier to get on with the other staff, but didn't agree with some of their ideas. I felt like if I tried to take up opportunities to ask provocative questions with children (talking with them about power or gender for example) the others thought I was 'on the director's side', but if I just kept my head down and didn't do the work in ways I believed in, I felt really hollow and anxious. I was trying to balance up my own desire to belong in the team, and in a profession that was new to me, with the desire to 'do' early childhood practice in ways that seemed 'right' to me – that fit with my values about early childhood education, and what I believed we as educators were there to do. I felt a bit trapped between mixed messages about what were the 'right' ways to do, think and be within this setting, as well as in the profession generally. As I didn't find the support or resources that might have helped me, I really struggled to resolve these tensions, and in the end, I left.

Although my strategy here was withdrawal (and in a way it's a 'negative' story), please don't feel that your examples have to be negative. As you are still working in the field and / or studying to upgrade your qualifications, I anticipate that you might have found successful strategies for negotiating mixed messages and the discourses that inform them. I am particularly interested in hearing about strategies that have 'worked' for you.

Some housekeeping about the focus group

Our group discussion is due to begin at 11am on Saturday, February 23. I would greatly appreciate it if you could arrive around 10.45am so that we can be ready to begin on time.

There will be around 5 participants in our focus group, along with myself, and Joy Goodfellow, who will help me facilitate, and make notes about, the group discussion.

The focus group will be held at the CSU Sydney Olympic Park offices, Level 1, Quad 3 Building, 102 Bennelong Parkway, Sydney Olympic Park.

If you are driving to Sydney Olympic Park - please see the map attached. When you enter the driveway at Quad 3 you will see a boom gate on your left, and someone waiting to let you in. Please park in one of the spaces marked 'CSU' if possible. Entry to the building is along the path just past the boom gates, please come to level 1.

If you are catching public transport to Sydney Olympic Park – the SOP train station is very close by (about 5 mins walk). Please be aware that the trains do not run frequently to Sydney Olympic Park, but do run more frequently to a nearby station – Concord West. If you are planning on catching the train, and would like a map for the walk to the office from one of these stations please let me know and I will send one to you by email.

If you are running late on the day – please send me a text message to let me know when you expect to arrive – my mobile number is 0438 808 342.

I will have morning tea available beforehand as well as after the group, and if you need to be reimbursed for train or bus fares, we can do this after the group has ended. Please note – to be reimbursed, I **must** have a receipt with an ABN included on it. I can take a photocopy of any tickets you might need for your return trip.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions ahead of the group, otherwise I am very much looking forward to meeting you, and hearing your perspectives and experiences!

Sincerely

Tamara Cumming
PhD Student

Appendix 5. Written guide to arts-based phase



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23 February 2013

Arts-based data collection stage

NB The following information is the same as that contained in your information statement.

The next stage of the project would involve preparing a visual representation (in your own time) that documents ways you negotiate mixed messages. I am aware that you are likely to have multiple demands on your time apart from your work, and expect that participants might spend from ½ and hour to a few hours creating or selecting a visual 'artefact'.

This 'artefact' could for example, take the form of a documentation panel (such as those you might already use in your practice), or an artefact in a digital format using photo templates or applications on your mobile phone. Or, you might prefer to select an artefact that meaningfully illustrates ways you negotiate influences on your practice (for example, a photo, drawing or non-confidential document).

We would then organise a time to meet for a one-on-one interview. During the interview, we would explore themes or issues that had come up during the initial focus group, through creating or selecting your visual 'artefact', or any subsequent experiences and ideas on the topic stimulated by your artefact. This interview would take about an hour.

With your approval, I would like to copy or collect your artefact, so that I can use it to inform my analyses, and possibly, reproduce it in subsequent publications or conference presentations. I would return any original artefacts to you if you wished. If you were identifiable in the artefact, I would ask for your explicit consent in writing, to reproduce the artefact.

Where possible, I would travel to meet with you in person, otherwise I would conduct the interview over a landline phone or via Skype (using a secure internet connection). I would like to tape-record the interview for accuracy, and return a written copy to you for checking. Any transcripts made of the interview would not identify you by name. I would like to use data from the interviews in a summary to inform the follow-up focus group.

Ideally, I would like to do these interviews during March, and plan for us to meet again as a group in early April.

In any case, I will contact you all again in the next week to check whether you are interested in continuing your participation.

Some ideas

Using photography to evoke *your* experiences of mixed messages about 'right' ways of being, thinking or doing your work in early childhood education. It only needs to be a few images – as long as they convey a meaning that you can talk about.

Think about a time when you recognised and responded to mixed messages about 'right' ways of being, thinking or doing your work in early childhood education. This might be a time you identified for the focus group, or another time.

Take or gather some images* that convey how you felt in this experience – for example:

- recognising mixed messages at work
- recognising the sources of mixed messages
- thinking about having to make a choice
- influences on your choices
- weighing up options
- doing something (or nothing) about mixed messages
- consequences, or how you felt about these consequences.

You might like to use the camera in your mobile phone or a digital camera, or you might like to gather existing images from the internet.

If possible, I would like to have a copy of any digital material before our interview, so that I can transfer it to my computer ahead of our meeting. When we meet up for individual interviews, we will then use the images or artefacts as the basis for our conversation.

*If you are taking photos, be sure not to include anyone identifiable.

Appendix 6. Lines of enquiry example

Q: And I think, so xxx have agreed to participate even though they are educators of my son xxxy, so we've got a direct link. I mean I had someone else from the same centre in my previous group and at the time she wasn't a direct educator, and I think that made it a little bit easier ethically but I appreciate you raising it and I think it's really good to have it out on the table and I think that's a really wise way to have dealt with it.

D: I thought just let me just bring it out and get-

D: Right, I'm xx, I work at xxx which is at the xxx, I run the baby's room, have lots of fun, lots of cuddles. I've got an advanced diploma and I'm hoping to move on to go and get my bachelor. So for me coming here, was just a way of finding out a bigger – because you feel quite isolated at work when you're in that little notch there. So I just thought this would sort of widen my horizon a bit, yes, I'm really glad to be here today.

Q: I feel very special, thank you.

D: Because we love xxx.

(All laughing)

Q: So you came to help xxx really didn't you?

D: Yep, basically.

Q: So that's interesting though, I just wanted to say, because there's a lot of discussion in the past, you know when ABC was huge and I think people equated full profit with this kind of thinking, but we're talking about a not for profit centre (D: yep, we are not for profit), so this message is coming through even though-

M: It's contradictory though.

Q: So yeah, is that where you'd identify that sense that I'm the client from-

D: Yeah, yep, yes-

Q: It's not your personal belief?

D: No it's not my personal belief, no.

Q: What is your personal opinion about it?

D: I am, I feel for xxx that I'm like the great aunt, too young to be the aunty, so I'll be the great aunt and you're part of my extended family – you're not quite young enough to be my daughter, but you know, you're an extension of my family, so when I think of my own family I think of the xxx clientele as like being part of my extended family as such. You're important, like you as a person are important to me. There's been a time when I've come – xxx and xxx have come in and I've greeted them good morning, and I always sing "Hello xxx" or whatever I'm doing, and Tamara said "Oh what about me???" (All laughing) I'm part of this too you know.

In positioning yourself, children and parents as 'family' does this bring up messages about being in a family that you have to negotiate?

What does 'love' do, especially in a babies room?

Would you like to talk any more about the ethics of your involvement in this project?

Appendix 7. Discussion prompts to use with ‘Di’

Being part of the project

- Would you like to talk any more about the ethics of your involvement in this project?
- You talked about valuing getting a bigger perspective by taking part in this project. I wondered what is it that you feel is ‘out there’ that you don’t access within your setting or team?

Working with children and families

- You used the word ‘entrusted’ to describe what parents do when they leave their children with you. Did you want to say anything more about feelings that go with being entrusted?
- In positioning yourself, children and parents as ‘family’, does this bring up messages about being in a family that you have to negotiate?
- What does ‘love’ do, especially in a babies room?
- We talked a bit about the idea of families as ‘clients’. Why does it matter who is paying the bill?

Cultural difference

- Can you talk a bit more about being a teacher in South Africa? How were the messages in South Africa about what it means to be a teacher different to here?
- It sounded like you have a lot of sensitivity for cultural ways of being and doing. How do you negotiate the mix and balance?
- You talked about the way that you and L come from ‘different places’ – is that just about coming from elsewhere, or other things too? How have you negotiated differences that you have noticed?

Expectations and beliefs

- How do you get messages about expectations – of management, or of parents? How do you work with these, and your own expectations? What does that process ‘do’?
- Did you get to finish the point you were making about being told how to make the room look?
- How do you work with things like ‘being told how the lamp should sit’?
- What does feeling ‘stifled’ do? What does it produce?
- We talked a bit about the requirement for you to include external references in your documentation, and what parents might think about that. Did you want to say anything more about that?

Working as a team

- What messages come with hierarchies or top down approaches? What other ways of being in a team together might work?
- You also talked about the role of different expectations between colleagues, and how that might make it hard to ‘bond’, can you say a bit more about this?
- Being the leader of the birth-2s, in what way do you ‘manage’?

Appendix 8. Documenting moments of affect

J: Like the constricted boxed in, to me is suggesting containment whereas there are some other things, the bending I think is more open, I don't know how others read that.

Q: Yeah I think the reason that I put things like feeling constricted and boxed in in movements is that to feel constricted or boxed in, I think you've got to have a sense that you would like it to be otherwise.

V: Or other things are moving in on you maybe, that's-

Q: Yes I think it's worth exploring, yeah absolutely. Now, and L I think that was your term as I remember it, feeling constricted and boxed in by what choices might be available in a setting. Does anything else come to mind with that?

L: I just, I think that a lot of the movement, it all comes back to being restricted because you may bend but then something will just bring you straight back, so it's a lot of "I'll try this, I'll try this" and then in the end it's like "Why try it because I'm just going to come back to point A".

J: So I'm thinking, what is there that goes in on one's head that makes one feel boxed in, what are the parameters, are there values that you hold yourself?

L: Having limitations put on you.

J: So there's external factors-

L: Yeah and whether they be your values or even something as simple as-

K: Time,

L: Time exactly, there are limitations-

J: Time in relation to efficiency or just no further time to deal with-?

K: I think that, you know this is what I want to do, this is how I want to do it, I'm just not going to have enough time to do that-

L: Have enough time.

K: Puts you in that space of "Okay so do I have a go at this knowing that I'm not going to have the time to do it properly"-

L: Not going to finish it.

F: Or do I just go "Okay this is one of the things I have to slide"

L: Push it to the back-

Action of restriction – inelastic 'lines'

J theories of internal/external

Has the tone of 'okaaay, I won't do that...'

Refrains of time through these sentences.

Appendix 9. Information for participants



Negotiating discursive influences in early childhood practice Information for Participants

Dear Early Childhood Educator,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that forms part of my PhD study. I am researching ways that early childhood educators (ECEs) in Australia negotiate influences and messages informing their practice. The main purpose of my study is to contribute new understandings to efforts to improve the sustainability of the early childhood workforce.

I am undertaking my PhD with CSU's School of Teacher Education (Bathurst) and I am also supported by CSU's Research in Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE) Research Centre. My background is in sociology, and research into early childhood practice. I have also worked in a preschool as an educator, and alongside early childhood early intervention professionals as part of my research work.

I am inviting participants from diverse service types, experience and locations, who are interested in exploring and discussing ways that they negotiate some of the influences and messages informing early childhood practice. It is important to me that your participation is freely given. There is **no obligation to: take part in the study; to answer any of the questions that come up during the project; or to take part in the three stages of data collection.** Further, participants may withdraw from the project at any time without having to give a reason, and may request that their contributions to arts-informed enquiry and interview stages also be withdrawn. The only exception is that, due to the nature of focus groups, not all information can be removed if participants withdraw after taking part in focus group discussions.

Stage 1 – initial focus group

The first stage of the research project is an in-person focus group, where, as a group, we would discuss our understandings of influences and messages that inform early childhood practice, and experiences of negotiating these influences and messages.

Each focus group would include 4-5 participants, and run for around 1 – 2 hours. I would attend and co-facilitate the group discussion along with an experienced focus group moderator, who specialises in early childhood practice. After the group discussion, we would talk through the subsequent stages of the research project for those who indicate they would like to continue their participation.

I would like to audio-tape each focus group meeting for the purposes of analysis (identifying participants only by first name), and after the discussion has been transcribed and names removed, I would email you your own responses to check and correct if you wished to do so. I would then combine all the (de-identified) findings from the focus groups along with material from the next stages of the project, to inform a follow-up focus group meeting.

Focus groups would take place in locations (including regional areas) that are convenient and safe for participants, and could be conducted in the evening or on a weekend day if required. I would meet basic travel expenses for participants to travel to and from focus group meetings (such as train or bus tickets, or parking fees), and would also provide some simple refreshments.

Stage 2 – arts-informed enquiry and interview

The next stage of the project would involve preparing a visual representation (in your own time) that documents ways you negotiate influences and messages that inform your practice. I am aware that you are likely to have multiple demands on your time apart from your work, and expect that participants might spend from ½ an hour to a few hours creating or selecting a visual ‘artefact’. This ‘artefact’ could, for example, take the form of a documentation panel (such as those you might already use in your practice), or an artefact in a digital format using photo templates or applications on your mobile phone. Or, you might prefer to select an artefact that meaningfully illustrates ways you negotiate influences on your practice (for example, a photo, drawing or non-confidential document).

We would then organise a time to meet for a one-on-one interview. During the interview, we would explore themes that had come up during the initial focus group, through creating or selecting your visual ‘artefact’, or any subsequent experiences and ideas on the topic stimulated by your artefact. This interview would take about an hour.

With your approval, I would like to copy or collect your artefact, so that I can use it to inform my analyses, and possibly, reproduce it in subsequent publications or conference presentations. I would return any original artefacts to you if you wished. If you were identifiable in the artefact, I would ask for your explicit consent in writing, to reproduce the artefact.

Where possible, I would travel to meet with you in person, otherwise I would conduct the interview over a landline phone or via Skype (using a secure internet connection). I would like to tape-record the interview for accuracy, and return a written copy to you for checking. Any transcripts made of the interview would not identify you by name. I would like to use data from the interviews in a summary to inform the follow-up focus group.

Stage 3 – follow-up focus group

Once all the members of the initial focus group who wish to participate in interviews have done so, and I have completed some analysis of stage 1 and 2 data, we would organise a mutually convenient follow-up focus group meeting. In the follow up focus group, I would use aggregated data from the initial focus group, interviews and arts-informed enquiry to explore issues that were significant to participants or myself, and/or that I could learn more about by seeking discussion with the group. Issues might relate to influences and messages informing practice and ways of negotiating these influences and messages, as well as any changes to practice that participants felt might be related to their participation in the research project.

Some benefits participants might gain from participating include:

- build awareness of the value of critically reflecting on power dynamics that underlie early childhood practice
- build capacity to keep critical reflection going on an ongoing basis
- increase awareness of values and power relations that inform the early childhood field
- enjoy collaborative engagement with other educators, with a range of practice experiences and diverse knowledge sources

It is also possible that participants might find some ideas discussed in the project challenging to their ways of thinking or doing things, but participants would not be expected to share any information that they do not wish to share. Should a participant find any of the discussions distressing, they could withdraw at any time without any repercussions. If needed, free counselling support could be accessed with an organisation such as Lifeline, phone: 13 11 14.

How the data will be used

I will be using the data gained through my research project for my PhD thesis, which involves publishing six or seven articles in Australian and international peer-reviewed journals within the next three years. I may

also use the data in conference presentations in the future. Participant's names would not be used in any publication or presentation, nor would audio recording of the interviews be made public. As stated above, if participants were identifiable in the 'artefacts' they provided, I would seek their consent for reproducing the artefact in a publication or presentation.

Confidentiality

As part of participation I will ask that we all respect each other's confidentiality by not sharing identifiable details outside the group.

In relation to focus groups and interviews, we would select a location where we can speak confidentially (other than your home, workplace or an isolated area). Any recordings made of the interview would not identify you by name.

Finally, please note that as a researcher I am not a mandatory reporter in relation to issues of child protection. However, if a disclosure is made that causes me serious concern for the wellbeing of a child, after consultation with my supervisors, it may be possible that a report be made of suspected neglect/risk of harm according to the procedures of the relevant State or Territory.

If you have any questions regarding my project or would like to clarify any aspect of participation, please contact me via email tcumming@csu.edu.au. If you would like to take part in the study, please contact me by return email, and I will let you know what our next steps will be.

Thank you for your support and assistance with this project,

Tamara Cumming

Doctor of Philosophy Candidate
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Email: tcumming@csu.edu.au

Principal supervisor

Dr Jennifer Sumsion
School of Teacher Education
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Email: jsumsion@csu.edu.au

Co-supervisor

Dr Sandie Wong
School of Teacher Education
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795
Email: swong@csu.edu.au

Appendix 10. Consent form for participation in interviews and arts-based phases



Negotiating discursive tensions in early childhood practice Consent Form – Interview and use of artefact/s

Chief Investigator: Tamara Cumming tcumming@csu.edu.au ph: 0438 808 342

Supervisors: Professor Jennifer Sumsion jsumsion@csu.edu.au ph: 02 6338 4423

Dr Sandie Wong swong@csu.edu.au ph: 02 6338 4437

(Please use BLOCK LETTERS)

- have read (or where appropriate have had read to me) and understand the *Information for Participants* statement and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- agree to participate in the interview stage of the research project. I know that I can withdraw from participation at any time without consequence, and that I am not obliged to participate in further stages of the research project if I do not wish to.
- understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, and that any information or personal details gathered as part of the Project are confidential and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be published without my written permission.
- understand that de-identified data will be used to inform further stages of the research project, unless I withdraw my participation in the project.
- understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the project and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.
- understand that if I withdraw my participation in the project, I may also request that my contributions of artefacts and/or interview material be withdrawn.
- have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigators' Name: Tamara Cumming _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

The Executive Officer
Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Academic Governance
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795

Tel: (02) 6338 4628 Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 11. Consent form for participation in initial focus group discussion phase



Negotiating discursive influences in early childhood practice Consent Form – initial focus group

Chief Investigator: Tamara Cumming tcumming@csu.edu.au ph: 0438 808 342

Supervisors: Professor Jennifer Sumsion jsumsion@csu.edu.au ph: 02 6338 4423

Dr Sandie Wong swong@csu.edu.au ph: 02 6338 4437

I, _____

(Please use BLOCK LETTERS)

- have read (or where appropriate have had read to me) and understand the *Information for Participants* statement and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- agree to participate in an initial focus group stage of the research project. I know that I can withdraw from participation at any time without consequence, and that I am not obliged to participate in further stages of the research project if I do not wish to.
- understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, and that any information or personal details gathered as part of the Project are confidential and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be published without my written permission.
- understand that de-identified data will be used to inform further stages of the research project.
- understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the project and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.
- understand that if I withdraw my participation in the project, due to the very nature of focus groups, not all information can be removed if I withdraw after taking part in focus group discussions.
- have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigators' Name: Tamara Cumming _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

The Executive Officer
Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Academic Governance
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795
Tel: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 12. Consent form for participation in follow-up focus group phase



Negotiating influences on early childhood practice

Consent Form – follow-up focus group

Chief Investigator: Tamara Cumming tcumming@csu.edu.au ph: 0438 808 342

Supervisors: Professor Jennifer Sumsion jsumsion@csu.edu.au ph: 02 6338 4423

Dr Sandie Wong swong@csu.edu.au ph: 02 6338 4437

I, _____

(Please use BLOCK LETTERS)

- have read (or where appropriate have had read to me) and understand the *Information for Participants* statement and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- agree to participate in a follow-up focus group. I know that I can withdraw from participation at any time without consequence, and that I am not obliged to participate in further stages of the research project if I do not wish to.
- understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, and that any information or personal details gathered as part of the Project are confidential and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be published without my written permission.
- understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the project and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.
- understand that if I withdraw my participation in the project, due to the very nature of focus groups, not all information can be removed if I withdraw after taking part in focus group discussions.
- have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigators' Name: _Tamara Cumming_____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

The Executive Officer
Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Academic Governance
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795
Tel: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome

Appendix 13. Pre-publication version of Table 1.

Studies reviewed for interpretative meta-analysis

Author/s	Year	Country	Participant location (as identified by original authors)	Research topic	Number of participants	Data collection methods										Qualifications	
						Interview	Group-based discussion	Survey	Arts-informed	Stimulus	Observation	Document analysis	Reflective statement	Statistical data/validated scale	Non-degree	EC-related degree	
Adair	2011	United States	Cities	Language use and acquisition	45#		X			X						X	
Andersson & Hellberg	2009	Sweden	Not specified	Effects of recognition of prior learning in further education	10	X										X	
Bown & Sumsion	2007	Australia	Metropolitan Sydney	Regulation	3	X			X							X	
Brooker	2010	United Kingdom	Inner city London	Professionalism	Approx. 32	X					X				X	X	
Brownlee & Berthelsen	2006	Australia	Metropolitan city	Epistemological beliefs	Not specified	X				X	X				X		
Brownlee, Berthelsen, Irving, Boulton-Lewis & McCrindle	2000	Australia	Metropolitan city	Epistemological beliefs	6	X				X	X				X		
Colley	2006	United	City	Learning emotion	8	X		X			X		X		X		

		Kingdom														pre-service	
Dalli	2008	New Zealand	Various	Professionalism	255			X									X
Duncan	2007	New Zealand	South Island	Values	8	X											X
Edwards	2005/06	Australia	Metropolitan	Theoretical knowledge	14	X	X	X					X				X
Einarsdottir	2003	Iceland	Not specified	Professionalism	20		X			X							X
Elfer & Dearnley	2007	United Kingdom	Not specified	Experiences of emotion	12	X	X				X		X			X	
Fasoli & Ford	2001	Australia	Regional/remote/urban Northern Territory	Culturally contextual practice	2	X					X					Not specified	
Fasoli & Moss	2007	Australia	Remote Northern Territory	Culturally contextual practice	Not specified					X	X		X			Not specified	
Fenech & Sumsion	2007a/b	Australia	New South Wales	Regulation	212	X	X	X									X
Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd	2010	Australia	Sydney	Professionalism	5*	X	X					X	X			X	X
Garavuso	2007	United States	New York	Influences on practice	3	X					X		X				X pre-service
Giugni	2011	Australia	Sydney	Post-structural reflection	35								X				X
Johansson, Sandberg &	2007	Sweden	City	Practitioner-oriented research	44		X	X								Not specified	

Vuorinen				for professional development												
Karlson & Simonsson	2008	Sweden	Town/city	Fostering gender-sensitive pedagogies	Not specified		X								Not specified	
Kim	2004	South Korea	Seoul	Pedagogical beliefs	4	X				X					X	X
Langford	2007/08	Canada	Urban	EC teacher identities	76	X					X	X			X pre-service	
Moore & Gilliard	2007	United States	Rural Montana	EC teacher education	12	X				X					X	X pre-service
Moriarty*	2000	UK/Finland	Not specified	Professionalism	37	X									X	X
Moyles	2001	United Kingdom	Not specified	Emotion and professionalism	Not specified	X			X				X		X	X
Nuttall	2006	New Zealand	Not specified	Negotiating professional identity	1	X				X					X	X
Osgood	2004	United Kingdom	Inner city/suburban/ rural	Commercialisation	222	X	X			X	X				X	X
Osgood	2010	United Kingdom	London	Professionalism	24	X	X			X	X				X	X
Robson & Fumoto*	2009	United Kingdom	Various	Influences on practice	13	X									X	X
Sargent*	2004	United States	Not specified	Experiences of male ECEs	Approx. 74	X									X	X
Sisson	2009	United States	Rural/suburban	Pedagogical influences on professionalism	8			X				X			X	X

Skattebol	2003	Australia	Inner city	Identity and social justice	Not specified	X				X		X	X		X	X
Skattebol	2010	Australia	Urban	Professional role	10	X	X			X	X		X		X	X
Sumsion	1999	Australia	Regional	Experiences of male ECE	1	X										X pre-service
Sumsion*	2003a	Australia	Not specified	Influences on attrition	1	X			X						X	X
Sumsion	2003b	Australia	City	Influences on educator resilience	1	X				X		X				X
Sumsion	2004	Australia	City/regional	Influences on educator resilience	7	X			X						X	X
Surtees	2005/08	New Zealand	Not specified	Teacher discourses of sexuality	3	X	X									X
TOTAL					1208	30	13	5	3	9	15	6	12	1	21	30

*Some participants in this study were working in the early years of school.

#Unless otherwise specified in an article, the total number of participants in a study is included here. Where a subset of the total participation was the subject of an article, it is this subset that is used as the “number of participants in the study”. These articles are indicated with a #.