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The post migration lived experiences of Syrian refugee children in Early Childhood Education and Care in England: four children's stories.

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the lived experiences of four Syrian refugee children in Early Childhood Education and Care. It aimed to capture their voices and tell their stories, using a hybrid praxeological and polyvocal methodology (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012; Tobin et al, 2016) and multi modal methods (Theron et al 2011; Clark and Moss, 2011; Carr et al 2002). Their lives are complex, so Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) was used to understand their context, whilst an intersectional theoretical triad comprising of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979); Orientalism (Said, 1978) and Social Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) was developed to frame the research. Issues of power, emotion, positionality, intersectionality, and invisibility are threaded throughout the research, therefore the paradigm, methodology, research design and theoretical frame were carefully chosen, and new models constructed to consider the sensitivities of the field. A chronological layered approach was adopted for the literature review which identified broad themes and illuminated hidden narratives about refugees, these resonated through the findings and subsequent discussions. Other studies concerned with refugee children's lived experiences informed this research (Kalkman and Clark, 2017; Prior and Niesz, 2013; Wihstutz, 2020; Peleman et al, 2020; Picchio and Mayer, 2019; Stekalova-Hughes and Wang, 2019; El Gemayei, 2019). The findings are presented using the poem No Man is an Island (Donne, 1624). They suggest that elements of the children's lived experiences act as islands, causing isolation but others which act as bridges, enabling connection. A dynamic power sensitive ethical approach was developed to respond to the challenges of the field, maintain the original ethical commitment to the parents of the children and be true to the participatory methodological approach (Gaywood et al, 2020). This thesis contributes new theoretical, methodological, ethical, and pedagogical understanding to both research and practice, which is transferable for use with other marginalised groups.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to any person who finds themselves on the outside looking in or to those who have been battered unkindly by life's storms. My hope is that you will find spaces of welcome, where you can rest, connect, and regain a sense of belonging.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 A personal and professional inquiry

Sitting next to my father at the funeral of a much-loved relative, Uncle Hans, I heard for the first time that he had arrived unaccompanied in England from Czechoslovakia on the *Kindertransport*. This information came as a complete shock. I knew the story of my grandfather going to one of Hitler's rallies, then gathering his brothers together, making plans to move the family fur trading business to London because he recognised the looming danger. I knew that my grandparents had escaped the Holocaust, arriving in Britain just before the outbreak of the Second World War, and I knew that my father was Jewish, but for me these were merely the family stories which provided the backdrop to my life. Hearing about Hans' childhood experiences on the *Kindertransport* caused me to think more deeply. Talking with my cousins after the funeral, I began to think about what life must have been like for my father, growing up and caused me to engage in a new way with the oral stories of my family.

Very soon after the funeral, catastrophic events began to unfold in Syria. On television, I watched families and children fleeing from their homes, noticing that the children looked very like my brothers, with their olive skin and dark eyes. It caused me much discomfort but crucially I started to make the connection between my own familial history and this generation of refugee children. I began to search for ways to use my skills to assist the children who were being displaced. Slowly it dawned on me that I could use my doctoral study to make a difference for young refugee children, and this could be my contribution. What evolved is a deeply personal, scholarly, and rigorous inquiry into the post migration lived experiences of four very young Syrian refugee children, in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Through an examination of the children's lives, I have inadvertently examined my own, finding a deeper sense of belonging and surety of my personal and professional identity.

This study is located within the local authority where I worked at the time. The residents are predominately White British and affluent, although there are hidden pockets of poverty with areas of rural isolation. I was the only educationalist within the Early Help service. My role was to support children who were facing significant life challenges, to be able to access high quality early education. Due to the demographic, and absence

of any significant refugee population, it was widely accepted that there was a lack of experience of working with refugee children. I was concerned about whether current early educational practice was able to serve refugee children well, whether general inclusive pedagogies were fit for purpose, and able to include displaced children along with their families, in reality. Following the personal connections I made to the refugee experience at Hans' funeral, two professional questions began to form as I considered my working context. These were: "*How can I develop my practice and understanding to best support the learning of very young refugee children?*" and "*What can I do to support children to feel welcomed in Early Childhood and Education Care settings and regain a sense of belonging after their experiences of displacement?*" (Whitehead, 1989).

Inevitably, I made several value-based and experience driven assumptions, as I formed these initial questions. Considering the educational successes within my wider family, I assumed that education offers all children and more specifically refugee children, an opportunity to achieve and succeed in ways other activities cannot and secondly that early education is vital as the first link in this long chain of learning (Sylva et al, 2004). Based on my own experience of moving my young family to sub-Sahara Africa and their experiences of starting school, I also assumed that refugee children would need to feel welcomed and would be disorientated on arrival in a new country. Finally, there was a belief that through my own practice I could impact others and promote a "*flourishing of humanity"* (Whitehead, 2016)

My thesis centres on the post migration lived experiences of four Syrian refugee children. The choice to focus on Syrian children was purely practical, for at the time, there were very few, if any, refugee families living in the local authority. In total eight families arrived in England as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Person's resettlement scheme (SVPRS) (Home Office, 2017). I was able to recruit four children and their families to take part in this research, all of whom were part of the SVPRS which was initially launched in January 2014 as a response to the ongoing crisis in Syria. The Spring of 2011 saw the Arab Uprisings across the Middle East, where people began to demand more democratic government. There were similar demonstrations in Syria which were crushed by the Syrian government. This sparked a complex civil war. In August 2013, UNHCR published figures which suggested that because of the Syrian

conflict, there were one million refugees from Syria who were under the age of 18 and 740,000 were under the age of 11 (UNHCR 2013). Following growing political pressure, in September 2015, the British government extended the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (SVPR) and committed to resettling "*up to 20,000 Syrian refugees*" in 5 years (Home Office et al, 2018:8.)

Local authorities were encouraged to sign up voluntarily to the SVPR scheme and were tasked with overseeing and implementing the resettlement process. The UNHCR criteria for being part of the scheme included, "*women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence, amongst others*," (Home Office, 2017:3). Arriving as part of this scheme is a significant factor in this study. The war in Syria provides the backdrop, whilst the criteria of the scheme meant that some of the participants were impacted by special educational needs and disability, as the UNHCR had deemed them to be people in "severe need of medical care" (Home Office, 2017:3). Additionally, although the participants are refugees, and have experienced pre and peri-migration trauma, the SVPR scheme has meant that generally, the nuclear family remained intact, their refugee status was granted without any uncertainty, secure housing and financial assistance was provided. They were given support workers to help navigate a new system and enabled to work where possible. There was an expectation that the adults should attend language classes and the families remained in close contact with each other, which provided ongoing community support. Within the study area, there was also a ground swell of goodwill with voluntary groups forming to offer welcome for refugees. Generally, many refugees are not able to access this level of support, on arrival in a host country and subsequently would be at a greater risk for mental health difficulties (Measham et al, 2014). However, despite this support, the families all experienced varying degrees of challenges.

The SVPR scheme uses the term 'vulnerable' to describe the people who access the scheme. This term needs clarification. Virokannas et al (2020) did an extensive literature review on the use of the term vulnerability specifically in social work. They found that certain people groups were often identified as vulnerable, with children being the largest group referred to in the literature. The review highlighted the "*danger of using it* (the term vulnerable) *in a stigmatising, labelling, marginalising and*

objectifying way, denying agency and voice of those seen as vulnerable" (Virokannas et al, 2020: 336). Also highlighted was the understanding that all humans share a vulnerability due to the nature of being human, this is described as, "*universal vulnerability*" (Virokannas et al, 2020; 336). Interestingly the authors conclude that vulnerability is a contested notion and that, "*it is also important to recognise the temporal, situational, relational and structural nature of vulnerability'* (Virokannas et al, 2020:336). They also suggest that vulnerability is multifaceted and that, "*attention should be turned towards vulnerable life situations, social processes, society and its institutions*" (Virokannas et al, 2020: 336). Therefore, in this study, 'vulnerable' will only be used to describe the government *scheme* and not the people who made use of the scheme to find safety for themselves and their families. However, there is a recognition that the children's life circumstances have rendered a level of vulnerability to them, so they live with reduced power in terms of their position in society. I have chosen to adopt ideas about universal vulnerability within this study but reject the notion of refugees being innately vulnerable as it is not congruent with the ethics of this study and is not consistent with my own personal values. In addition, this thesis takes seriously Moll et al's (1992) work on Funds of Knowledge and from the outset positions both the children and their families as being possessors of deep cultural, community and home knowledge which they brought with them into their ECEC settings.

1.2 The role of emotion

As already stated, my research was created as a personal and professional response to an international situation, which caused millions to flee their country, because of war. Naturally, the displacement of children is an emotive topic, and media reporting appears to have fuelled this emotional response. Snow (2020) discusses the impact of the images of Alan Kurdi on the national and international response to the ongoing war in Syria describing their publication as a "*turning point in the crisis of displaced peoples, owing in part to their immediate reproduction and circulation*" (Snow 2020: 168). He suggests that the photographs depicting the death of a small refugee child caused a brief, "*rupture in public sentiment*" (Snow, 2020:169), interrupting many of the unhelpful and xenophobic responses to the refugee crisis up until that point. The images seem to crystallise the issue of emotion which has been an emergent but enduring concern in this thesis.

I noticed the impact of this when presenting my research (Gaywood, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2020, 2021). I was concerned that the strong emotions surrounding the subject would supersede the rigour I hoped for from my academic colleagues which would bring challenge and encourage me to think more deeply. This entry into my research diary illustrates this point.

> *Today was the first time I presented my work. I talked about refugees being regarded as "prizes" and "a narrative of deficit and weakness." There were a few questions but generally a stunned silence. After me, another researcher presented their work, also concerned with refugees. They were obviously more eminent than me, but their presentation seemed to rely on and feed both those conceptualisations of refugees. The response from the floor was warm and emotional. I am now questioning whether presenting to colleagues is going to offer the rigour I had hoped for* (Research Diary: 20.2.18)

The challenge for this thesis has always been to retain focus on the children and take care to systematically collect their stories, to represent their post migration experiences adequately. Given the emotive subject matter, a subsequent challenge was to ensure that this study could be trustworthy and hold validity. It was therefore important to build the research design, theoretical frame and methodology taking this challenge into account. As the research design unfolded, it was necessary to continue to re-visit it, to ensure that like a sculpture, the piece was strong and robust. The use of praxeology (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012) within the methodological frame was intentional as it gives space for the emotional, relational aspect of research. Whilst the polyvocal approach (Tobin, 2016) allowed me to acknowledge the presence of my own voice as researcher, as well as capture the other narratives which have informed the study. I also chose to include a reflexive approach, as advocated by Pillow (2003) as a key element in mediating the impact of emotion and using a reflective journal has provided a robust method to examine my own feelings as well as reflecting on those of others. These approaches are discussed more fully in Chapter 5. Helpfully, there seems to be a growing acknowledgement amongst academics of the role of the emotional aspects involved in research, building on Goleman's work (1996) concerned with emotional literacy. In his keynote speech at EECERA 2019 (Thessaloniki) when talking about measuring quality in Early

Childhood, Jan Peeters spoke about *‘the aspects of quality that can only be measured by the heart’* (Peeters, 2019) describing the work of colleagues which supported often marginalised and forgotten children. Page (2018) too recognises the importance of emotion in her work considering the role of professional love in ECEC. Therefore, having attempted to ensure rigour, transparency, and trustworthiness within the fabric of the design, I have chosen to recognise and consider the emotional aspect of this research, by committing to document the emotional interactions, complex feelings and empathic responses which now punctuate this thesis.

1.3 Concerns about power

The issue of power has also emerged as a dominant theme within this thesis. Concerns about who holds power, power inequity and power sensitive practices have heavily influenced and are woven throughout the study, like a golden thread which is visible in many parts. Notions and definitions of power are complex and challenging to define (Coleman, 2014:138). Foucault’s ideas about societal structural power and the creation of cultural norms (Faubion, 2020), Freire’s “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (Freire, 1970) and Critical Race Theory (Delago et al, 2017) have all influenced the thinking about the operation of power within this study.

To fully consider the impact of power within the lives of the children I have drawn heavily on the notion of intersectionality from Critical Race Theory (Delgado et al, 2017) which has been described by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) as, “*a way of understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people and in human experiences”* (Hill Collins and Bilge 2016: 11). They suggest that,

> *when it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other* (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016:11).

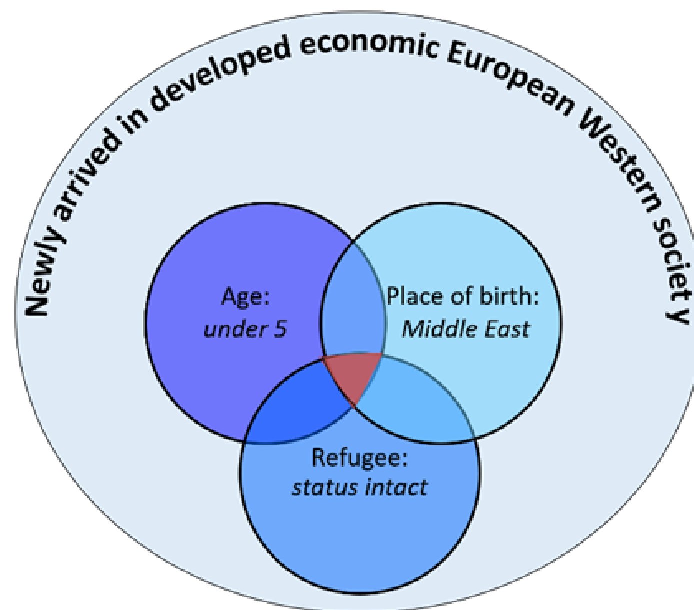
Intersectionality has offered me a power-sensitive vehicle to interrogate power structures and dynamics more closely. De Saxe and Trotter-Simons (2021) outline the value of intersectionality as “*liberatory praxis*” (de Saxe and Trotter-Simons, 2021:14) and suggest that using an intersectional approach can be helpful to frame the often-complex lived experiences of people who find themselves marginalised by

dominant discourses, because it recognises some of the power interchanges in operation. As I have grappled with many of the complexities involved in researching with refugee children, I have built on the concept of intersectionality and used it to diagrammatically represent aspects of the research design, the location in the field and the intricacies of the children's lives, whilst remaining alert to power interchanges. Intersectionality forms one on the themes which resonates throughout this thesis.

Within this study, there is an underpinning assumption that all the participants hold innate personal power, but circumstantial and structural power may have diminished their ability to exercise that power. There is also a recognition of the drive to survive, and the courage required to move a far distance to an unknown place to do this. Equally it is acknowledged that the hegemony within the study's location is also likely to have negatively impacted the participants ability to exercise power, alongside the families' reduced status. Part of the national narrative that undoubtedly impacts the participant's exercise of power, is the rise of Islamophobia and hate crimes associated with it. The concept of Islamophobia is heavily contested (Lean, 2019). In *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia,* Zempi and Awan (2019:7) cite the definition used by the British Government All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, *"Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness*." (All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, 2018:11). This definition of Islamophobia will be used within this study, as it was defined by British Muslims themselves.

Considering the factors of age, refugee status and the rise of Islamophobia it is almost inevitable that these were impactful on the participant children's ability to have and exercise power or control in their own lives. In the same way that Levitas et al (2007) describe the multi-dimensional aspect of social exclusion, it is recognised that these factors form multiple layers which potentially lead to a reduced capacity to be able to exercise power. I have used notions of intersectionality to demonstrate visually the elements which overlap to reduce the children's ability to exercise their power.

Figure 1. The intersectional elements creating reduced power



When thinking of concerns about power differentials, it has been necessary to interrogate my own privilege of being a white, educated member of the establishment who understands the dominant culture and then consider the power inequity between myself as researcher and the participants. Block et al (2013) talk about the "*imbalance of power between researchers and participants"* (Block et al, 2013:4) which is found particularly in research involving refugees. Locating my own positionality of self as a practitioner researcher has been key in an attempt to address these power differentials (Gaywood et al, 2020).

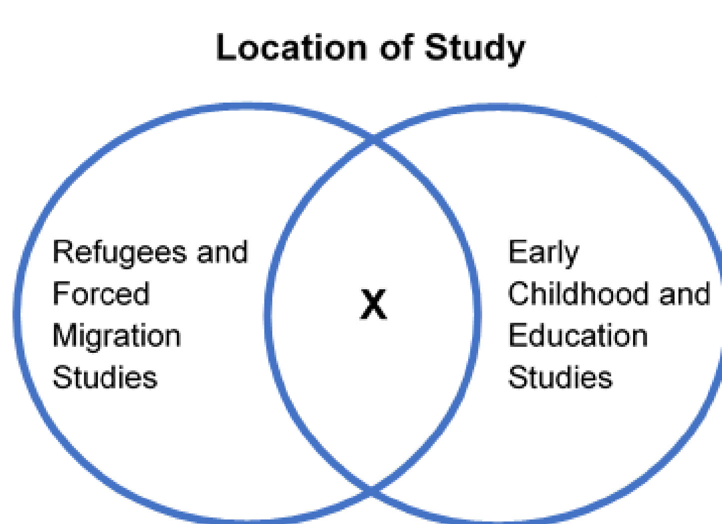
Not only has there been a need to manage the power inequity between the researcher and participants, but also examine the research structures and processes for potential power imbalance. Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) describe children as "*a relatively powerless group in society*" and say that "*a greater acknowledgement and recognition of these imbalances in power relations when conducting research with children is warranted.*" (Gillet-Swan and Sargeant, 2018:2). Block et al (2013) note that, "*The cross-cultural nature of most refugee research raises additional methodological and ethical concerns that implicate power*" (Block et al, 2013: 8). Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) also suggest the importance of "*acknowledging the issues of power."* (Gillett-

Swan and Sargeant, 2018: 4) but I have always been keen for this thesis to go beyond mere acknowledgement and offer ways to remediate these differentials in power, so I have taken seriously the need to consider the structural power in operation within research processes. Thus, care has been taken to attempt to rebalance power through the development of power sensitive processes, structures, and practices. None of the methodological approaches used in this thesis are accidental and all have been designed to attempt to address the issues of power on a micro level. These form part of my original contribution to knowledge.

1.4 Location of study within the field

When attempting to locate this study in the field it has been necessary to draw again on intersectionality to accurately represent where my research is situated. This study is positioned in the real world (Robson, 2011) and is grounded in my everyday professional working life, thus is concerned with praxis (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012). It is a small scale, qualitative study which is located within the intersection between two existing fields of study.

Figure 2. Location of Study



(Gaywood et al, 2020)

Gaywood et al (2020) describe the liminal nature of the experiences of refugee children when they first attend an ECEC setting. They point out that,

> "*There is an intersectional aspect to their experience and therefore it is highly appropriate for this study, which chooses to recognise the children's refugee status and their experiences within an ECEC setting, to be located within the intersection between two fields of study*" (Gaywood et al, 2020:152).

An initial literature review (2018) found that very few studies were concerned with the lived experience of the very young refugee child, post migration. Figure 3 demonstrates the topic spread and the foci of various studies.

Figure 3. Table to show the results of a systematic literature review: layer 2 (2018)

Refugee child lived experience under 5	**Refugee child lived experience over 5**	**Mental health of refugee children under 5**	**Mental health of refugee children over 5**	**Educators of refugee children**	**Experiences of refugee parents**	**Inter/cross cultural research with non-refugees (under 5)**
**	**** *		**** ***	*****	*****	*****

The two most relevant articles found, offered a positive starting point. It was therefore decided that this study would build on the work of Kalkman and Clark (2017) and Prior and Niesz (2013) who both attempt to give voice to underrepresented children using different methods to explore their daily experiences in ECEC. These are discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.5 Formation of the research questions

Thinking about my father and his cousins who had all built lives in their new country and 'integrated' into British society to a greater or lesser extent, I was initially interested in investigating the process of 'integration.' However, Bennett (2018) describes integration as a complex and contested concept which is often influenced by socially constructed notions of race, the Other, the nation state, the foreigner and citizenship. He outlines the influence of neo-liberalism in the public discourse surrounding migration and subsequent integration. Of equal interest was Roer-Strier's (1998) work looking at Jewish immigrant parental responses to re-settlement within Israel and the impact on children's longer-term cultural transitions. She describes three parental approaches as either: "*kangaroos, cuckoos or chameleons*" (Roer-Strier, 1998: 77). However, although these two subjects were interesting from a personal point of view, my main concern was to investigate the lived experiences of refugee children, so whilst the process of integration is undeniably important in a wider context, pursuit of this would cause this thesis to be policy driven. Equally, to examine immigrant parental experiences of cultural transitions further and build on Roer-Strier's (1998) work, the focus would need to shift away from children's stories and experiences. A decision was therefore taken to discard these initial lines of inquiry.

Working as a Children Centre teacher for the local authority meant that I was often the only educator and pedagogue on the senior management team. Much of my interactions with colleagues was spent supporting them to consider services from the point of view of the child, think about the impact on children of any changes and continually examine our pedagogy to ensure it was consistent with the organisational values. When I began to consider the foci of my thesis, I drew heavily on these work experiences. Investigating refugee children's lived experiences offered a way to ensure their voices, needs and everyday lives were central. Pedagogically, I have always worked believing that children are co-constructors of their learning and so assumed that the children's experiences would offer new insights enabling more effective pedagogical approaches to be developed. As a former Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and a teacher specialising in including children with social, emotional, and mental health needs (SEMH), I also assumed that children who

had experienced forced migration would have specific inclusion needs which current practice and pedagogy had not kept pace with.

Formatting the final research questions took time and these were shaped by several preliminary meetings with interested parties which included the then Chief Executive of the local authority and two fellow researchers who were working in different ways with refugees. Following a meeting with a Syrian academic (Research Journal:13.6.17) the decision was made to focus on the *post*- migration experiences of the young refugee children. It was important that the research questions were firstly answerable, useful for future practice and primarily concerned with the educational experiences of the children. A pilot study was undertaken to try out data collection methods and to ascertain if the methods used, could answer the research questions. As a result, the overarching research question this study now intends to answer is:

- *How do very young refugee children experience ECEC?*

with the subsequent questions:

- *Do they share any commonality of experience?*
- *What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy?*
- *What are the implications for future practice?*

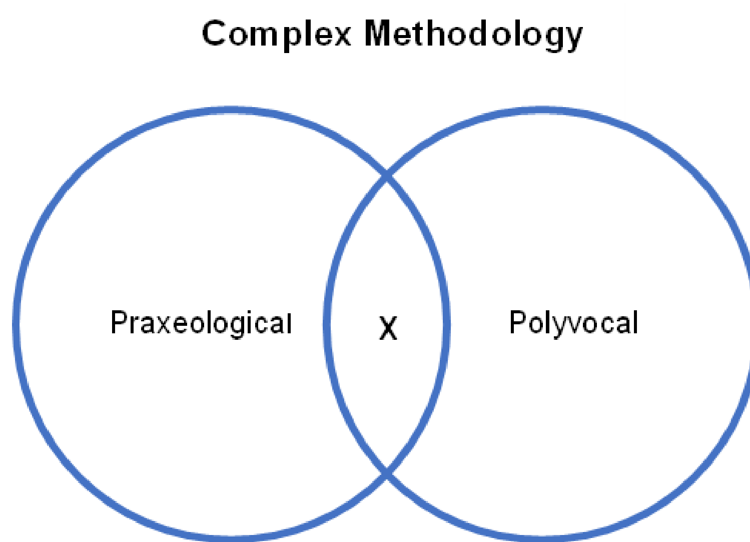
1.6 Methodological and theoretical approach

The methodological approach adopted for the research project is characterised by the need to be responsive to a complex field and has taken seriously Halilovich's (2013) view that,

> *the complexities relating to refugee research- involving many specific and broader factors - require from researchers both flexibility to respond to the particularities of the situation of their participants and creativity to develop "customised" methods and methodologies, rather than relying on standardised research techniques* (Halilovich, 2013:136)

Using this principle, a hybrid methodology was developed combining a poly vocal approach (Tobin 2016) with a praxeological methodology (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012). These are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

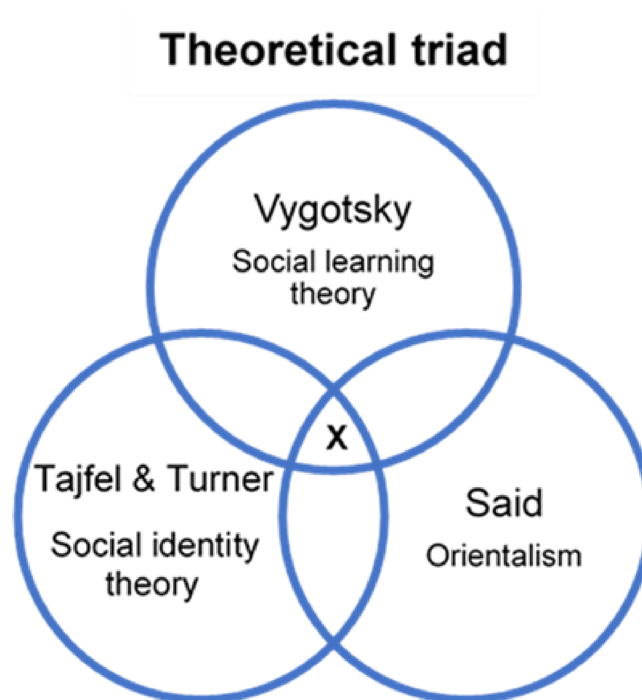
Figure 4. An intersectional complex methodology



(Gaywood et al, 2020)

It was deemed necessary to create a hybrid methodology in order to recognise the many voices involved in each child's story, retain the focus on praxis and be true to the ethical requirements of the study. It was also a methodological and ethical decision to write in the first person, to acknowledge my own presence in the research as one of the many voices. The research design also was responsive to the field so was emergent and developmental in nature. It was complex and multi-layered. The theoretical frame, like the hybrid methodology is intersectional and like the research design, is complex. Decisions made during its development, were influenced by an overarching desire to ensure the obvious and less obvious power dynamics in the research process were not only acknowledged but power inequalities were mediated.

Figure 5. Complex intersectional theoretical triad



The methods used to elicit the children's voices and capture their stories needed to be situationally specific and responsive to the field. Although the children and their parents could understand some English, their mother tongue was Syrian Arabic. Therefore, a drawing methodology was employed (Theron et al, 2011) alongside an adapted Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2011).

1.7 Terms and concepts

When considering the key terms and concepts used in this thesis, it is important to continue to take note of Halilovich's concerns about "*the complexities relating to refugee research"* (Halilovich, 2013:136) and be mindful of the flow of power associated with certain words. Many of the terms and concepts which are woven through this thesis are highly contested in the Refugee and Forced Migration field. It is therefore crucial to be clear how each is going to be used.

1.7.1 Definition of the term *refugee*

The term refugee is used throughout the thesis to describe the children and their families who are the main actors in this piece. It is a key term which was not only

challenged by the children's mothers but also by academics who express concern about its usage and the many implications associated (Espiritu, 2016; Kyriakides et al, 2018). The term refugee is defined in Article 1 of the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees as set out by the United Nations in 1951. A refugee is described as a person with a,

> *well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.* (UNHCR Refugee Agency, 2019:18)

This definition of refugee will be used throughout. It ought not to be confused with the term migrant which has a different meaning and tends to describe a person who moves to another country often for work. Although there maybe similarities of experience, the refugee differs because of a "*well-founded fear*" of persecution, should they return to their country of origin. However, both terms migrant and refugee are controversial. Kyriakides (2017) talks about the "*migrant–refugee dichotomy*" (Kyriakides, 2017:934) discourse within both the European and worldwide media explaining that refugees are often seen as more deserving whilst migrants less so. He describes the power of the use of words which have political implications and impact the public understanding. This was very pertinent in my study when two of the participant parents openly shared that they did not like the word 'refugee' to describe them (Field notes. Parental interview 29.6.18). Kyriakides (2017) highlights the "*orientalist discourse that position East as victim to be rescued by West as saviour*" of refugees (Kyriakides, 2017: 934). It was not clear what caused the mothers to feel that way about the term 'refugee' but they seemed to feel the weight of limitation and power differential which is ascribed to the meaning of the word and reacted against it. Given Hayward's (2020) assertion that language,

> *may reflect norms or pathologising labels or locate people on continuums or spectrums that were invented by professionals for explanatory reasons but are now used to define, manage, regulate or otherwise influence the discourse* (Hayward, 2020:4),

it was important ethically to discuss the ongoing use of the word refugee with them. Gaywood et al (2020) note that how refugees are conceptualised is important and determine the ethical approach (Gaywood et al, 2020:154). So,

> *I asked how they felt about me using the word* (refugee*) because my study was specifically about refugee children. They said in the study is was okay, but generally they did not like the word*. (Field notes. Parental interview 29.6.18)

1.7.2 Child's voice

The primary aim of this study is to give voice to the young refugee children by capturing their lived experiences and documenting accurately their stories. The notion of very young children, even the pre-verbal, having 'a voice,' being active participants in learning and having preferences is an established norm within early education practice in Britain, drawing on the work of Mallaguzzi (1998) and is documented in recently published non-statutory guidance (Early Education, 2021). However, in a research context this concept and the ideas about including children within research, to represent their voice, is not without its problems. Lane et al (2019) highlight concerns about the power differentials involved when attempting to include children's voices in research. They describe the idea that representation of children's voices can be "*well-meaning"* but suggest that it may not only "*mask power differentials*" but places the researcher in an unequal position of power, within a social "*construction of childhood*" (Lane et al, 2019: 698), assuming that children need adults to speak on their behalf.

However, there already exists a broad body of knowledge which has examined how multimodal methods can be used to adequately represent views of young children (Clark and Moss, 2011; Edwards et al, 2012;). Ni Laoire (2016) explores how these methods are particularly effective when working with diasporic children and young people, as return migrants. Researchers in ECEC often use Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1991) as the rationale to include the child's perspective within research (Im and Swadener, 2016; Pascal and Bertram, 2009; Sutherland, 2013; Nilsson et al, 2015). Phelan and Kinsella (2013) discuss some of the ethical considerations when representing the voice of very young children, whilst others have written about the variety of ways of observing and interacting with children to elicit their voice (Carr et al, 2002; Elfer et al, 2003; Fonagy et al, 2002).

The issue of representation is equally found within Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. Kirmayer (2013) describes the "*crucial issue of voice*" and asserts that "*the research process can give voice and agency to refugees*" (Kirmayer, 2013: viii). Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al (2014) describe the ongoing need for research that does, "*not deny the agency of displaced persons but rather aim (s) to enhance their rights and capabilities within contexts of accelerated social and political change*" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014:6). It seems then, that much has been written within the fields of Early Childhood Education and Care, and Refugees and Forced Migration studies, about listening to those who have less power and therefore find their voices silenced or unheard. The fact that there is a paucity of research focused on the experiences of very young refugee children, suggests that due to their specific circumstances and age, these children's voices seem to have been forgotten or overlooked, in some way. However, Nguyen (2018) notes,

> *Many of the voiceless are talking all the time. They are loud, if you get close enough to hear them, if you are capable of listening, if you are aware of what you cannot hear. The problem is that much of the world does not want to hear the voiceless or cannot hear them* (Nguyen, 2018:20)

Although not without its problems, this study then, is an attempt to capture the lived experiences of four children, hear their 'voice' and represent as well as possible their stories; taking into account and making attempts to remediate the power differentials. In their exploration of how Maori elite athletes express their cultural identity, Erueti et al (2014) cite Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) who describe the importance and power of individuals' stories,

> *These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities*. (Erueti et al, 2014:1066)

There is an explicit suggestion of the positive consequences of sharing stories, for the building and hopefully re-building of communities, which is pertinent when considering the stories of those children who have been displaced from their communities and forced to re-establish themselves in new places.

1.7.3 Use of the terms Outsiders and Other

Within this thesis the two terms Outsiders and Other are often used to describe the positioning of the children and their families, in relation to the dominant host country children or citizens. I have coined the term Outsiders by building on the work of Tajfel and Turner (1979), who describe social interactions between In-groups and Out-groups, so those who find themselves positioned in an Out-group, become Outsiders. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work forms part of the theoretical triad which frames this study. I also use Outsiders to describe a peer group of academics who reviewed the findings, as they identified themselves to me as not belonging to the dominant group within academia, having been positioned in an Out-group (5.6.1).

Also included in the theoretical triad used in this study is Said's work on Orientalism. Said (1978) identifies many of the processes and thought patterns associated with colonialism and the conceptualising of people who are non-European. Bhabha (1994) continues the discussion about colonial discourse and goes on to suggest that Othering and ideas of the Other, are linked to political power discourses which stereotype people both racially and culturally. Junuzi (2019) relates this narrative specifically to refugees and suggests that in recent times, "*the refugee is being constructed as the European 'other' and 'barbarian' in order to provide a 'solution' to the European identity anxieties and dilemmas"* (Junuzi, 2019:119) and he also calls out the "*politics of othering"* (Junuzi, 2019:120). Saeed (2019) links Orientalism (Said, 1978) and Othering citing Poole (2002) who suggests that the, "*contemporary manifestation of racism has its roots in Orientalist discourse and constructions of the 'other*.'" (Saeed, 2019: 326). The label of Other is widely used in literature when considering refugees and how society often portrays them (Bennett, 2018; McAreavey and Das, 2013; Krumer-Nevo and Sidi, 2012; Seker and Aslan, 2015). It tends to be linked to narratives about who does and who does not belong to a host country (Mavelli, 2018; Fotaki, 2019). Throughout the fieldwork I was confronted by subtle narratives of Othering (Reflective Journal: 15.3.17). I witnessed the children's isolation in their ECECs and later heard first-hand accounts from the parents of incidents of Islamophobia. (Fieldwork notes: 20.3.19). So, the use of the two terms Outsiders and Other have been helpful throughout this study as it has offered me a way to frame and discuss some of the power inequities, experienced by the children and their families.

Throughout the thesis I will use a capital letter when employing the terms, unless I am using a direct quote which differs.

1.7.4 Cultural guide

At the outset of this research, I was acutely aware of my own positionality and the impact this could have on the research process, design, and my ability to engage with the Syrian participants. Marmo (2013) points out the ethical complexity of working with refugees where the researcher, "*is seen as belonging to an ethnically or socially privileged group"* (Marmo, 2013: 95). She suggests that there are an, "*array of cross-cultural postcolonial issues"* (Marmo, 2013:95) with obvious power issues where the researcher holds dominance, which most likely would impact the quality of the fieldwork. She notes that, "*addressing sociocultural and linguistic signifiers can contribute to minimise the effects of the dominant role"* (Marmo, 2013:96). Therefore, to ensure that the ethics of the piece were robust, I chose to recruit someone who could help me navigate the complexities of any potential cultural differences. I have chosen to refer to this person as a cultural guide. This was fraught with difficulties which is discussed later in the Ethics chapter but eventually I met Mina, who acted as the interpreter and cultural guide. Mina became important in the research occupying this dual role, so I chose to recognise her voice and story, utilising the polyvocal (Tobin, 2016) aspect of the hybrid methodology.

1.7.5 Experienced witnesses

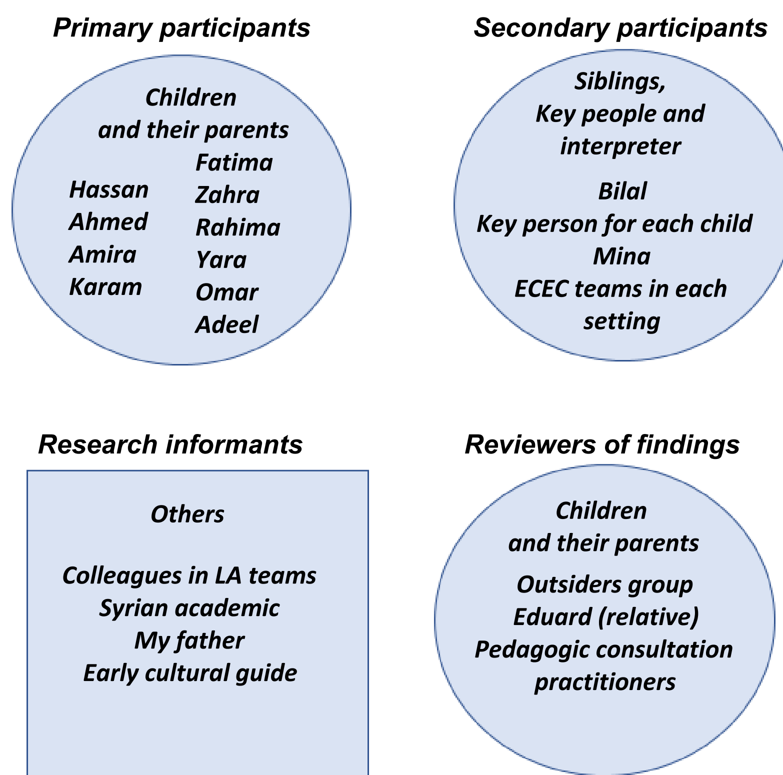
During the second phase of the fieldwork, the staff at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school chose to withdraw from the project, because of time pressures. They were the teachers of Hassan and Karam and acted as their keyperson. Both had been interviewed but neither felt able to gather their team of support staff to view the stories of the two boys, then engage in a discussion. I was keen to gather feedback, so I asked the headteacher and the Special Educational Needs Coordinator to participate. I refer to them as 'experienced witnesses' as they knew both boys and their families well and had other insights to offer. Once all the findings had been reviewed, I chose to engage with a relative of mine, Eduard, who arrived in Britain aged 7, as a child refugee. I used the findings as a stimulus for further discussion and interviewed

Eduard as another experienced witness. His lived experiences gave further depth and insight.

1.7.6 An overview of the research participants and informants

Although this study is primarily concerned with the lived experiences of four children and their parents, there were several other participants and informants who contributed. Those who have been assigned names tend to feature more than those who were not. The research informants all contributed in some way to the research. I engaged a group of people, including the children and their parents, to review the research findings to ensure trustworthiness. The figure below provides a summary of those involved.

Figure 6. Summary of research participants and informants



1.8 Original contribution to knowledge

The original contribution to knowledge this thesis makes will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9 however, to summarise, my study will add both **ethical, methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical** contributions to the small but ever-expanding existing body of knowledge about refugee children and their post migration experiences. Original models of research design, theoretical frame and hybrid methodology have been developed which have proven 'fit for purpose' in an extremely complex field. Layered data collection methods have built on existing knowledge, to reduce the risk to children who may be experiencing post-traumatic stress symptoms, whilst enabling them to engage in research and have their voices heard. Power sensitive and culturally responsive ethics have been developed through engagement in real world research and new researcher positionality has been established. A number of these contributions are transferable to other research fields and provide the means of engaging more ethically with other marginalised people groups. Finally, I have created a Pedagogy of Welcome, supported by colleagues within the early education and care sector, which has the potential to be transformative of practice and could positively impact future training for early education professionals.

1.9 Thesis structure

This thesis is set out in 9 chapters. The introduction has included a brief rationale and the location of this study within the field. It has set out the research questions, explained how and why these questions became the focus and outlined the methodological and theoretical approaches. Key terms and concepts have been explained throughout the chapter and a summary of the original contributions established.

The context chapter introduces the research participants in more detail. The micro, meso, exo and macro contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of the children are described. When considering the children's macro context, there is a brief exploration of the British government's current and recent policy regarding refugee children, which considers some of the broad policy drivers.

The literature review describes the layered approach adopted to keep pace with the fast-emerging research. There has been a paucity of research concerned with very

young refugee children and their everyday lived experiences in ECEC, so studies undertaken with older children, those concerned with the experiences of children's parents, their educators, migrant experiences and retrospective studies documenting refugees from the Holocaust have all been included. Emerging themes are identified and discussed.

The fourth chapter outlines the theoretical frame which has underpinned this study. Initially a quadratic theoretical lens was developed to examine the field and findings but was later honed to a theoretical triad which includes the theories of Vygotsky (1978), Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Said (1978). This will be explained within the chapter.

The methodology chapter (Chapter 5) introduces the research design and describes the pilot study undertaken. It explains how and why a hybrid methodology was created, which combines a polyvocal and praxeological approach. The participant selection and the multi-modal methods used for data collection will be discussed, along with the data analysis approach. Also included will be an explanation of the in-built structures regarding trustworthiness.

Due to the ethical complexities, a whole chapter (Chapter 6) has been dedicated to the ethics involved in this piece of research. The ethics chapter considers issues of safety and wellbeing, the ethical issues involved with creating power sensitive research processes and design and it considers culture and language concerns. Finally, there is a section which discusses positionality. This chapter draws on the article: *Involving refugee children in research: emerging ethical and positioning issues* (Gaywood et al, 2020).

The seventh chapter introduces the research findings in which the children's artefacts are analysed. Further findings are described thematically using John Donne's poem: *No Man is an Island* employing two broad themes of Islands and Bridges.

The following chapter, Chapter 8, contains a discussion of the findings and draws on the literature review and the theoretical approach. Themes of power, emotion, intersectionality, movement, invisibility, relationships, and positionality will be re-visited. Each of the research questions will be answered in turn. One of my major contributions to knowledge is included in this chapter: the Pedagogy of Welcome, as

it answers the third research question: *What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy?*

Chapter 9, the final chapter of the thesis outlines my original contributions to knowledge in terms of my theoretical, methodological, ethical and pedagogical findings. The strengths and limitations of the study are discussed. Final reflections about my own personal journey as a researcher and the transformational nature of the research are made. Recommendations for future research and possible opportunities for dissemination of the thesis are considered and the chapter concludes with final thoughts.

Chapter 2: Context

2.1 Introduction

The aim of the context chapter is to introduce the children, as the main actors in the research, and set their lives in a context. I have used Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model as a frame to do this which suggests that a child's development is affected by the people and environments around them. It does not feature in the theoretical triad (Chapter 4) however, the theory has been useful to understand some of the complex interactions between the different elements surrounding a child. The model is concerned with the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems of a child's world. It has been used successfully by McIntyre and Hall (2020) investigating barriers to inclusion of refugee children in English schools and Kreitzer et al (2022) working in a community-based project with Rwandese genocide survivors in Canada. They highlighted the importance that professionals,

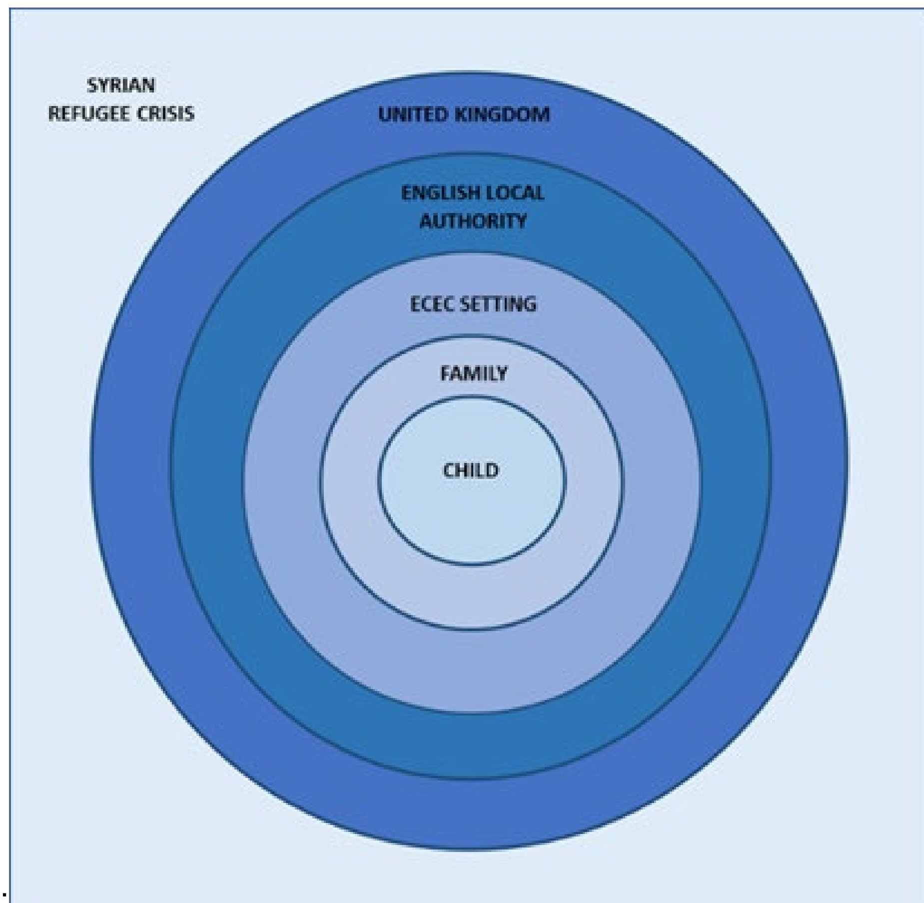
> *understand the complex and multiple factors that impact them. It also requires rich understanding of the ways that individuals are in a dynamic, interdependent relationship with their environment, particularly those aspects that are part of their regular daily life including families, workplaces, and local communities*. (Kreitzer et al, 2022).

In research carried out in Israel with migrant parents and children, (Roer-Strier, 1998) Bronfenbrenner's model (1979) also proved useful when, "*organising the multiplicity of variables influencing the child and family*" (Roer-Strier, 1998:74). The intention is to build on Roer-Strier's work and use two adapted models (Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7. Application of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to the children's context

Microsystem	**Family**
Mesosystem	**Early Childhood Education and Care setting**
Exosystem	**The local authority**
Macrosystem	**Living in the United Kingdom and the impact of policy making**
Chronosystem	**The war in Syria**

Figure 8. Adapted model representing the children's contexts



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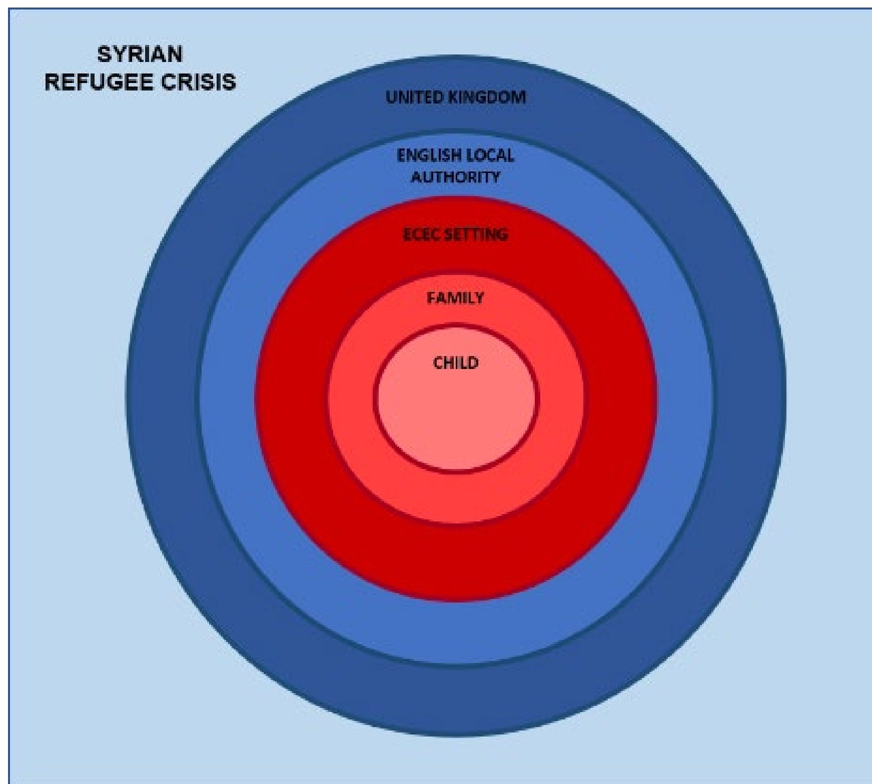
When presenting and examining the children's contexts, the decision was taken to start first with introducing the children and then work outwards from the centre of Brofenbrenner's (1979) model, rather than begin by discussing the wider context. This was a conscious decision. During the whole research process, it has been a significant challenge to retain focus on the children themselves and their stories, and not to become distracted by the adult secondary and tertiary actors in the piece. For although each person's story is valid, the aim of this study has always been to accurately represent the young children's life experiences. Issues of power, voice and emotion continue to resonate and the intention within this chapter is to ensure that the children's voices, found in their stories, are represented well and clearly heard. Therefore, each individual child, their family and their ECEC setting with be introduced in turn, in accordance with this aim, and to consciously hold the reader's attention on the children.

2.2 Chapter structure

This chapter will firstly **introduce the children and their micro and meso- systems**. Secondly the **local authority in which the children live: their exo-system** will be explained. The third section within this chapter describes **Living within the United Kingdom: the children's macro-system.** A context timeline has been included with a brief outline of the everchanging direction of government policy making. In this section three policy drivers: humanitarian, security and economic concerns have been identified and are discussed. Finally, **the war in Syria: the children's chronosystem** is introduced briefly and its impact on the children and their families' daily lives is explored. Illustrative anecdotes are used throughout the chapter to add detail and explore the children's context in more depth.

2.3 Introducing the children and their micro-system and meso-systems.

Figure 9. Diagram showing the children, their micro and meso-systems



When considering the micro and meso-systems the children inhabit, it is important to note that all the children are different. They live in different contexts and family situations. They attend different ECEC settings and are being introduced separately to remediate the effects of essentialisation which can creep into discussions about refugees.

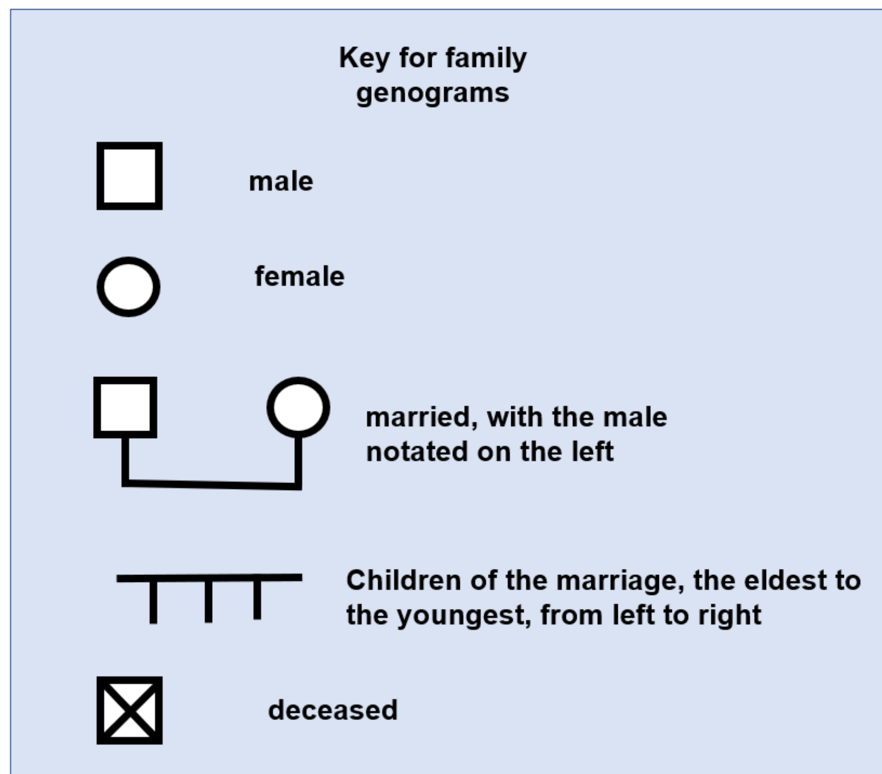
Ahmed Amira Hassan Karam

(Lippiatt 2019)

The four children who are the primary research participants have all been assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity as have their parents and the ECEC settings they attended. As part of the fieldwork, a graphic artist (Lippiatt 2019) created images of each child based on their character and physical presentation as I described them. All the children approved the images of themselves during the member checking phase, in the second part of the fieldwork. The images used in this section have been included to assist the reader and to remain true to the visual nature of this research.

I have chosen to use simple genograms as a visual way to represent each child's family situation, locating them clearly. The genograms are visually accessible for the reader and were used widely within the Early Help service and social care, where I was working during the fieldwork phase of this study. Below is a key to assist the reader.

Figure 10. Key for family genograms



The introductions are brief vignettes, and more will be learned about each child and their experiences in subsequent chapters. In the following vignettes which describe each of the children and their personal context, the information included has been gathered as part of the fieldwork. There may lack a consistency of detail regarding the lives of each child, this is because the parents provided much of the personal data, and they chose what to tell and what to keep private. This was all shared voluntarily and, based on the guidance offered by one of the early cultural guides, the parents were not pressed or questioned further (Chapter 6).

All the settings involved were known to me to a greater or lesser degree, through my work as the Children Centre teacher. During the first fieldwork phase of this study, January-August 2018, Ahmed, Amira, and Hassan were between 3 and 4 years old and attending nurseries or a pre-school. Each transitioned to Reception classes in September 2018. Karam was in a Reception class in an Infant school during this period.

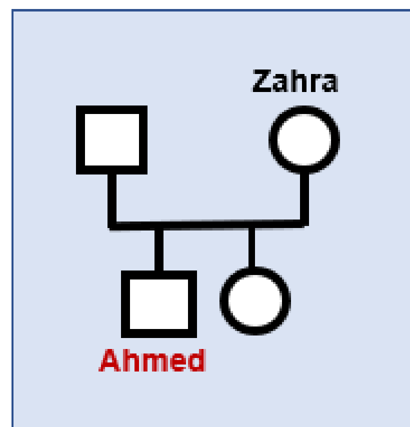
2.3.1 Ahmed:

(Lippiatt 2019)

Ahmed is deaf and had been fitted with cochlear implants before coming to Dog Lane Nursery. His language in both Arabic and English was slow to develop. He was receiving support from the teacher of the deaf, weekly visits from a specialist Early Years practitioner and was also funded by the local authority's Inclusion Support Fund which enabled him to have one-to-one support for most of his time at Dog Lane Nursery.

2.3.1.1 Ahmed's family

Figure 11. Genogram of Ahmed's family



Ahmed has a younger sister who was born in England. Both his parents worked professionally, in Syria. His father was a hospital doctor, and during the fieldwork

phase, was working hard to master English so that he could do a conversion course to begin to practice again. Ahmed's mother, Zahra, is an archaeologist. She was volunteering at a local historic site. Zahra did not want me to use an interpreter, either with her or with Ahmed, so during the home visits, his mother interpreted my questions for him. During the first phase of the fieldwork, the family lived in a flat which was damp and was situated within an area identified as having high levels of poverty, a bus ride outside of the town. At the end of 2018, Ahmed and his family were re-housed in a newly built complex nearby.

2.3.1.2 Dog Lane Children Centre Nursery

Ahmed had moved into the study local authority from a neighbouring local authority which is predominately rural. His parents said that they preferred a more urban place to live, and Ahmed's aunt later spoke of Islamophobic incidents prior to the move. She did not cite these as the reasons for the family's move, but there was a suggestion that they influenced the decision. Ahmed had attended a previous ECEC setting but for the duration of the first phase of field work, was attending Dog Lane Children Centre nursery which was funded and run by the local authority. The nursery was due to close at the end of July 2018 and all the staff made redundant as part of cuts to public services in response to the central government's wider austerity agenda. As the closure date approached, Ahmed's sessions at the nursery were changed, in response to reducing staff and children. The impact of this for Ahmed, will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7 and the situation explained in more depth in Chapter 5. I was managing this closure whilst supporting the staff and manager of the setting on a day-to-day basis. The ethical complexity involved will be clarified in Chapter 6.

The staff team at Dog Lane Nursery, were a mature group of women who had extensive experience of supporting children who were encountering significant life challenges. Although in the local authority there was an acknowledged deficit of experience in ECEC of supporting minoritized children and those who are bilingual, Dog Lane had one of the higher rates of children from these backgrounds within the county. In addition, many of the children attending the setting had Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and a higher than average proportion had experienced early trauma, often as a result of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Felliti et al, 1998). There was one other refugee family at the setting.

2.3.2 Amira:

(Lippiatt 2019)

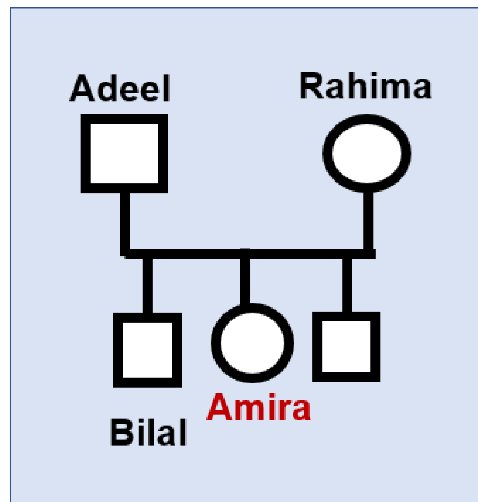
Amira was introduced to me by her mum, Rahima, as being a shy girl. During my first visit to her family home, which was without an interpreter, Amira and I had an unfortunate misunderstanding about her hair.

> "*Rahima (mum) pointed out to me Amira's beautiful hair. I agreed and I said that she was lucky to have such beautiful hair. Amira thought I said "Yucky" and was offended. Rahima, Adeel (dad) and I all laughed quite a bit. Amira did not laugh. I then asked Rahima to make sure that Amira understood that I thought her hair was beautiful, not yucky. Amira nodded*" (Fieldnotes. 19.1.18)

My relationship with Amira continued to be complex throughout the fieldwork. At times, she tended to be reticent with me both at home and in her ECEC setting but occasionally open and warm. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

2.3.2.1 Amira's family

Figure 12. Genogram of Amira's family



Amira has two brothers, one older and a younger brother who was born in England. Bilal, Amira's older brother is deaf, and at the start of the fieldwork was struggling to communicate in either English or Arabic. Amira was the first person in her family who was able to communicate with him, through sign language. He was attending a specialist deaf unit which is attached to one of the primary schools in the local authority. Adeel, Amira's dad had a nut selling business in Syria and very soon after his arrival in England, began working for one of the fruit markets in the town centre. Rahima married at fifteen and very quickly had her children. She was attending English language classes and by the end of the fieldwork, had also begun to speak sign language with her oldest son. Rahima was cautious to become involved in the research project and asked for me to visit the family home, after the initial presentation and recruitment event, before agreeing to join. She did not want Amira to be singled out within her ECEC to be part of the project but was happy for me to visit her at home and in the setting. During the home visits, Rahima was also keen to talk to me about her life in England and in Syria. She hosted the final feedback member checking session with the other mothers. Amira and her family lived in a newly built flat near the town centre.

2.3.2.2 St Swithin's Pre-school

St Swithin's is a sessional pack away ECEC setting which is committee run and is based in a local church hall. The staff are older women who have years of general experience. The leader is very committed and passionate about her role as an Early Years professional. Although small, the setting access support from the local authority regularly and has a good reputation with the Special Education Needs and Disabilities Inclusion team. St Swithin's was well known to me, as I had worked with them professionally as the Children Centre teacher. The leader was very keen to be involved in the research project as she wanted to feel more confident supporting Amira who was the only refugee child in the setting, although there was one other child who did not speak English as a first language.

2.3.3 Hassan:

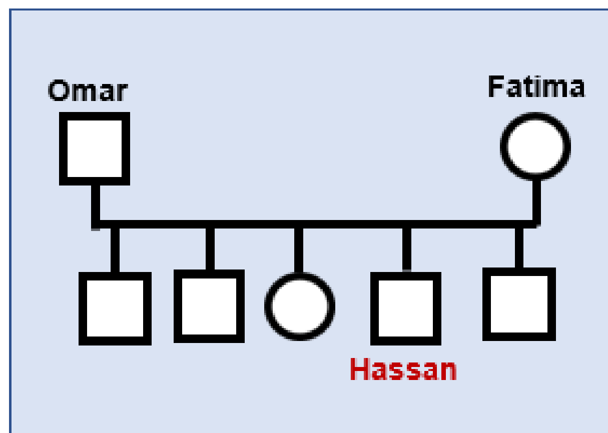
(Lippiatt 2019)

Hassan was the fourth child in a five-child family. Hassan seemed very isolated at nursery and there was a lot of concern about him. He was reluctant to speak either in Arabic or English and there were times during the home visits that he demonstrated potentially traumatised behaviour. However, it became clear very quickly that Hassan loved the outdoors, and he enjoyed looking at pictures of my dog. Although his speech and language development were delayed and he often chose not to speak, Hassan was able to make his meaning known to me, so we managed to build a positive

relationship quite quickly. At the time of writing, I remain involved with Hassan in my professional capacity as Children Centre teacher.

2.3.3.1 Hassan's family

Figure 13. Genogram of Hassan's family



Hassan has two older brothers and an older sister. His younger brother had been born in England. By the end of the study, Hassan also had a younger sister. The family were Bedouin and had been farmers in Syria. Amongst the study participants they were the most traditional. Neither Hassan's mother, Fatima, nor his father, Omar, could read or write, although Fatima had taught herself rudimentary Arabic whilst they were in a refugee camp. They were both clear that they wanted their children to attend school. Omar particularly wanted them to have the opportunities which he had not had, in terms of learning. Omar openly shared about his experiences during the war in Syria and spoke about the atrocities carried out by ISIS, that he and his eldest son had witnessed. Both had been negatively affected. The oldest son was being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder and Omar was open about the impact on his mental health. Omar was keen to talk about his life in Syria and his life in England during the home visits. He often spoke about his farm, and how he missed the outdoors and freedom. He talked about a time when he had worked in a café, in England, but was unable to sustain this due to his ongoing mental health difficulties. Omar wanted Hassan to be involved in the project as he felt it would benefit his son. Both Omar and Fatima were extremely worried about Hassan who was exhibiting very dysregulated behaviour at home. At the start of the project the family had been housed in a

predominately white working-class estate, which has high levels of poverty and is slightly outside the city centre. During the project, the family were moved to a larger house within the same area.

2.3.3.2 Croft's End Nursery school

Croft End Nursery and Infant school is situated close to Hassan's home. It is one of the last maintained schools in the local authority. Most of the children in both the nursery and the infant school are from a white working-class background and both the school and nursery have a vast amount of experience supporting children and their families who are facing significant life challenges whose lives may be affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Felliti et al, 1998). Hassan had attended the two-year unit within the nursery before moving into the pre-school. The nursery teacher had been qualified less than five years in nursery and tended to adopt a more formalised pedagogy. The class was supported by several teaching assistants who had more experience. There were no other children within the nursery who were bilingual.

2.3.4 Karam

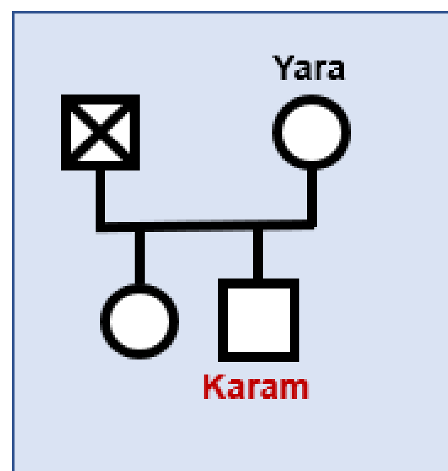
(Lippiatt 2019)

Karam is the oldest child involved in this study and he was in a reception class during the first phase of the fieldwork. Karam's actual age is unclear. He told me, during one visit to his school, that he was seven. When I asked Karam's mother, Yara, she confirmed that his father had changed the date when he registered Karam's birth, but told me that he was six, nearly seven. The school seemed unaware of this anomaly. Karam was fluent when speaking both English and Arabic and could switch between

the two naturally according to whom he was speaking. (Fieldnotes: 19.4.18). Karam loved being at school and was keen to work hard. He was friends with another refugee boy but also had English friends, both in school and in his neighbourhood. He is the cousin of Ahmed, and also moved into the local authority from a neighbouring more rural county.

2.3.4.1 Karam's family

Figure 14. Genogram of Karam's family



Karam's father had been a surgeon in Syria. He had died of a brain tumour, when the family were refugees, before being re-settled in Britain. Karam found it extremely difficult to talk about his father's death, and at school talked as if his father was still alive. Although Karam was achieving well in school, Yara, told me that when Karam had attended a nursery in the previous local authority, he had been demonstrating dysregulated and aggressive behaviour. As a result, he had a person to support him on a 1-1 ratio. She explained that Karam had developed a strong bond with this person but unfortunately, she also suddenly died. Yara was worried about Karam because of his significant experiences of bereavement. She noticed that when he was at home, he tended to be quiet and often cried. She said that the other Syrian families thought that Karam was a '*bit of a baby'* and the expectation was that he should be a '*man*' (Fieldnotes: 7.8.18). Yara found this upsetting. Karam had an older sister who was in secondary school. At the time, she was struggling with anxiety and was receiving extra support from the school and was hoping to access further support from an outside agency, specialising in trauma recovery. Karam's grandmother was a frequent visitor

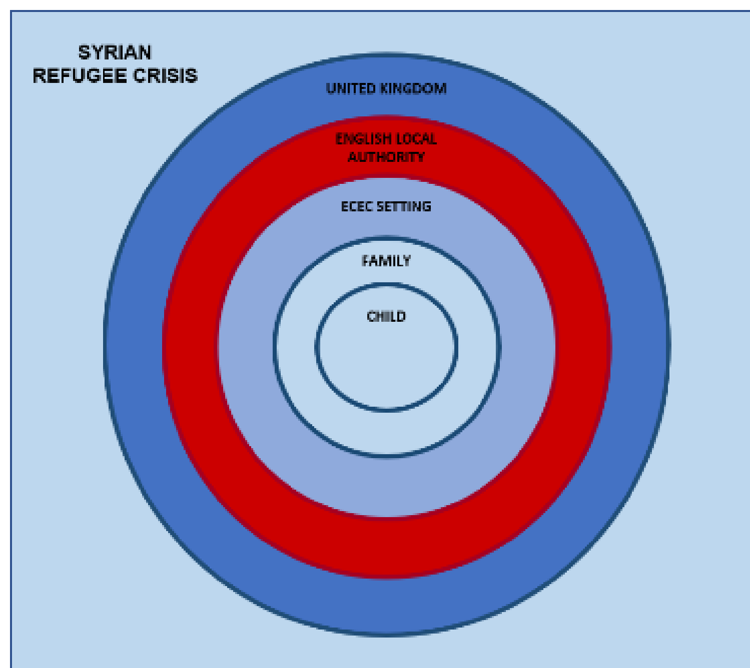
to the household to help as Yara had ongoing medical issues, which required hospital treatment. Yara spoke about one of Karam's uncles in Syria who had been conscripted into Assad's army. This caused Yara and her mother huge ongoing anxiety.

2.3.4.2 Croft's End Infant school

Karam attends the same school as Hassan and was taught by the Foundation Stage Leader alongside another class teacher. They were supported by numerous teaching assistants, who for the most part lived in the surrounding area. The infant school has accommodated several refugee children who arrived in the local authority, so the school had developed policies and procedures to support them. Alongside the policies is a positive welcoming ethos which may have developed because of the nature of the senior management team. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator at the school is of British- Egyptian-Islamic heritage and the headteacher's grandfather was a forced migrant.

2.4 The local authority in which the children live: their exo -system.

Figure 15. Diagram showing the children's exo-system



The children live within a local authority in the West of England. This makes up their exo-system and was my own professional working context as the practitioner researcher. As a place to live and work, it is unique. The unique characteristics of the

area form part of the wider context the children live in and undoubtedly will impact their lived experiences and is therefore important to consider within this chapter. The study local authority is largely rural and is centred around a historic city, with areas of urban development. Most of the residents are white British and are moderate to high income earners. In the more affluent areas, house prices are equivalent to those in London. There are areas of poverty with higher rates of deprivation, but these are situated in small pockets across the local authority and are largely hidden from the wider population.

The local authority took part in the SVPR scheme and during the first phase resettled five families, (twenty-five people in total), welcoming the last of these families in March 2016. The first phase was administered directly by the council. In July 2017, the council commissioned two local charities who continued to resettle refugees. The commissioned service supported sixty-seven people in total (18 families). One of the commissioned charities was already delivering services to homeless people and offering refuge support for women and children who were leaving domestically abusive situations. The other charity, *Welcoming Refugees,* (pseudonym) was established quickly as a direct response to the refugee crisis. It grew and has rapidly become well known and trusted within the local authority.

The resettlement process, within the local authority, was not without its difficulties. An incident at one of the Children Centre team meetings, where I had been asked to lead a reflective discussion with the team, highlighted some of the tensions at play within the children's exo-system.

> *One of the families was experiencing difficult behaviour from some of the other Syrian families at the school pick up. A social work student who was on placement began to talk about a "caste" system which was in operation amongst the Syrian community. The way she was talking felt very 'Othering.' It was as if she believed <u>their</u> 'caste' system was so different from what is experienced in the UK. I tried to encourage her to see that there is an English class system which potentially operates in a very subtle way, but she could not see it.* (Reflective Journal: 15.3.17)

One member of staff seemed unable to consider challenges of working with the Syrian families, beyond a '*language barrier*' whilst I sensed another held romanticised notions of '*helping refugees.'* Eventually the conversation moved to the need for all humans to feel accepted, but it never developed further. There were two members of staff who were noticeably quiet during most of the discussion, only speaking to talk about the classist prejudice and stereotyping they have experienced living in the same area as Croft End Nursery and Infant school. The area is a long-established white working-class estate which has a reputation for criminal activity, social disadvantage, and high levels of poverty, within the local authority.

> *Later, I decided to ask them about their silence in the discussion on Wednesday. They were both incredibly open and told me that within the area, they know of quite a bit of ill feeling from people who want to know why the Syrian families have arrived and jumped the housing waiting list. Both could understand the feelings of the residents but hadn't wanted to say anything in the discussion.* (Reflective Journal: 17.3.17)

This small incident seemed to highlight different narratives surrounding refugee resettlement in the local authority. Whilst there was a ground swell of good will and empathy for the Syrian families, which resulted in the establishment of *Welcoming Refugees,* and the local authority signing up for the SVPR scheme, there were also other stories. Not only were there tensions within the small Syrian community, but also racial tensions amongst local white working-class residents. This created an uncomfortable atmosphere. On one hand there were groups of residents who wanted to help the families, whilst others perceived their presence as a threat. How refugees are conceptualised by host citizens is an ongoing feature in this thesis, which will be revisited. These types of incidents fed into the construction of the theoretical frame, prompting the inclusion of Said's work on Orientalism (1978). Said suggested that historically European responses to non- Europeans have been rooted in a set of assumptions about them. He comments,

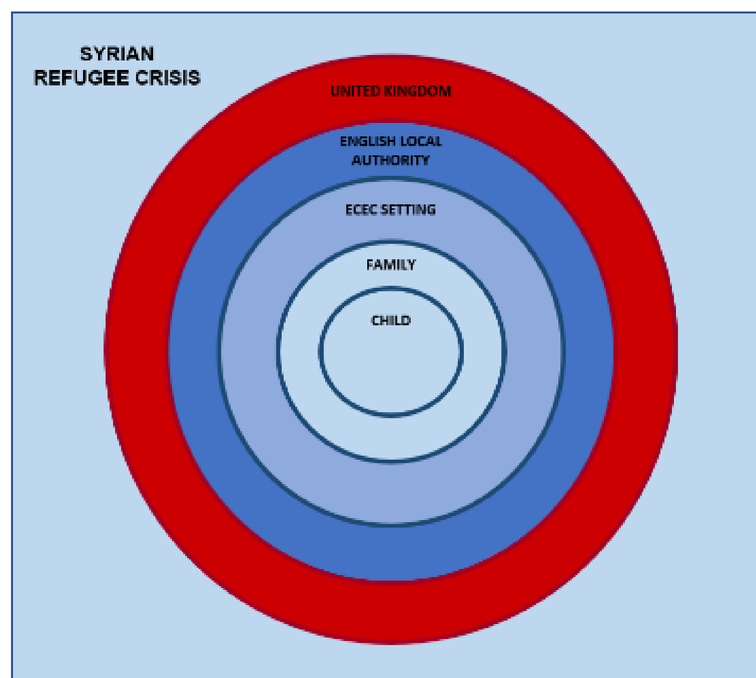
> *Orient idioms became frequent, and these idioms took firm hold in European discourse. Beneath the idioms was a layer of doctrine about the Orient; this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them*

converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like (Said, 1978:203).

It is not clear precisely what prompted the differing responses to the Syrian refugees described, but Said's work has offered a lens to consider the dynamics and is discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

2.5 Living in the United Kingdom: the children's macrosystem.

Figure 16. Diagram showing the children's macrosystem

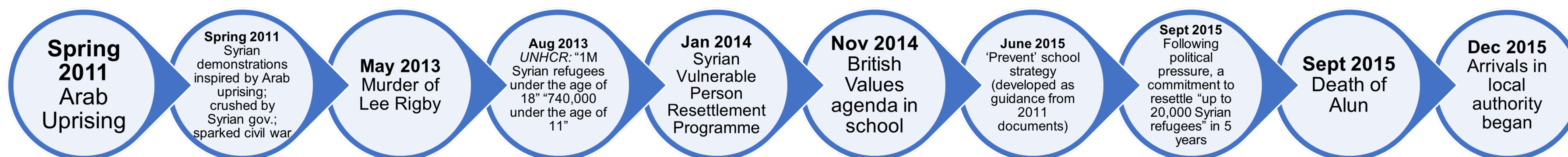


The children arrived as refugees in the United Kingdom, which is their macro-system. Sigona (2014) makes the argument that to accurately represent refugee stories, it is necessary to place them within a clear political context therefore this section examines recent policies of the British government. I begin with a brief description of relevant policy from the New Labour government (1997-2010) until present day. Then I consider policies changes within the early years sector, of most relevance to the children in the study. The aim of the policy section is to interrogate the policies adopted and consider the impact of the wider policies, on the children's lives and contexts. I recognise that this is potentially problematic as policies are created by governments based on their own world view, which is what drives political thought,

leanings, and beliefs. Each individual citizen will hold values or have experiences which shape their worldview, and, in a democracy, these differing opinions, are considered a right. The readers of this thesis and me as researcher are no different. Rather than try to deny or supress my own beliefs and values, I have decided to take a more honest approach, acknowledging my positionality and voice within the policy critique.

Government policies concerning refugees have shifted over time, providing a changing landscape, with each change impacting the everyday lives of refugees living in England, so it is important to consider these when setting out the context of the lives of the children in this study. I have created a contextual timeline (Figure 17) of national and international events which highlights some incidents which I deemed relevant to this study, and may have influenced the shifts in economic, foreign policy and policy regarding refugee, migration and asylum seekers. Each part included has been selected to help orientate the reader and assist during the subsequent discussion about policy.

Figure 17. Context timeline



2.5.1 The shifting direction of governmental policy making

Mayblin (2017), Taylor et al (2016) and Stewart and Mulvey (2014) agree that the current direction of policy making around refugees and asylum seekers can be traced back to the New Labour government of Tony Blair (1997-2007) which "*introduced more pieces of legislation on the topic of asylum than any other in history, while simultaneously seeking to distance itself from the 1951 Convention.*" (Mayblin, 2017:18). In the last ten years, there have been four successive Conservative-majority governments with each administration pursuing slightly different agendas, possibly in response to national and international events, but also due to shifts in foreign policy. In broad terms the Conservative coalition government (2010-2015) pursued policies of austerity and the development of a Big Society, aimed at reducing the national deficit and encouraging more 'responsibility' within the general populous (Cameron, 2011). Cameron (2015-2016) asked the British public to vote about remaining or leaving the European Union (EU) (23.6.2016) which meant May's government (2016-2019) was dominated by the Brexit agenda, following the decision of the British people to leave the EU. The current government (2019-date) have negotiated British withdrawal from the EU and planned to introduce a points-based immigration system (Home Office 2020) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The present Home Secretary, Patel, has recently introduced the Nationality and Borders Bill (Home Office, 2022b) which had made it illegal for asylum seekers to enter Britain without a visa and opens the possibility of prosecution for anyone rescuing asylum seekers from British waters. The introduction of a Memorandum of Understanding (Home Office, 2022c) between the British government and the Rwandan government has made it possible for people who have claimed asylum in the United Kingdom to be relocated to Rwanda to proceed with their asylum claim there. Off set against this policy is the recent governmental response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine which has seen 4.8 million refugees moving across Europe according to the UNHCR. Numbers of Ukrainians eligible for resettlement in Britain are uncapped and 3 routes are being offered: the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and the Ukraine Extension Scheme.

2.5.2 Policy within early childhood education and care

In comparison to government policy concerning refugees, policy within the ECEC has been fairly static. There has been no explicit mention of refugees nor any formal published guidance on how to support refugee children. However, in the wake of the war in Syria (see Figure 17) the Coalition government (2010-15) introduced the requirement for early educators to introduce British Values (Department for Education, 2014), into their work with young children. This was possibly to ensure that values relating to being British were openly and explicitly included. The inference being that children needed to develop a sense of British identity. These values include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance for those of different faiths or beliefs. Then in 2015, it became a safeguarding obligation to undertake The Prevent Duty (Department for Education, 2015) where early educators were expected be able to identify children who were "*vulnerable to radicalisation*" (Department for Education, 2015:5). Although the suggestion for early educators was to incorporate both requirements within areas of learning covered by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Personal, Social and Emotional development and Understanding of the World, it seemed that the government had, "*imposed a political agenda of securitisation onto practitioners"* (Robson, 2019: 97). A review of the EYFS in 2021 changed little, although an affirmative mention was made of bilingualism in the updated non- statutory guidance Development Matters which comments, "*Speaking more than one language has lots of advantages for children"* (Department for Education, 2021a: 22). This reference inadvertently speaks to a young refugee child's experience, as very young refugee children often arrive unable to speak English, so will become bi- or multilingual. More explicit mention of refugees and asylum seekers is made in Birth to 5 Matters (Early Education, 2021), another non-statutory guidance, which encourages practitioners to consider refugee children's protected characteristics, to think about the differences between equity, equality and how to include refugee children and their families.

2.5.3 Policy drivers

When considering the direction of policy making or guidance regarding refugees, it seems that it has often been sandwiched alongside migration, either forced or economic, where "*the terms "refugee," "asylum seeker," and "migrant" have been*

allowed to merge in public discourse into a single category of disapproval and disavowal." (Taylor et al, 2016:1). Mayblin (2017) describes this discourse which appears to have influenced policy making, as a post -colonial issue. Bennett (2018) suggests that the public discourse about citizenship and becoming British has also been influenced by neo-liberal politics and traces how the notion of the Other has infiltrated British public discourse (Bennett, 2018: 25).

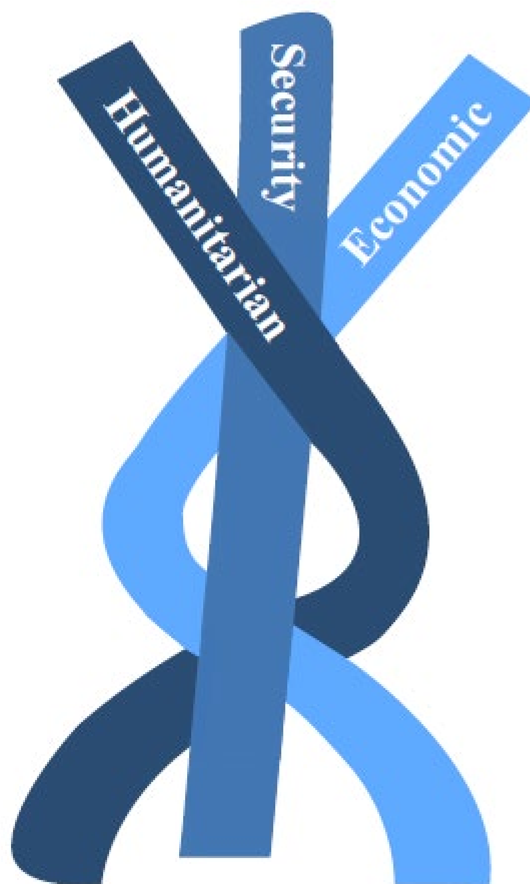
Mavelli (2017) has interrogated the policy making of the British and German governments from a humanitarian perspective. He concludes that there is a potential conflict between the securitised policies and the attempt at a humanitarian approach, suggesting that racism impacts policy direction. In his subsequent work, Mavelli (2018) considers the impact of neo liberal policies on citizenship. He suggests that citizenship has been defined in terms of the economic value each refugee can bring in terms of,

> *an individual's, or a group's, capacity to contribute to the country's financial viability, economic competitiveness, international reputation, moral standing and self-understanding, and emotional well-being.* (Mavelli 2018: 482/3)

The net consequence of this has been that certain refugees are framed as more deserving and therefore welcomed differently.

I was struck by Mavelli's work, because he identified unseen political drivers which appear to play a significant role in policy making which would inevitably influence the lives of both asylum seekers and refugees. So, when considering the children's macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) it seemed important to build on Mavelli's (2017; 2018) work and consider these policy drivers to determine how each has resonated throughout this study, impacting the lived experiences of the children. Mavelli (2017) identified humanitarian government of refugees and the role of securitisation within policy making. He also discussed the application of neo-liberal economics (Mavelli, 2018). I have built on his work and used these three overarching drivers, humanitarian, security and economic to consider their influence in the lives of the children in this study. I have represented these drivers as a three-stranded braid, interwoven and difficult to separate. (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Three stranded braid representing policy drivers



Each of the strands will be discussed in turn and several incidents from the field will be used as illustrative anecdotes. The three-strand braid image not only provides a framework to consider some of the drivers found in governmental policy making regarding refugees but also offers a means to discuss some of the complex issues involved in this study, enabling a wider discussion about attitudes towards refugees which resonate through the whole. Also included within the appropriate strands, will be an outline of various personal and professional motivations which have informed the study.

2.5.3.1 The humanitarian strand.

The humanitarian thread is concerned with the human-felt response to exceedingly difficult situations which has acted as a driver for policy. In the introduction chapter, the issue of emotion was discussed. The humanitarian thread in the braid, offers an

opportunity to consider the wider perspective of emotion, in the government responses to the Syrian refugee crisis. Soylu Yalcinkaya et al (2018) discuss the positive impact of an emotional response to refugees in policy,

> *Another possible mechanism for the proposed relationship between exposure to child refugees and policy support is through emotions. Exposure to the suffering of young children may evoke strong emotions among observers…..If exposure to child refugees evokes strong emotions such as empathy, this may play a positive role in policy support*. Soylu Yalcinkaya et al (2018)

The SVRP scheme, as the primary policy within this study, is clearly positioned within this strand of the three-strand braid, as it came into existence because of deep concern felt across the country and expressed in parliament. The scheme was introduced by David Cameron as a response to the unfolding civil war in Syria and the aim was to work in partnership with United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to resettle 20,000 Syrian people, which became known as the UK 2020 Plan for Syrian refugees (Farani et al, 2017). Between March 2014 and June 2015, 216 refugees were resettled with prioritisation given to those who met the scheme's criteria. In September 2015 Richard Harrington was appointed by Cameron as the Home office minister responsible for Syrian refugees but he only held the post for one year until the post was terminated by the following British Government administration, led by Theresa May, which seemed to be following slightly different policy priorities. In an editorial for the British Medical Journal, Taylor et al (2016) expressed concern for refugees who were children and was highly critical of this change in approach. They suggested *"more broadly, a more compassionate discourse around children and refugees is warranted*" (Taylor et al 2016, 1)

The scheme has evolved over time. In July 2017, the scope was expanded to include other nationalities who had fled from Syria. Wilkins (2020) outlines the changes over the five years of the scheme. The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme became known as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme (Syria) (VPRS) and in Spring 2020 the VPRS, the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme, the Gateway scheme and the community sponsorship scheme were merged and re-named the Global Resettlement scheme. It is unclear why these schemes have been merged but the focus remained the same,

The scheme will continue to focus on refugees "greatest in need of assistance, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk." It will have an expanded geographical focus beyond the Middle East and North Africa (Wilkins, 2020: 3/4)

For Ahmed, Amira, Karam and Hassan, the benefits of arriving in England as part of a resettlement scheme are important. Their nuclear families remained intact, and even though Karam father had died, Karam was still in close contact with his uncle, his mother's brother, who offered the family support and protection. For all the children, their refugee status was assessed by UNHCR prior to travelling to the UK and was granted which meant that the families did not have to prove their status and were spared the unenviable task of re-living their pre-migration experiences to British officials. Each family arrived with the offer of secure housing and although both Karam and Ahmed's family re-located to the local authority, the stress endured by many refugees of continuous movement and insecure housing, was significantly reduced. As the involvement of the local authority was voluntary, the arrival and welcome of the children and their families was planned so they received financial assistance and were given support workers, from the outset, to help navigate a new system. The children's parents were also given the right to work where possible and the adults were expected to attend language classes. Most of the families arrived together and remained in close contact with each other, with the local authority providing opportunities for them to meet regularly. This provided them with ongoing community support.

The role of emotion is a recurring theme when considering policy making regarding refugees. In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. The world watched as millions of people fled for their lives into bordering countries. Again, there has been an outpouring of emotion for the people, in particular the children, with "*around 150,000 individuals and organisations to register to house Ukrainians"* (Wright, 2022). However, within the same time frame, The Nationalities and Borders Bill, has made the asylum-seeking process more complicated, requiring visas prior to entry and the criminalisation of certain routes to the United Kingdom. An interesting dichotomy appears to be at play. The strong emotional response from people living in Britain which has prompted so many to offer welcome in their homes, contrasted to a government who is attempting to introduce increasingly restrictive and punitive

legislation which undoubtedly impact future refugees and asylum seekers. Mavelli (2017) argues that a broad humanitarian response to refugees can be used by government, "*as a way of promoting a self-understanding of Britain as just, moral and compassionate, and therefore, as a biopolitical way of promoting and enhancing the emotional life of its population*" (Mavelli 2017:811). This notion of how a humanitarian response to refugees impacts the host nations self-identity is one which resonates through the thesis, and links with ideas of positionality. It was an emergent theme within the literature and is discussed further in Chapter 4.

2.5.3.2 Security response

The schemes described in the previous section have a very specific aim which is to re-settle already confirmed refugees, working alongside the UNHCR. There was a specified number of people who were to be resettled on these government initiatives. However, Britain's attitude to asylum seekers differs slightly with Theresa May being seen as the architect of shifting the narrative to a more securitised response. This security driver forms the second thread in the three stranded cord. May was criticized for the introduction of a "*compassion quota*" when she was Home Secretary (Webber, 2016: 55) and Farani et al (2017) describe the tension between a humanitarian response and issues of foreign policy. Adopting a securitised approach to policy, regarding refugees, migrants and asylum seekers has far reaching consequences. The context timeline (Figure 17) suggests a securitised influence was in operation prior to May's tenure as Prime Minister, with the introduction of the British Values into the curriculum for all children, including in Early Years and also the Prevent strategy with the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 (Webber, 2016:60). Bennett (2018) suggests that when citizenship is prioritised as a means of being able to identify who belongs and who does not, it would be a natural next step to begin to define what makes a person British, therefore the introduction and promotion of British Values within the education system is no surprise and indicates the shift in thinking from humanitarian concerns to a protective securitised vision of the world.

Lazaridis and Wadia (2015) trace a growing securitisation in governmental approaches to policy because of the 9/11 attacks in New York and suggest that a narrative was needed to frame this. "*Thus, emerge dichotomies between "natives" and "newcomers" as well as new forms of identities and distinctions between "them" and*

"us" (Lazaridis and Wadia, 2015:2). They describe how discussions about borders and threat, merge into a polarised position of "*insiders and outsiders*" (Lazaridis and Wadia, 2015:3). The impact of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers being described in these terms is significant. Taylor et al (2016) suggest that *"the impression given is that the UK is experiencing a sustained surge of claimants."* (Taylor et al, 2016:1). This feeling of being overwhelmed by refugees can lead to a fear-based response which Baum (2016) describes as "'*mixaphobia: fear of the unmanageable volume of the unknown*" (Baum, 2016:9). Mayblin (2017) suggests that this need to categorise people, as those who belong and those who do not, while ostensibly from a security perspective, can also be explained from a post-colonial perspective and is rooted in racism. These ideas of insider ~ outsider and us ~ them echo throughout this study and it is clear the impact of a securitised response in policy making sets up a narrative about refugees where they are perceived as a threat, and easily translates into concepts of the Other. I have attempted to address this through the theoretical frame I have developed in Chapter 3. These issues have continued to resonate through Chapter 4, Chapter 7 and 8.

Whilst a securitised response in policy making appears to have had possibly unforeseen and uncomfortable consequences, it is important to note that the need for security and to feel safe is part of natural human experience. It is this which drives many refugees to leave their homes and is enshrined in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3 (United Nations 1948). Feeling safe was also clearly an issue in the children's lived experiences within their meso-system. Hassan did not talk in his ECEC setting, and only spoke or engaged with others when he felt safe enough to do so (Fieldnotes: 31.1.18). Karam exhibited impulsive tendencies which seemed linked to his anxiety about his mum when she was unwell, suggesting her illness left him feeling unsafe because of his previous experience of his father's illness and subsequent death (Fieldnotes 19.4.18). Whilst Ahmed's refusal to use any toilet other than his own at home, (Fieldnotes: 14.3.18) can also be understood as a stress response and the need to feel safe. A securitised policy focus highlights issues of belonging, offering legislation to make it clear who formally belongs, through citizenship. This status allows refugees to enjoy the benefits of belonging and offers legal protection and safety.

However, the findings of a paper written by students at the Danish school of security (Gaywood et al, 2015) which traced the trajectory of an Islamic State (IS) fighter are important because they suggest that a different approach may be needed, offering a deeper connection which goes beyond the legislative process. Gaywood et al (2015) found the only clear similarity which could link European born IS recruits who had carried out terrorist attacks, was a deep sense of "*conflicted habitus*." (Gaywood et al, 2015: 32) They noted that the perpetrators of violence, often had feelings of not belonging within their birth culture alongside a disconnect with their religious practices. The implication is that this disconnect could ultimately lead to the very acts which threaten a nation states security, and it was this notion, which first led me to think about how education could remediate such isolation for children, from an early age.

2.5.3.3 Economic drivers

The final strand in the three-stranded braid, is the economic concerns which appear to have driven recent governmental policy. In 2020 the government introduced a points-based immigration system after the UK left the European Union, with the sole intention of attracting highly skilled workers and to "*shift the focus of our economy away from a reliance on cheap labour*" (Home Office, 2020). Whilst this policy statement is related to immigration and it is made clear that,

> *The rules for family reunion, asylum and border crossing checks are outside of the points-based system. However, they will remain integral to the transformation of the UK's new immigration system programme* (Home Office 2020)

suggesting a shift in emphasis for asylum seekers and refugees. Due to the blurring of terms in the media, it seems that this narrative about the reduction of low skilled workers has somehow become entwined with ongoing narratives about refugees, positioning migrants, asylum seekers and refugees either stealing jobs or being a drain on the economy, unable to work and claiming benefits.

This narrative about refugees is not only found in the UK but seems characteristic of negative conceptualisations of refugees. Writing in the Australian context, McAdam and Chong (2019) suggest that "*the term 'economic migrant' tends to elicit a certain emotional response -a fear that people are coming to take our jobs and enjoy privileges*

that we have" (McAdam and Chong, 2019: 43). Within Germany, Hamann and Karakayali (2016) suggest that the ideas around Willkommenkultur, which was the German governmental response to the Syrian refugee crisis, were not new in German society but were introduced by employer organisations to recruit more foreign workers, to address workforce shortages and originally had its roots in an economic need. However, Fotaki (2019) notes a change in the German public response to refugees and migration,

> *the initial welcome, epitomised in German Chancellor Angela Merkel's statement "we can do it," was quickly replaced by rising hostility toward the refugees and would-be migrants"* and that both refugees and migrants were seen "*as threats to the economy and security* (Fotaki, 2019, 321).

Liebe et al (2018) suggest this shift in attitude was centred around housing allocation. Fotaki (2019) also notes that this negative attitude towards refugees, focussing on employment, has been replicated across Europe, specifically in Greece and Italy (Fotaki, 2019:322). Interestingly, he suggests that,

> *antimigration sentiments may be a form of anxiety displacement arising from the dislocation experienced by citizens of many developed European countries in economies with decreasing opportunities for meaningful employment and an increasingly privatised welfare state in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, this dislocation has been exacerbated by retrenchment of the welfare state following the neoliberal shift in public policy over the past few decades.* (Fotaki, 2019:322/3)

Piotrowski et al (2019) has applied a concept from games theory and explains about zero-sum thinking which leads people to believe that another person's gain is their loss, so when migrants, asylum seekers and refugees receive benefits, housing or employment, it is at the expense of the host country citizens. When conceptualised in this way, refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are increasingly seen as a threat to economic livelihoods. This resonated with the incident involving two Children Centre members of staff, as previously discussed, who explained to me about the negative feelings amongst the community towards the Syrian families because of the housing allocation. It clearly demonstrates how attitudes encapsulated within policy, which are

then reported on the wider stage, are echoed within this small-scale study, thus influencing the participant children's micro systems and their daily lived experiences. This suggests interconnectivity between national, international policy and very young refugee children's lives.

However, although the governmental rhetoric and policy direction appears to have conceptualised refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers so negatively, in terms of their contribution to the economy; within this study, a more complex picture has emerged. Article 23 of United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out a person's right to work, as fundamental (United Nations, 1948). During the fieldwork phase of this piece of research a critical incident occurred involving my own father, which gave me a further glimpse into the refugee experience. His parents left Austria in the wake of the rise of fascism, arrived in the United Kingdom and were subsequently naturalised, changing their own names and my father's, becoming British citizens. My grandfather and his brothers relocated their international fur trading business to London and my grandmother owned and ran a newsagent and tobacconist. The critical incident took place when a local refugee support charity had visited the assisted living village, where my mother and father now live. My father had been considering volunteering with the charity and so attended the presentation to find out more about the charity's work and any possible volunteering opportunities. I recorded the incident in my research journal.

> *Dad spoke to me today about an incident which happened during the presentation. Firstly, he told me how angry he got with one of the other residents. He said that she kept referring to the refugees as "them" and "they." He told me that he was so incensed that he had to speak. He said something along the lines "excuse me but "those" people were my parents" He was maddened by the idea that they were thought of as somehow different from the woman who was talking. Next, he told me about how mad he felt when the people from the charity were asking for donations to the project. He felt like they were asking for handouts for the refugee people. He said to me, "But they need to work, they need to find employment" I tried to explain that the organisation was probably seeing the residents as wealthy people who they could tap up for money. We talked about it and I said that I thought that Dad would have a lot to*

offer refugee people, as he understood the need to work and become economically independent, not relying on handouts. What was interesting was that his parents arrived in the UK before there was a welfare state and they worked to survive and they embodied this work ethic, sharing it with my dad. To be financially independent was important to them and is important to him now, so to work hard is a means of being independent. (Research Journal: 11.1.19)

Within the lives of the study children, working also featured as being important. Adeel, Amira's father, worked full time. During one visit when we were discussing how the family experience life in Britain, unlike his wife, Rahima, who had more negative experiences, Adeel spoke with great pride about his work, at the fruit market. He shared that his boss trusted him, above the other workers, and had given him a van to drive. For Adeel working not only provided him the means to be financially independent, but also appeared to give him a sense of pride and self-worth. Omar, Hassan's father was unable to work because of his significantly poor mental health but he often spoke about work and his longing to work on his farm. He talked about having worked when the family were in a refugee camp and Omar spoke about his desire to open a café eventually, serving Syrian coffee (Fieldnotes: 14.5.18). During the fieldwork phase, Ahmed's father was working hard to master English, so that he could practice in Britain as a doctor and Zahra, Ahmed's mother undertook voluntary work at a local historic site to remain in contact with her profession, archaeology. Karam's mother also volunteered briefly at his school, until she became unwell.

In their book examining the economic mobility of Syrian refugees, the World Bank (2020) suggest that

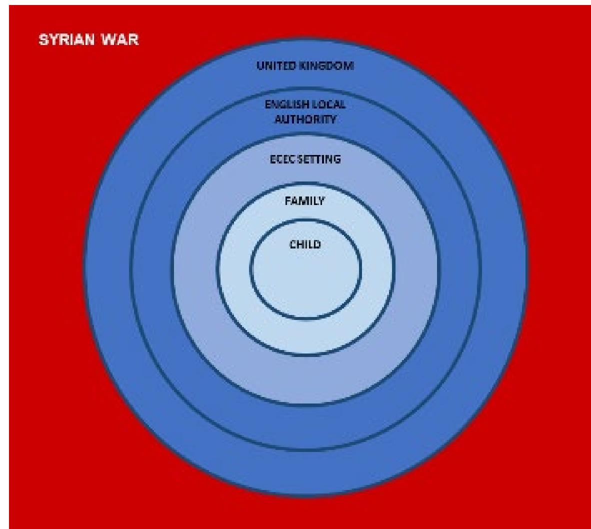
> *Taking refuge is not always a "win– win" situation (that is, with both better security and better economic opportunities) for Syrian refugees. On the contrary, access to security is often counterbalanced by a decrease in the quality of life. The security and quality of life trade-off often takes an intergenerational form: short-term security comes at the expense of lower human capital accumulation that will disproportionately affect Syrian children and youth going forward*. (World Bank, 2020:1).

This also was evident within my study. Ahmed's father's experiences seem to epitomize the findings of the World Bank. At the start of the study, he was studying hard to convert his medical qualifications so he could practice in the UK. During the time I was involved with Ahmed, he decided to train as an interpreter, and was offering informal interpretation to the local charity which had been commissioned to support refugee resettlement. Currently, he is working delivering pizza. His socio-economic status changed significantly. During the interview I conducted with Eduard, my relative, he raised a similar issue. He told me how his father and his friends had met refugees from Germany, in the Austrian coffee houses, before the invasion of Austria. They could not quite believe the stories that were being told. Eduard said that all the refugees were doctors, lawyers, teachers and from professional backgrounds, and as a result of this experience his father always encouraged Eduard and his sisters to take up practical skill-based jobs, because he felt they could never be taken away from them and were transferable whatever may happen (Fieldnotes: 29.8.20).

Finally, when considering economic drivers of governmental policy, which have had an impact on the children involved in this study, it is worth mentioning Britain's ongoing arms trade, which Webber (2016) suggests is heavily implicated within the Syrian War. In 2019, the Department for International Trade released its annual figures for security exports which demonstrated that Britain was the second largest exporter of arms worldwide, after the USA. Also noting, "*The UK's largest defence markets were the Middle East, North America and Europe*" (Sabbagh, 2019:5) with trade to the Middle East accounting for 80% of the increase in sales. (Sabbagh, 2019). Although this trade is no doubt economically beneficial for Britain, Webber (2016) suggests this pursuit of arms deals and the trade in the Middle East by the British Government can be seen as partially to blame for the ongoing conflict in Syria and throughout the region (Webber, 2016:57), the impact of which has been life changing and significant for the refugee children involved in this study.

2.6 The war in Syria: the children's chronosystem

Figure 19. Diagram showing the children's chronosystem



The war in Syria provides the backdrop to all the children's lives in this study and is the children's chronosystem. It is an ongoing complex war which began as a civil uprising against the Bashar al-Assad's regime, whose family had held power in Syria since the 1970s. This government appears to have responded brutally to its own citizens, reportedly using chemical weapons and barrel bombs. Very soon, other countries became involved with Russia backing the sitting government. The rebels formed small units and were joined by those with religious motivations, eventually seeing Islamic State (IS) militia becoming involved. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and Kurdish freedom fighters all entered the fray, forming a variety of alliances. The US backed some factions encouraging them to unite to fight against IS. Across Syria, the non-military citizens became the victims in the war, with widespread destruction of the country, causing millions of ordinary people to flee for their lives. All the children in the research, had reached the sanctity of a safe country which borders Syria, prior to coming to the UK as part of the SVPR scheme.

The parents were often vague about this part of their story, and only Omar, Hassan's father would speak of the horrors he had witnessed when IS had been controlling an area he was living in. It was also unclear where exactly the children had been born, although there were hints that one or two may have been born during this early time

of refuge. It was only occasionally I was privileged to be part of any conversation about the conflict and the impact of the war on the families' lives. During one meeting with Yara, Karam's mother, and his grandmother, they shared with me their ongoing distress because Yara's brother had been conscripted into the Syrian army, and they were unsure of his location and worried about his safety. (Fieldnotes: 7.8.18). When I met with the mothers of the children to share the findings, as part of the member checking phase, all the women agreed fully with everything they had seen, and they engaged fully with the discussions. Zahra seemed to be elected as the spokesperson and when thinking about the visible and invisible challenges the children and their families had faced, she reminded me to not forget that they had been forced to leave their homes because of the war.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has introduced the study participants and described their contexts by utilising Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system model, investigating the children's lived experiences by looking at their micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems. I have considered the local, national, and international context within which the children live. The children's lives and contexts are complex and multi-layered with visible and invisible factors influencing this complexity at each level, set in an everchanging political landscape. Both the micro and meso systems of each child are unique, challenging stereotypes about an essentialised refugee experience. Their exo system, the local authority, is also unique, within England, but provided a similar backdrop for all the children and their families. Through an investigation of the children's macro system, which reviewed policy and policy making, it became clear that there are narratives about refugees which are invisible but have significant impact on how refugees are perceived. Through the identification of three policy driver's humanitarian, security and economic, I have been able to consider how these have echoed through the children's lives. Finally, the children's chrono system is important as it serves as a reminder that the children are victims of war, and their families continue to live with the consequences and in the shadow of conflict.

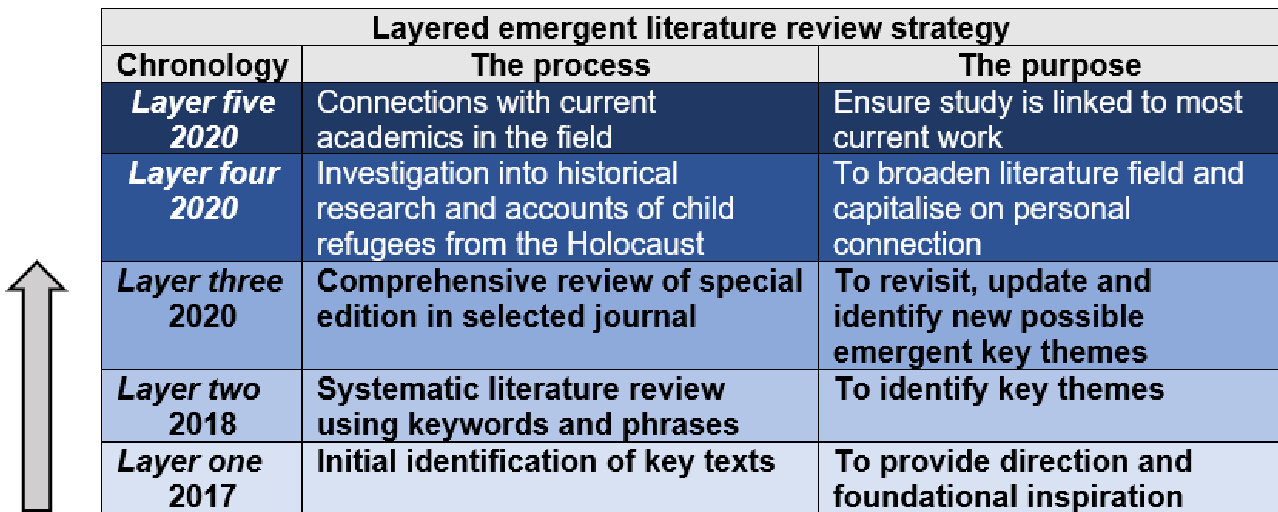
Chapter 3: Literature review

3.1 Introduction

Research with refugee children and their parents is an emergent field of study in ECEC studies. Possibly due to the increase in volume of refugees worldwide and the ensuing issues arising for early educators with newly arrived children, there has been more interest in how to include refugee children and their families in ECEC settings, in recent years (Silva et al, 2020; Wolf et al, 2020). More established is the field of Refugee and Forced Migration studies, which began to develop in the 1980s (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al, 2014:2). There is much literature about the political nature of migration, asylum seeking and refugee-ism which suggests that the concepts of nationhood, citizenship, who belongs and who does not are social constructed and/or politically motivated (Bennett, 2018; Stewart and Mulvey, 2014; Mayblin,2017). The conceptual framework of the three stranded cord I used to depict the different drivers of policy: humanitarian aspects, security responses and economic concerns in the previous chapter could have easily been used to review the literature in this field. However, as my study sits firmly between Early Childhood and Education studies and Forced Migration and Refugee Studies (Figure 2) I have drawn on literature from both fields in order to ensure that this literature review is clear, focused and able to identify my study's specific location, within early education.

Documenting the refugee experience and researching with refugees is an ever-changing field. Its responsive quality is reflective of the transient nature of refugee lives. To adequately review the literature for this study I have consciously adopted a layered, emergent approach which is not only in keeping with the direction and character of the whole piece, but also takes into account the fast- moving field. Below is a diagram which demonstrates how the layered approach developed and captures the chronological aspect of the literature research strategy, as well as the process followed, along with the purpose of each layer.

Figure 20. Diagram to show the literature review strategy: 2017-2020



Layered emergent literature review strategy		
Chronology	**The process**	**The purpose**
Layer five* *2020	Connections with current academics in the field	Ensure study is linked to most current work
Layer four* *2020	Investigation into historical research and accounts of child refugees from the Holocaust	To broaden literature field and capitalise on personal connection
Layer three **2020**	**Comprehensive review of special edition in selected journal**	**To revisit, update and identify new possible emergent key themes**
Layer two **2018**	**Systematic literature review using keywords and phrases**	**To identify key themes**
Layer one **2017**	**Initial identification of key texts**	**To provide direction and foundational inspiration**

Also worthy of note is that whilst for my own research I have been completely clear about how I have used the term refugee (Chapter 1), during the literature review it has been necessary to adopt a more pragmatic approach to terms as there are few studies specifically about refugee children from which to draw on. Therefore, within the literature review it is noticeable that often the terms migrant, refugee or asylum seeker have been used interchangeably, possibly reflective of the lack of clarity in both the national and international narratives about refugees. In addition, refugee children have been cited amongst children who are experiencing social disadvantage (Khalfaoui et al, 2020). Although there is an element of truth in this, it seems important to remind the reader that, as already stated in Chapter 1, this study is not concerned with a deficit model of inquiry and ethically any blanket labelling of refugee children is uncomfortable, teetering on the brink of essentialisation. However, for the purposes of the literature review, as already stated, it has been necessary to take a practical view accepting studies which have a slightly different ontological lens, in order to identify wider themes, as research regarding refugee children remains scarce.

Using the strategy outlined above, five themes have emerged through this literature review. They are:

- Invisibility of refugee children
- A narrative of trauma
- Feeling excluded and facing exclusion
- The importance of relationships.
- Intercultural and pedagogical practices

The literature has also illuminated five distinct narratives which appear dominant in the refugee and forced migration field and are noticeable in emerging early childhood studies concerned with refugees and migrants. These are:

- Refugees are often defined solely in terms of trauma, therefore conceptualised as victims
- There is a tendency to essentialise the refugee experiences so there is little emphasis on individual experience
- Receiving countries are subtly positioned as saviours
- There are those who belong and those who don't, feeding into ideas of *Us - Them* which then leads on to refugees being conceptualised as *The Other*
- Children are less important than adults
- The onus is often placed on refugees to adapt culturally to integrate, whilst the responsibility of the host nation is to be more accessible

In his research investigating practitioners' attitudes to parents from low socio-economic backgrounds, Simpson (2013) highlighted that unwittingly staff had imbibed dominant neo-liberal ideas which had formed unspoken yet powerful narratives about poverty. He suggested that this was likely to impact on their attitudes to parents and potentially create barriers for the children's access to education. The same could be applied in the case for refugees, so these hidden narratives, highlighted by the

literature review, are almost as important as the themes themselves when considering the impact of the literature on my study. In addition, I have included figure 21 which shows how I have used the themes identified by the literature review to assist me to consider the research questions.

Figure 21. Table to show how the literature review findings have supported answering the research questions

Research questions	**How the literature review helps to answer**
How do very young refugee children experience ECEC	Invisibility of refugee children A narrative of trauma
Do they share any commonality of experience	Feeling excluded and facing exclusion The importance of relationships
What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy	Intercultural and pedagogical practices
What are the implications for future practice	Issues around conceptualisation of children and the positioning of the host country Narratives of the Other or Us~Them

3.2 Chapter structure

The intention of this chapter is to first describe **each layer of the literature search strategy,** demonstrating how each built on the previous one. I intend to discuss the three works which provide the foundation for this study within the description of layer one. Having described the purpose and reasoning behind each layer in turn, I will **discuss the themes identified** in more depth, drawing on other readings. Within these discussions, I will include the hidden narratives, which appear to underpin the literature. Finally, I will discuss the eight **studies which are** most aligned to my own, in that they are solely **concerned with very young refugees' lived experiences,** with the intention of making clear how my study is situated in comparison. To ensure that this study is firmly rooted in current thinking, there will be a brief review of literature

concerned with **postcolonialism** and followed by a section discussing issues around **translanguaging**. Finally, I have included an overview of **more recent studies which have investigated the lived experiences of older children and adults from refugee or migrant backgrounds.**

3.3 Explanation of the layers in the literature review

3.3.1 Layer one: Initial identification of foundational texts

I have identified three key works which have underpinned the formation of the research design, approach to ethics and theoretical frame, providing inspiration and direction. They include the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire,1970) which developed an emancipatory pedagogy that gives voice to the oppressed (Freire, 1970: 69), Natural Inclusion Theory (Rayner, 2017) which was born out of the intense study of fungi and Joseph Tobin's studies on the experiences of migrant and immigrant children, the Children Crossing Borders project. (Tobin, 2016).

During my master's research project in 2016, I had already become aware of Freire's work. It re-presented itself to me when I began to consider a study about refugee children as issues of power were notable from very early in the creation of the design (Chapter 1), Freire spoke to me of the concept of power distribution, the crucial role education has to remediate the negative effects of inequality and the responsibility of the pedagogue to be alert to not only the obvious but also the nuances of oppressive power-insensitive daily practice. Power, as one of the main themes of this thesis, was thus confirmed through the study of this seminal work.

At this time, I was a member of an academic group which met weekly in my locality. It was through discussions with fellow academics and peers, I was introduced to the work of Alan Rayner. Again, like Freire, his work resonated with me so as part of my early investigative fieldwork I met with him (Research Journal: 24.10.17) to consider the implication for this study. He explained to me his theory of natural inclusion. As a scientist, he had spent a lifetime studying fungi and had observed a natural law in operation which seemed to diverge from the law of natural selection (Darwin, 1859). Rayner (2017) noticed that in contrast to the long-established natural selection process where larger plants use domination of space to survive by crushing and ending the life of weaker or smaller plants, fungi operate in a different manner. As a

species he saw that they actively open spaces, not only make room for other fungi, but draw them into the created space, dynamically. Rayner suggests that natural inclusion theory could have relevance and significance for human society and the way humans operate.

Considering this in light of the worldwide refugee situation, I could clearly see the natural selection process in operation, not only in the persistent warring of governments, people, groups and militia each hoping to dominate space, crush opposition and achieve ascendency; but also, for the people who were forcibly displaced where the strongest, healthiest and most wealthy had a much better chance of survival. Natural inclusion theory offered a different narrative and one which had potential for me "*to unveil opportunities for hope*" (Freire, 1994:3). Through Darwin's observations of the natural world, he noticed this need to dominate to survive, and through Rayner's scientific work he saw a species creating space for the Other to replicate and increase, but with the same aim: survival. This seemed to be a new way to consider the plight of refugees which went beyond political, socially constructed concepts but were rather rooted in observations made in the natural world.

Given the enduring power of the natural selection process replicated in the human world, it struck me as logical to assume that a natural inclusion process had the potential to be as equally powerful and enduring, but in a different way, offering new opportunities for "the Other" to be drawn in and actively welcomed to form new communities. In the same way Freire became inspirational and directional for this study, Rayner's theory also offered a valid ontological foundation.

Having identified two foundational pieces of work, it was necessary to find a way of translating both these theories into possible and do-able research practices, which could help answer my research questions. During early supervisory discussions (Supervision notes: 2.6.2016) it was suggested to consider the methodology used by the project Children Crossing Borders. Following an investigation into Tobin's extensive study of im/migrant children's preschool experiences in five different countries (Tobin, 2016) it became clear that this work could be useful to my study. Although the children and their families were described as immigrant or migrant, as opposed to refugees, the research is rich and illuminates a significantly complex field, documenting findings about families' experiences alongside practitioners whilst taking

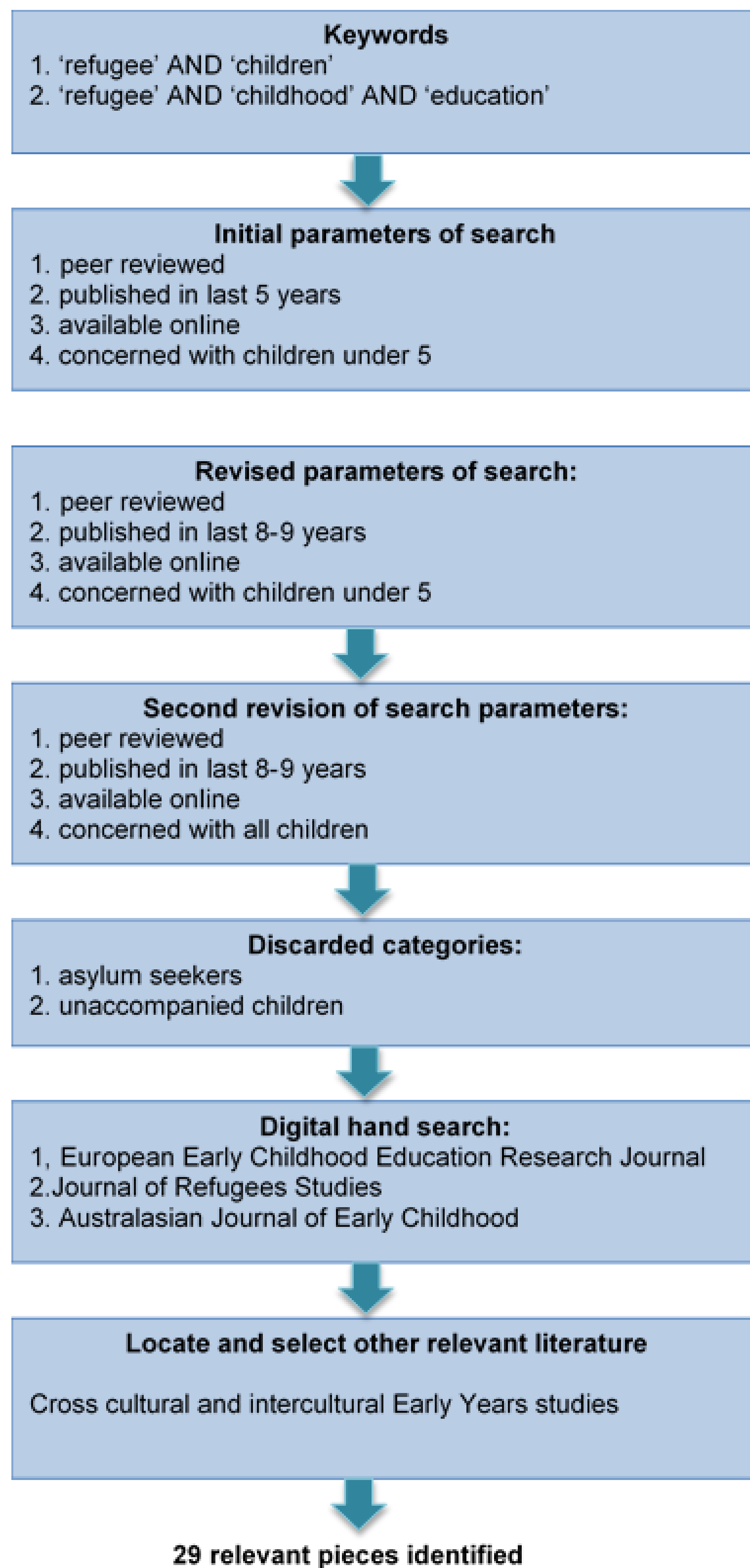
into account the broader issues of identity, migration and policy. Most helpfully, it sets out tried and tested research methods to gather data. These provide the basis for the research design which is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6.

3.3.2 Layer two: Systematic literature review using key words and phrases

Having established a strong literature foundation in layer one on which I could build a stable and robust research design, it was then necessary to review the literature more critically and "*mapping the concerns*" (Hart, 2018: 24) in order to continue to ensure a study that was well-grounded and clearly situated in literature. So, a more structured search was undertaken in 2018 using the Summon search engine. The process used is captured below (see figure 22).

This initial literature review was helpful in many ways as it enabled me to identify main themes and understand the gaps in research surrounding refugee children's everyday experiences (Figure 3). Due to this paucity of research, it became clear that very few journals housed relevant contributions for my study. Three peer reviewed, respected journals emerged as offering the most applicable research: the European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, and the Journal of Refugees Studies. Therefore, I made the decision to focus on these three journals due to their specific location and importance within the two fields of study. I carried out a more in-depth hand search of the three journals which enabled me to identify key themes, which resonated through other literature and were found to be consistent in the following layers of the literature research strategy. Three themes emerged through this literature search. They were: a narrative of trauma; feeling excluded and, the importance of relationships.

Figure 22. Literature research process



3.3.3 Layer three: Comprehensive review of special edition of selected journal

In 2020 the European Early Childhood Education Research Journal published a special edition: Children and Families with Migrant/Refugee Background in ECEC Services (Bove and Sharmahd, 2020) This offered a significant comprehensive collection of current research focused on refugee children in the early education field with a stated aim "to address these gaps in the literature " (Bove and Sharmahd, 2020:3) Therefore, for the third layer of the literature research strategy, I decided to undertake a review of all ten articles and the editorial piece. This enabled me to identify further themes, within the ever-changing field, to add to the previous themes identified in 2018 and therefore ensure a rigorous up-to-date literature review. The themes seemed to build on those of the previous literature search. These included: the invisibility of refugee children, feeling excluded and facing exclusion and intercultural and pedagogical practices.

3.3.4 Layer four: Investigation into historical research and accounts of child refugees from the Holocaust

Given my own personal connection with the subject matter (Chapter 1), and the significant lack of literature written about refugee children's lived experiences in their settled country, it seemed relevant to broaden the literature search and investigate studies concerned with the experiences of refugee children of the Holocaust. Elie (2014) suggests that in Forced Migration and Refugee studies "*the field is often believed to be deeply "ahistorical" and historians tend to "situate their work within other (related) historiographical debates"* (Elie, 2014: 23). Therefore, it is unsurprising there is little written about the 1939-1945 era in terms of refugee children's experiences. In the same way it was necessary to broaden the scope of the search within layer two, I decided to adopt a similar strategy for this layer of the literature review, to include lived experiences of young women, many of whom would likely be described as unaccompanied minors, using today's refugee, and forced migration terms. By increasing the scope of the search, some studies were identified which seemed relevant and helpful to locate my own work. The three themes which emerged from

the previous review in layer three, offered an insightful frame to discuss the findings and enabled me to include other literature I discovered along the way.

3.3.5 Layer five: Connections with current academics in the field

During this study I have begun to make links with other academics in the field who have similar research interests. I decided to include this as part of the literature research strategy because it is easy for future doctoral students to replicate, and it means that my research is firmly located within the current field of study. The work identified has also fed into the subsequent identification of themes and discussions.

3.4 Discussion of themes identified

3.4.1 Invisibility of refugee children

Whilst in the media, images of refugee children seem to be prevalent, crystalised by images of Alan Kurdu, suggesting their visibility with attention being paid to their pre and peri migration stories, within research literature the opposite appears to be the case. It is widely reported that there is a paucity of research concerning refugee children's experiences (Vandekerckhove and Aarssen, 2020; Wihstutz, 2020; Bove and Sharmahd, 2020; Gaywood et al, 2020). Although there is a growing body of research concerned with migrant and refugee children, it is primarily conducted with the adults either in their family, the adults in ECEC settings or is focused on accessibility of ECEC services (Tobin 2016: 2020; Silva et al, 2020; Lamb, 2020). Whilst these studies are vitally important because one of the key functions of ECEC "*for overcoming children's and families risk of invisibility*" (Bove and Sharmahd, 2020:3), there remains very few studies concerned primarily with the children themselves and their experiences. This suggests a potential invisibility within the research community. However, it seems this invisibility is not a new phenomenon. Sidney Zoltak, a refugee of the Holocaust describes his own experiences as a child commenting,

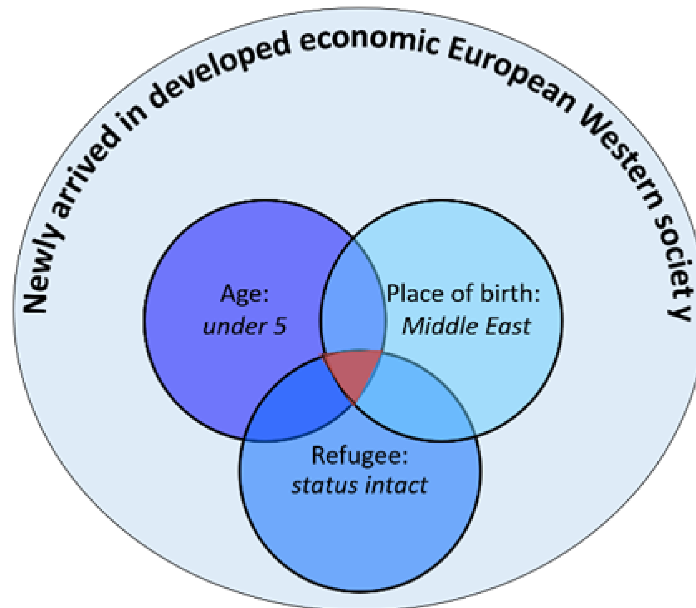
> *Child survivors,,,were not viewed as real victims by adult survivors and were not encouraged to speak about their experiences…..If there were competing narratives in a family, it was often the children's stories that were lost* (Sheftel and Zembrzycki, 2010:21).

In his doctoral thesis, Myers (2000) also notes this historical lack of attention to refugee children,

> *There exists no detailed historical study into the schooling of refugee children in Britain at all. For the period between 1914 and 1945, when Belgian, French, Spanish, Serbian, Russian and Central European children (to name only the largest groups) entered Britain, the absence of such a study is a notable weakness in the British history of education. Even the voluminous literature on education in the Second World War has little to say on the education of young refugees*. (Myers, 2000:7)

It is not clear why this should be the case as inclusion of children in research is more and more common place within the early childhood sector (Pascal and Bertram, 2009). Involving refugee children in research is complex from an ethical, methodological, and practical point of view (Gaywood et al, 2020) which may account for their experiences often being overlooked in preference for the adults. More uncomfortably, this invisibility in research would suggest a hidden narrative in operation which considers children’s experiences of less importance than the adults who care for them. For although, as already mentioned in the introduction (1.7.2), children have the right to have their voice heard enshrined in the law of participating countries (Article 12 in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child: 1991) it seems that in practice within the research community, the experiences and stories of very young children refugee children are often overlooked (Pascal, 2020) In the introduction, I used the diagram below to demonstrate the potential of reduced power for the children within this study, (Figure 1) however it can also be used to demonstrate how there is an intersectional element of very young refugee children’s invisibility.

Figure 23. Figure 1 re-imagined showing the intersectional elements which work together to reduce the volume of refugee children's voices rendering them invisible within research literature



However, the responsibility may not necessarily completely lie with the research community, nor the perceived national wisdom, for there is also literature which suggests a state of invisibility is a preferred option for some refugees themselves, and this is certainly true in my own personal family history. When describing Jewish refugee women Davis (2017) notes, "*In order to find a place in 1950s Britain these women often felt compelled to hide who they were*" (Davis, 2017:132). Roer-Strier (1998) identified parental coping strategies found in minority parents within Israel. One of these was a chameleon strategy (Roer-Strier, 1998:77/8) with parents encouraging their children to blend in, like the chameleon – suggesting that the need to be invisible, is strong.

3.4.2 Narrative of trauma

Although there is little research about refugee children, much of the existing research is concerned with their mental health and wellbeing. This seems to have given rise to a narrative of trauma. This narrative is potentially problematic because by focusing solely on trauma and its recovery, there is a subtle positioning of refugees as victims

which if left unquestioned perpetuates a power inequity between the researcher and the participants.

Many refugee children and their families, however, do experience mental health difficulties as a result of their displacement. Fazel et al (2012) offer a full and comprehensive review of literature about the mental health of refugee children who settle in high income countries. They identify risk and protective factors (Fazel et al, 2012: 277). Hart (2009) presents an educational psychologist's view, also identifying factors which can increase and decrease a child's risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Hart, 2009: 354/5). Measham et al (2014) goes further to describe more atypical symptoms of trauma that young refugee children may experience (Measham, 2014: 209) and Bryant et al (2018) describe how refugee parents who have PTSD are more likely to adopt a harsher style of parenting, which can impact children's long-term wellbeing.

There is also a commonly held belief that the trauma experienced by refugees is primarily located in pre and peri-migration experiences, which has potentially been perpetuated by media reports (Snow, 2020). Contrary to these media representations both Hart (2009) and Measham et al (2014) write about the impact of post-migration stress suggesting that,

> *stresses experienced by young refugees during their exile and after their migration were more predictive of psychological problems than traumatic experiences before* (Measham et al, 2014: 208/9).

Writing more recently von Knorring and Hultcrantz (2019) expertly outline the symptoms of resignation syndrome in asylum seeking children in Sweden, where refugee children are so traumatically affected by their experiences that they enter a psychologically induced coma-like state. They suggest that the final trigger for the onset of the symptoms is often news of a negative decision regarding their family's asylum claim and upcoming deportation. (von Knorring and Hultcrantz, 2019:1106).

Interestingly, this gap in knowledge, if left unchecked, has implications about power balances and positioning, for it enables the country of refuge to adopt a saviour-like status, making it harder to identify and report difficult traumatic experiences post-migration. For researchers and practitioners living in a refugee receiving country,

the belief that children’s trauma is solely experienced prior to arriving in a new “safe” country can give rise to a less critical analysis of current internal educational practices which are accepted as the norm, unwittingly re-creating a problematic narrative which positions the host country as saviour. Kyriakides (2017) suggests that this may be rooted in ideas about people from the Middle East which are described by Said (1978) in his seminal text, Orientalism (Said, 1978).

In addition, within the narrative of trauma, there can be a subtle narrative of victimhood, where refugees are positioned and conceptualised solely as victims of trauma. Marmo (2013) suggests that “*when the victim is qualified in terms of fragility, naivety and powerlessness*” the refugee themselves are idealised (Marmo, 2013: 87). This essentialising of the refugee experience seems to be woven through the narrative of trauma. However, Jacobsen (2014) points out that although “*existing psychological research focuses on what can be done to help people recover from trauma,*” other elements of refugee suffering may be missed. She suggests that displaced people also experience significant loss and impoverishment, but the psychological impacts are less reported and therefore remain under researched (Jacobsen, 2014:103). In his Turkish study which investigated reciprocity and the transactions between Syrian refugee parents and children in an intervention programme, Erdemir (2021) highlights the challenges for refugee parents and suggests that their experiences can lead to *“less warmth and more harshness toward their children”* (Erdemir, 2021: 548). Again, this foci on the terrible experiences of refugees or the resulting problem of the trauma is understandable as an emotional human response. When confronted by others suffering, it is natural to care and want to promote healing.

Another problematic element of the trauma discourse exists because of the asylum-seeking process itself. In order to gain refugee status, those seeking asylum in the United Kingdom are expected to re-tell traumatic experiences within an increasingly hostile environment where there is a culture of disbelief which assumes that claims are likely to be bogus (Sigona, 2014: 374). So, the asylum seeker is forced to inhabit and almost embody victimhood in order to be accepted as deserving of refuge. Mavelli (2017) cites Didier Fassin (2012) suggesting that this.

> *language of compassion and emotions turns ‘domination’ into ‘misfortune’, ‘injustice’ into ‘suffering’, and ‘violence’ into ‘trauma’; practices of*

> *subjectification, with the construction of a 'new humanity' made of individuals who are legitimate as long as they are recognised as 'suffering bodies'* (Mavelli, 2017: 810).

Mavelli (2017) suggests that this is a method used by governments to depoliticise the refugee situation and one which offers a positive national narrative, which is infused with ideas of collective compassion.

3.4.3 Receiving countries positioned as saviours

When a refugee is conceptualised primarily as a victim this inadvertently can lead to an often-unexpressed narrative where the host country is positioned as saviour. Brade and Holmes (2017) discuss the British narrative about the Kindertransport and specifically the role of Nicholas Winton within that. They comment,

> "*It suits us societally to create a discourse in which we use events around the Holocaust both to tell a "positive" story and as an exemplar of moral behaviour in which "saving" children is presented as an unquestionable act of goodness*" (Brade and Holmes, 2017:5)

They also suggest that the reality of the movement of hundreds of children was more complex describing it as a "*messier, version of humanitarian intervention*" but they suggest it is more "*culturally comfortable to tell ourselves about the one heroic man who saved trainloads of children*" (Brade and Holmes, 2017:7)

Espiritu (2016) also puts forward that there is a difficulty surrounding the refugee story. Writing as a refugee from Vietnam, he purports that there is a ghost-like element to the stories and accepted narratives about refugees, the war and their current living experiences. He describes an accepted national narrative regarding the Vietnam War, which is primarily American-centric where there is a "*strategic forgetting*" (Espiritu, 2016:195) of the Vietnam people themselves, rendering their experiences ghostly. It seems then, that there is an uncomfortableness when considering refugee experience. Creating positive narratives and heroic stories for the national psyche, is often easier than accepting possibly darker narratives, particularly if they cast shadow on the host nation. However, it is important to take into consideration the experiences of child Holocaust survivors. Writing about the post war social worlds of child Holocaust

survivors, Sheftel and Zembrzycki (2010) assert that "*nightmares and parties are parts of the same story*" (Sheftel and Zembrzycki, 2010: 22). Concerned with the similar issue, Espiritu (2016) goes on to explain how post war and second- generation refugees use the arts and cultural endeavours to explore their ghost stories offering counter narratives which are more reflective of them and their family experiences. The use of art-based methods to investigate the untold stories of the refugee experience is important for my own study and will be made clear in Chapter 5.

Within the literature, there has been a clear movement away from the narrative of trauma and victimhood. Hart (2014) notes a sea-change in research focus particularly with refugee children. He highlights the "*pre-supposition that children are inherently and universally vulnerable by virtue of their age or stage in the developmental process*" but explains that there has been a move away from a "*trauma-focused model"* to a "*concern for 'resilience'"*(Hart, 2014: 386). This shift in focus is welcome as the "t*rauma discourse and pathologization of refugees*" not only dehumanises and is reductionist for refugees, but also creates and reinforces a power inequity in any subsequent research which may claim to represent the refugee voice (Sigona, 2014: 372). Pace and Sen (2018) note the benefits of this change remarking that, "*focusing on the vulnerabilities of refugee children can obfuscate the reality that minors are also future agents of progress and reform."* (Pace and Sen, 2018:1)

Sheftel and Zembrzycki (2010) also make reference to refugee children's agency. They describe two motivating forces which they had observed in operation amongst the children, which was the need to "*assert independence and reclaim their agency*" (Sheftel and Zembrzycki, 2010: 28). They also note the impact of the trauma narrative on the telling of the children's stories, "*While trauma has been given considerable attention in the literature, how survivors went on with their lives, while living with it, has not."* (Sheftel and Zembrzycki, 2010: 22)

This deficit in the literature about refugee children's agency is important to note. Whilst the narrative of trauma continues to be a major theme, when positioning my study within current research it clearly sits on the tectonic refocus in the field of refugee and forced migration studies, which positions child refugees as self-determined agents in their own world.

3.4.4 Feeling excluded and facing exclusion

The third theme of feeling excluded and facing exclusion, emerged from the literature review first surfacing in the second layer and then again three years later in the third layer. Several studies chart the experience of refugees and note that feelings of exclusion are common (Ukasoanya, 2014; Uptin et al, 2013). Subsequent literature suggested that for refugee children and their families, entry into ECECs is often fraught with difficulties and there are significant barriers to access and inclusion (Lamb, 2020; Wolf et al, 2020). Peleman et al (2020) and Lazzari et al (2020) also conclude that ECECs can unknowingly perpetuate social exclusion through the processes and practice which seems to favour children born within the host country. Feelings of exclusion experienced by refugee children and their families and the significant barriers to ECEC which they face, resonate with similar concerns in the refugee and forced migration field (Ryu and Tuvilla, 2018). Themes found within the literature in this section are complex and intertwined, with one concept inextricably linked to the others. The intention is to draw out and discuss issues arising from feelings of exclusion and facing exclusion. These centre around belonging, those who do not belong and ways to belong. Ideas within this section are often political and contested so the aim is to give the reader a broad overview of the main threads found in the literature.

The notion of belonging is recognised as important within the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (2009) which places a high emphasis on young children feeling that they belong, suggesting that it is "*integral to human existence*" (Australian Government, 2009:7). However, there is no mention of belonging in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in England. Instead, it suggests that "*children should be supported to……develop a positive sense of self*" (Department for Education, 2021a: 9). Whilst a strong sense of self is obviously important for all young children to develop; for refugee children, feelings of belonging are significant and more complex, because of their experiences. Seker and Aslan (2015) acknowledge that refugee students encounter, *"problems like alienation, discrimination, or otherization in their relationships at school and in class."* (Seker and Aslan, 2015: 88/9.)

Davis (2017) describes the complexity of developing a sense of belonging in a new host country for Jewish refugee women in 1950s Britain, suggesting their experiences

included not only anti-Semitism from British people, which they were expecting, but that they "*were most hurt by the lack of welcome from British Jews and their own family*." (Davis, 2017:133) Craig-Norton (2019) writing about Jewish women refugees in the same era, confirms this experience noting that "*most felt unwelcomed by the Anglo-Jewish community and many testified that they were forever "the bloody foreigner" to the average British citizen*." (Craig-Norton, 2019: 324). These feelings of being excluded would naturally undermine the process of developing a sense of belonging in a new country. Tobin (2020) asserts that this is still a live concern today suggesting that,

> *the challenge of incorporating im/migrant and refugee communities into their host societies is more challenging and divisive today than it was fifteen years ago* (Tobin, 2020:11)

Recent statistics tend to agree, noting that migrant women from non-EU countries found it the hardest to integrate into the British labour market but Dumont (2020) suggested that when they were enabled to take up work, it had a positive effect on their children's long-term inclusion within the host country.

This sense of belonging is not just a matter of external inclusion. For refugee children there is an internal sense too. In conversation with Garb (2020), Eva Hoffman talks about her own experiences leaving Poland as a child with her parents in the 1950s and describes her personal inner journey and experiences of not yet belonging in her new home, "*One kind of identity of self, is left behind, and a new self has not yet been created*" (Garb, 2020: 42). Feelings of belonging and recognition of children's dislocation as part of the refugee experience, is important. Also significant are the wider policies and processes which either promote or dissuade a sense of belonging to a host country. Conceptualising belonging in terms of "*cultural inclusion*" and "*political inclusion (citizenship)*", Mavelli (2018) concludes that,

> "*neoliberalism' establishes a regime of differences—between included and excluded, worthy and unworthy, and valuable and less valuable—through a logic of equivalence that reduces every human to some form and amount of capital*." (Mavelli, 2018: 490).

Alongside this, is the host nation's attitude to refugees which can either speed or impede the process of developing a sense of belonging for refugee children and their families. Fotaki (2019) describes the,

> *complex psychosocial processes of categorising belonging and who counts as an outsider. These do not necessarily or exclusively involve rational evaluations and calculative thinking, but are often driven by unconscious fears and affective dynamics that are central to defining both who deserves help, and the level of help that individuals are willing to provide to them* (Fotaki, 2019: 323)

Although Mavelli (2018:) proposes links between neo liberalism and the "*regime of differences*" (Mavelli, 2018: 490) and Fotaki (2019) suggests that fear maybe the predominant marker for many when considering the outsider, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory proposes that people tend to categorise themselves according to shared characteristics and a social consensus within their group. This in turn gives rise to feelings of membership and belonging. They describe how through this type of social comparison there develops a deep sense of belonging to an "in group" so logically those who do not belong are therefore situated in the "out group."

For refugees this is an important social phenomenon to understand, as it gives rise to another one of the hidden narratives, which have been exposed by this literature research, that there are those who belong and those who do not, feeding into ideas of *Us -Them.* Maher and Smith (2014) highlight the importance of taking note of the dominant discourse within the research country and recognise the "*us*" and "*them*" narrative in Australia (Maher and Smith, 2014: 23) Pace and Sen (2018) agree with Fotaki's (2019) assertion that this narrative has a specific relevance to refugees noting,

> *Refugees have emerged as an opaque category – denoted, in the words of our host, as simply 'they' – that is synonymous with all that we fear as detrimental to our ways.* (Pace and Sen, 2018: ix)

The *Us-Them* discourse can be extremely subtle, and if left unchallenged can not only galvanise refugees' feelings of being an outsider but can lead to refugees being conceptualised as *the Outsider* or *the Other.* Bennett (2018) points out that,

“Today’s refugees and asylum-seekers are the new ‘Others’ (Bennett, 2018: 25) and links this to a racist agenda (Bennett, 2018:27).

Mitchell and Ouko (2012) also note prejudice in operation describing how Congolese refugee families in New Zealand often experience racism and discrimination suggesting that the educational experience of refugee children is often fraught with difficulties not experienced by children born in the refugee receiving country. Lunneblad (2017) reports an ambivalent attitude held by early educators to refugee parents because they are seen to be breaking social norms (Lunneblad, 2017: 367).

This *Us-Them, Outsider- Other* narrative is not just confined to public discourse or educational experiences. Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) recognise that this narrative can also be found within academic writing. They suggest that it can be pervasive so recommend a reflexive-based framework, to use in research with refugees, to remediate the effect (2012:307). McAreavey and Das (2013) also note the potential impact of non-acknowledgement of the *Us-Them*, othering discourse, citing the work of Said (1985) noting that,

> *Minority or marginalised communities are often misrepresented, pathologised, or problematised by research processes. Said’s (1995) work on Orientalism, in particular, reveals how colonial power, conquest, and control have shaped the study, research, and conceptualisation of colonised persons as others, as inferior and as deficit*. (McAreavey and Das, 2013:115)

This is important for my own study. The issues raised by Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) and McAreavey and Das (2013) will be addressed more fully in Chapter 6.

For refugees, there are several formalised pathways which could offer them an opportunity to feel included, as if they belong. For refugees to begin to shed the label of being an outsider, to develop a sense of belonging, citizenship is often proposed as a legal route to do this (Stewart and Mulvey, 2014). Refugees themselves often understand the importance of attaining citizenship.

> *Being ‘labelled’ as a refugee can result in prejudice and negative treatment, so to become a British citizen was regarded as one way to shed this undesirable identity. ‘Hassan’, a refugee from the Middle East went further when he stated:*

> *a person cannot be a refugee for the rest of his/her life. The people's look is different when you are a refugee and when you are a British citizen*. (Stewart and Mulvey, 2014:1031)

However, Bennett (2018) recognises that this is far from simple. Notions of nationhood, citizenship and integration are linked and often contested. He notes,

> *citizenship is also where migration and integration intersect with the law. However, even this 'minimal' or fundamental definition brings with it consequences for integration.* (Bennett, 2018:36)

Much has been written about the integration of refugees (Ager and Strang, 2008; Strang and Ager, 2010). Strang and Ager (2010) suggest that integration is a "*two-way process*" (Strang and Ager, 2010: 601) which relies on refugees themselves being active agents. They explain that ideas about integration and assimilation are often used interchangeably, according to the migration policy of different countries, but they note that the concept of integration is defined by notions of nationhood and suggest that within Europe there has been a move away from notions of integration in favour of, "*pathways to citizenship that include selection and the fulfilment of requirements*" Strang and Ager, 2010: 592). To become a citizen of a nation state is therefore seen as an important element of finding a new way to belong, for refugees. However, this is not as simple as it might seem. Strang and Ager comment that, "*assumptions about what it means to belong to a nation, shape understandings of integration*" (Strang and Ager, 2010: 594). Also worthy of note is Bennett's (2018) opinion of the concept of integration, which he says tends to be concerned with "*socially constructed notions of race, the Other, the foreigner public discourse*" and "*citizenship"* (Bennett, 2018: 36). It is unsurprising then when considering refugee children's feelings of exclusion and facing exclusion, that the process of integration, feelings of belonging and ways of belonging is often a fraught path.

In his doctoral thesis about refugee children in Britain between 1937- 1945, Myers (2000) links schooling to the growth of national identity (Myers, 2000: 6) and this idea has been developed in the United Kingdom more recently with British values being introduced into education (Department for Education, 2014). The British government appear to address some of the complexities unearthed by this literature review in terms

of issues of belonging, through the introduction of ideas about what it means to be British. The British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance were legislated as part of the curriculum so are now taught in ECECs and schools as part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development (HM Government, 2014). The implication and hope being that through this teaching, all children will adopt these values, and somehow by having a shared set of values they will develop a shared British identity. For refugee children this potentially offers another way to develop a sense of belonging to their new host country.

Through considering the theme of feeling excluded and facing exclusion and discussing issues of belonging, another hidden narrative appears to have been illuminated within the literature. It seems that there is often an onus placed on refugees to adapt culturally to integrate with little emphasis being placed on the host nation to welcome them. I will address issues of welcome in Chapter 8 when I consider developing a Pedagogy of Welcome.

3.4.5 Importance of relationships

Following on from discussions about integration and ideas about how refugee children can overcome a sense of exclusion and systemic exclusive practices, is the fourth theme to emerge from the literature review. Gaining citizenship is a pathway which is put forward to develop a sense of belonging to a nation state and adhering to British values offers refugees the potential to gain feelings of belonging through a set of shared values. However, the fourth theme to emerge which highlights the importance of relationships for refugee children, offers an opportunity to develop belonging to people through relationships, as opposed to belonging to a place or a set of values (Boer, 2015).

Within early education it is almost an unquestioned norm that relationships are vital to young children and form the basis of their learning, with positive relationships being one of the four core themes within the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, 2021: 6). In the new curriculum guidance relationships with adults and with other children are included in the Early Learning Goals for Personal Social and Emotional Development. It is recognised that children's personal development is

linked to their social relationships, "*underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world*" (Department for Education 2021: 8). For refugee children who have challenging experiences which appear to lead to significant feelings of exclusion alongside difficulties of access to education, developing relationships is even more crucial. When considering the psychological wellbeing of refugee children and the role of friendship, Samara et al (2019) share that their,

> **"***findings also point to the fact that social relationships including friendship quality and number of friends played an essential protective role. Conversely, bullying was a risk factor that explained many of the refugees' problems.***"** (Samara et al, 2019: 301)

This emphasis on the importance of relationships is also replicated within the field of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. In Foundation House's Integrated Trauma Recovery Model for refugees (VFST, 2016:7) restoring "Connections and Belonging" feature as one of the Recovery Goals. Ager and Strang (2008) cite Social Connection in the form of "Social bridges, Social Bonds and Social Links" as part of the core domain of integration within their conceptual framework. In addition, Block (2017) represents the importance of relationships in her representation of Strategies Associated with Positive Outcomes, describing: Interpersonal Connectedness, Social Networks, Social Inclusion and Participation and Social Cohesion as vital elements for a positive experience post migration for refugees. Strang and Ager (2010) also emphasise, "*the establishing of 'bonding' relationships emerges as a critical priority in the experiences of refugees*" (Strang and Ager, 2010: 596).

Relationship making is not only important for refugee children. It is also vital for their parents to develop trusting relationships with staff when accessing early education (Lazzari et al, 2020: 50) Several studies have specifically examined refugee parents' experiences of Early Childhood Education (De Gioia, 2015; Mitchell and Ouko, 2011; Tadesse, 2014; Whitmarsh, 2011) All conclude that relationships with the education professionals are important. De Gioia (2015) found the attitudes of Early Educators was important to building relationships whilst Whitmarsh (2011) highlights the need to build trust between early education professionals and parents. In their systematic review of literature which considers barriers and facilitating factors which impact the

relationships between parents of immigrant backgrounds and professionals, Norheim and Moser (2020) suggest that barriers *"include language, asymmetrical power relations and cultural differences and disagreements*" Norheim and Moser, 2020: 789). They also note that, "*the barriers that parents with immigrant backgrounds are facing in their relationships with their children's ECEC professionals are complex and intertwined*" (Norheim and Moser, 2020:801) suggesting that developing relationships, is not straightforward.

3.4.6 Intercultural and pedagogical practices

It is widely agreed that education offers refugee children a haven and an opportunity to achieve, (Hek, 2005; Seker and Aslan, 2015; Tadesse, 2014; Walker, 2011). However, for refugee children it seems that there are pedagogical practices and approaches which are less helpful for access to education (Lamb, 2020) and make it harder for them to build relationships with early education staff and their peers (Peleman et al, 2020; Picchio and Mayer, 2019). Tobin (2020) suggests that, "*early childhood education in Europe and North America lack adequate attention to cultural differences"* (Tobin, 2020:11) and he describes one of the key findings of the Children Crossing Borders project is that there is a disconnect between perspectives of education of parents and practitioners. He suggested that although practitioners were prepared to include home languages and relevant cultural holidays, they were less flexible regarding pedagogical approaches (Tobin, 2020:15). In their study of four Turkish families resettled in Europe, Wolf et al (2020) found that when cultural adaptions were made, families were more likely to engage with ECEC (Wolf et al, 2020). Silva et al (2020) describes an intercultural approach which "*conceives the interaction between groups as a result of a commitment to overcome mutual distrust and to identify forms of coexistence in diversity*" (Silva et al, 2020:91). They suggest that this would be more appropriate than traditional multiculturalism, concluding that staff would benefit from more training. Strekalova- Hughes (2017) conducted a mixed methods study of early childhood teachers, assessing their intercultural sensitivity. She found that exposure to teaching refugee children does not necessarily increase teachers' intercultural sensitivities. She concluded that, "*children who are refugees are more likely to experience a teacher whose behaviours are preceded and shaped by a lack of intercultural sensitivity"* Strekalova-Hughes, 2017: 8). However, she suggests

that the educational needs of refugee children in early education require more input than ensuring individual teachers are culturally sensitive and enhanced training programmes. Rather further studies are needed which are located and grounded in the political and economic contexts of the children. In her recent study about the experiences of refugee children in Iceland, Ragnarsdottir (2021) outlined some successful educational practices which were supportive and enabled the Syrian children to settle and begin to learn Icelandic. She noted that the host children were prepared for the arrival of the Syrian children, who were then offered welcome through Arabic and Icelandic songs (Ragnarsdottir, 2021). Positive language practices were also employed, alongside time and energy to build trustful educational partnerships with the parents.

3.5 Identified studies concerned with young refugee children's lived experiences.

Eight studies have been identified which are concerned with young refugee children's lived experiences. Figure 24 gives a broad overview of them, summarising the research foci, the findings and noting the methodology used alongside the data collection methods. The studies are placed in the order they were located. The first two studies (Kalkman and Clark, 2017; Prior and Niesz, 2013) were located in the second layer of the literature review. The next two (Wihstutz, 2020; Peleman et al, 2020) were identified in the third layer, whilst the study by Picchio and Mayer (2019) was discovered by re-running the literature search technique from layer two, using the Durham University online data base, as part of a checking system during the third layer, in 2020. Two studies (Strekalova-Hughes and Wang, 2019; El Gemayei, 2019) were unearthed through connections with current researchers using Twitter and subsequent e-mail exchanges. The final study (Skaremyr, 2021) is the only piece of research which focussed specifically on the range of communication tools migrant children employed as they began to learn Icelandic within a pre-school.

These studies took place in a range of European Union (EU) countries, the United States and Lebanon, with different numbers of children, both refugee and migrant, from a variety of nationalities. Whilst the methods used to collect data are varied, multi-modal methods seem to be a recurring choice. The methodologies chosen also vary, however predominately a qualitative approach is used throughout.

The table briefly outlines the relevance of each study to my own, however there are two key themes which resonated with me both personally and professionally and have gone on to inform some of the thinking when creating the research design. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5. The themes are: 'stories, imagination, and play' and 'home and family.'

3.5.1 Stories, Imagination, and play

Stories, imagination and play feature as an important element in a number of these studies. Strekalova-Hughes and Wang (2019) highlight the importance of family story telling noting that for refugee children it is a "*culturally sustaining practice*" (Strekalova-Hughes and Wang, 2019: 11) which is significant for the children's identity formation, cultural and linguistic transference. Using an arts-based approach Prior and Niez (2013) investigate the stories and artwork of young Karen refugees and their families, to understand more about their lived experiences within early childhood classrooms noticing the difficulties and changes over time.

Kalkman and Clark (2017) describe in detail the role play story-making of one child and through this are able to demonstrate not only the exclusion she experiences when she transitions into the older group within her ECEC setting, but also record her attempts at re-introduction into the imaginative games of the other children. Again, using a variety of data collection methods, including multi-modal attempts to understand children's experiences, Wihtstutz (2020) outlines the extreme lack of space offered to children living in a collective accommodation centre in Germany, but documents children's capacity to use the spaces which are allotted to them, "*the Kinderraum*" to play. She also describes how children's play is impeded because they are forced, *"to loiter about in corridors, stairways and other areas forbidden to children*" (Wihtstutz, 2020:120). Similarly, El Gemayei (2019) writes about the significant multi-layered limitations of refugee children's life in Lebanon, but through her *day in the life approach*, finds that imagination and play serve as a means of escape for the children. (El Gemayei, 2019: 204)

3.5.2 Home and family

Both Wihtstutz (2020) and El Gemayei (2019) describe the limitations of life for refugee children. However, Wihtstutz (2020) notes the importance of the family, "*Family social networks represent a space for children to develop an identity beyond the limits of their 'refugee identity'* (Wihtstutz, 2020:121). As already described in the context chapter (Chapter 2), my study takes into consideration the ecological system of each of the participants (Brofenbrenner, 1979), therefore the recognition of the family within the eight studies which were concerned with the lived experiences is most welcome.

Figure 24. A table which shows an overview of studies identified which are concerned with the lived experiences of refugee children

Authors	Year published	Country of research	Children's country of origin	Number of children involved	Age of children	Ecological context	Research focus	Methodology	Research methods	Findings	Relevance to my study
Kalkman and Clark	2017	Norway	Middle East	1	4-5	Transition from introductory group for refugee children into mainstream day care	The meaning of role play during transition	Ethnographic	Based on the Mosaic approach	The impact of transitions on one child's confidence in role play: her *suitability* and *unsuitability*.	Social connections through play Discussion around belonging Isolation in new group Observation of play used
Prior and Niesz	2013	USA	Karen from Myanmar (refugee)	3	4-6	Family, home and early education	Stories of the children and their parents in relation to adaption.	Narrative inquiry	Storytelling and artwork sessions Digital recording of interviews of children and family	Changes over time Building bridge between home and school Dialogues on dissonance	Capturing stories to understand experiences in early childhood classrooms. Use of drawing Practitioner researcher
Wihstutz	2020	Germany	Afghanistan Kurdish Iraqi (refugee)	12	3-7	Collective accommodation centre Dedicated children's room	-Daily life -Use of space for play and agency -Relational networks	Ethnographic and explorative	Participant observation Semi structured audio recorded interviews with parents and practitioners Multi-modal	Use and negotiation of limited space The significance of relationships	Shifting positionality of researchers Encountered similar ethical issues Awareness of negative narratives about refugees Children presented as demonstrating agency.

									methods used with children		
Peleman et al	2020	Belgium (Flemish)	Children described as multi-lingual and migrants. No further information.	8	2.5-5	Four different classrooms became four "cases"	-First learning experiences -Verbal interactions.	Mixed method: qualitative and quantitative	8-13 separate video observations over 11 months	Low levels of conversation both C-C A-C Children often isolated.	Implications for pedagogy and practice.
Picchio and Mayer	2019	Italy	Migrant children From a variety of EU and non-EU countries.	32	18 months-48 months	Two ECEC groups: One 0-3 years and 3-6 years	Transition experiences of children from migrant families into ECEC	Action research	Written observation Video	Children often unsettled. Exclusion and poor treatment by peers Difficulty in communicating Wellbeing improved over time Stable play routines Role of teacher	Welcoming practices described Observations of children's social behaviours Practices to promote inclusive education.
Strekalova-Hughes and Wang	2019	USA	Nepal, Somalia, and South Sudan (refugee)	9 families 34 children in total over three groups.	3-8	Intergenerational family home setting	Children's perceptions of storytelling in the home compared to school	Theoretical frame: Culturally sustaining pedagogy Refugee critical race theory	Semi structured group interviews (child/sibling)	Children understood the importance of oral story telling for cultural, identity and language transmission. Children noted similarities and differences between home and school stories.	Culturally sustaining practices Recognises the complexity of children's identity
El Gemayei	2019	Lebanon	Iraq and Syria (refugee)	4	4-8	Questionnaire distributed in a Catholic run dispensary.	Impact of armed conflict on childhood	Ethnographic case study	Initial questionnaire	Refugee children's lives are complex. "*diversity of children's suffering*" (2019:139)	Layered approach to data collection

						Family homes	Refugee children's play post conflict	Day in the Life (DITL) approach to case studies	Observation at a school supporting refugees. Interview with local professionals Filming Semi structured interview with parents Drawing with children	Play opportunities were limited but children used imagination to break these boundaries.	Use of drawing with children Complex ethical issues encountered
Skaremyr	2021	Sweden	Newly arrived children English and Persian speakers	2	3-5	Pre-school	The communicative tools the children use to be able to participate in the life of the pre-school	Qualitative empirical study	Observation of children Interaction analysis Filming of children	Newly arrived children seen as active agents in their own learning. They use a variety of verbal and non-verbal communication tools to get involved in play	

Most of the studies included in this section of the literature review make mention of the home and family of the children. Prior and Niesz (2013), Strekalova-Hughes and Wang (2019), El Gemayei (2019) and Wihstutz (2020) actively include the parents alongside the children in the research design. Strekalova-Hughes and Wang (2019) describe how they sit amongst families during story telling events whilst Prior and Niesz (2013) "*conducted and digitally recorded in-depth interviews with the children's families to develop an oral history of each family's experience prior to their arriving in the United States"* (Prior and Niesz, 2013: 7) so placing high value on the children's wider familial experiences. In her investigation El Gemayei presented detailed building plans showing the layout of each child's home to be clear about the children's living spaces and homes to set a clear context for their lived experiences. Although not always overtly stated, the implication from each of these researchers is the important role both the family and the home play in the children's lived experiences.

The work of Peleman et al (2020), Picchio and Mayer (2019) and Kalkman and Clark (2017) are based within ECEC settings, data being generated from the children themselves, their peers and for Peleman et al (2020) the early educators. However, when considering the significance of "*newcomer children's role playing"* in their study, Kalkman and Clark (2017) describe their understanding that the play they observed will, *"comprise cultural scripts…… in which particular social and cultural identities are consciously and unconsciously*" They make reference to "*home"* describing it in terms of, "*multiple fields of social and cultural attachment and belonging*" (Kalkman and Clark, 2017: 294) thus suggesting the child's ecological home system, is taken into account. Equally, Picchio and Mayer (2019) are concerned with children's transitions into ECEC and describe how children need to "*cross the border from home*" (Picchio and Mayer, 2019: 286), with their study charting the difficulty of this process for the children.

3.6 Postcolonialism

There are many ways to think about the world and to demarcate its citizens. Postcolonialism theory offers one way to examine refugee experiences and because of its critical status it is important to include a review of these writings in order to firmly locate this study in relation to this theoretical perspective. Postcolonialism reminds scholars of the ongoing impact of colonialism and "*represents perspectives*

critical of or resistant to colonialism or colonial attitudes" (Young, 2020: 3). Said (1978) is often considered to be the first architect of postcolonial theory because of his work on Orientalism (Chapter 4), alongside Fanon (1990), who wrote about the necessity for violent struggle to end colonial oppression and Bhabha (1994) who discussed how colonisation impacted culture negatively.

In her book describing both colonialism and postcolonialism, Loomba (2015) suggests that colonialism has a long history spreading across the globe with multiple nations colonising other nations. However, she comments that although colonialism is primarily concerned with "*conquest and dominion*" (Loomba 2015:20) European colonisation is more insidious, possibly because the then-scientific notions about racial hierarchy somehow became connected to ideas about civilisation and culture. Colonialists appeared to use this thinking as an excuse to exploit people and their resources. Postcolonialism challenges these notions of racial hierarchy and offers a frame to examine them more fully. Davies and Isakjee (2019) highlight the importance of using postcolonialism when making an analysis of the European migrant camps. They suggest that issues of racism can be missed or underplayed without it. Writing in a United States context, Bhati (2023) also points out the virtues of postcolonialism. He comments,

> "*Postcolonial theory provides a strong theoretical foundation to understand intersectional identity and provides a firm capacity to understand race relationships using the historical lens"* (Bhati, 2023: 203).

More recently, when discussing the vast movement of people from Syria in 2015, Fonkem (2020) suggests that the situation was, "*an extension and consequence of the legacies of European colonisation and a flawed decolonisation process*" (Fonkem, 2020:53). He describes the "*legacy of colonialism*" (Fonkem, 2020:53) where issues of power, "*dominance, repression and exploitation*" (Fonkem, 2020,57) infuse the refugee experience. Loomba (2015) agrees with these sentiments and goes further, explaining the legacy of colonialism is more pernicious, affecting how knowledge and learning have been shaped, whilst Bhati (2023) records how the colonial discourse endures and can be identified within everyday culture impacting how people of colour are represented.

Spivak (2010) is considered a foundational postcolonial thinker and in her seminal work, Can the Subaltern Speak? writes about those on the margins within Indian/ Hindu culture. She critiques European colonialist power and the understanding of Western thinkers like Foucault. Spivak's (2010) conceptualisation of the subaltern, being a person silenced and oppressed by Western thinking or systems has spawned much further scholarship across disciplines and her ideas feature within much of the literature about refugees or migrants (Young, 2020; Bhati, 2023; Savsar, 2020). Her ideas can be traced in studies particularly concerned with refugee women's experiences which clearly use her notions of the subaltern to position refugee women in the research (Kristjansdottir and Skaptadottir, 2019; Whitmarsh, 2011). Fernando (2021) writes about the Irish asylum seeker context and also uses Spivak's (2010) post-colonial lens to examine the experiences of women within the asylum process. She describes the impact of,

> "*re-colonizing gendered/raced micro-violences through encounters with white patriarchal power in the courtroom, immigration interviews, prisons and Direct Provision centers*" (Fernando, 2021: 52) apparently identifying colonialism as "*white, patriarchal power"* (Fernando, 2021: 52).

Postcolonialism is a frame which offers a number of perspectives to understand the refugee experience. It has been used to consider gender issues (Fernando, 2021; Whitmarsh, 2011) concerns about racism (Isakjee 2020; Davies and Isakjee, 2019) intersectionality (Bhati 2023) and inequity of power distribution (Fernando, 2021; Savsar, 2020). These ideas are acknowledged and echo throughout this study. The literature review highlights concern about how refugees are positioned, conceptualised, and made invisible (Section 3.4), whilst section 3.4.4 specifically links Spivak's (2010) notion of the subaltern with the issue of refugees Feeling Excluded and Facing Exclusion. This section uncovers the subtle discourse in literature about refugees which sets up ideas of *Us~Them* or a refugee occupying a position of *The Other~ Outsider.*

Although postcolonial theory is important, and provides a strong backdrop to this study, there are some concerns with relying solely on it, particularly in such a complex study as this. Spivak (2013) herself wrote, "*I think postcolonial is the day before yesterday*" (Spivak 2013: 2) suggesting that more modern approaches could

or should be developed. Equally, postcolonialism is less effective in European countries which do not have a history of colonialism. Turtiainen and Hiitola (2019) writing about Finland suggest that although there is a perception that Nordic countries have "*successful equality policies*" this does,

> "*not guarantee straightforward integration and inclusion of minorities. Instead, Nordic countries continue to take part in processes of 'othering', and the values of equality are often used to build up narratives that exclude those who do not fit into these ideals"* (Turtiainen and Hiitola, 2019:1053).

They suggest that in Finland there remains an *Us~Them* narrative which effectively drives refugee and migrant experiences into the shadows, rendering them invisible or unseen.

Within my study, there are two clear religious threads: Islam and Judaism, which have been reflected in this literature review. The Syrian children are Islamic, and I have demonstrated how the literature describes the process of Islamic refugees being positioned as an unwelcome Other, in Europe (Isakjee, et al, 2020). Also, I have used literature from the Holocaust to trace the lived experiences of Jewish refugees, because of my own personal history. However, due to the current situation with Israel and its oppressive policies towards Palestine there is a potential tension between these two positions. Goetschel and Quayson (2016) discuss this tension and draw a link between the Jewish diaspora in the 1930s and the Syrian refugees in 2015, as in both cases, Europeans were reluctant to accommodate them. They highlight the importance of this connection because it helps formulate narratives to understand both refugee situations "*beyond their victimhood*" (Goetschel and Quayson, 2016:4). In the same way Said (1978) was able to link antisemitism and Islamophobia, Goetschel and Quayson (2016) suggest that *"Opening up memory in this way, allows us to think of the Shoah and Nakba side by side in order to allow them to illuminate each other.*" Goetschel and Quayson (2016:4). (Shoah refers to the Holocaust, and Nakba refers to "the memory of the catastrophe" when the Palestinian people were displaced from their homeland in 1948 to make way for the establishment of Israel as a nation state). Postcolonialism tends to focus on challenging the European colonisation of non-European countries and peoples. The Jewish experience of displacement is situated in history, across the globe and has

affected a people of faith who are both European and non-European who have experience of being slaves and making slaves; of being displaced and displacing others (Goetschel and Quayson, 2016) and so the ideas offered within postcolonialism can seem slightly at odds with the Jewish experience. However, there are clear links to my research. Postcolonialism has been used to challenge existing structures of power (Gallien, 2018) and has "*challenged traditional ways of knowing*" (Leavy, 2020:86). In her critique of the representation of refugees in both literature and film, Gallien (2018) considers the role of postcolonialism suggesting that, "*one constitutive principle of postcolonialism……. is to intervene in and disrupt the power dynamics as embedded in discourse*" (Gallien, 2018:722). It is this aspect of postcolonialism which has proved most helpful in framing and understanding the lived experiences of refugee children in this study.

3.7 More recent studies of the lived experiences of older children and adults from refugee and migrant backgrounds

In order to ensure that this literature review takes into account more recent studies examining the lived experiences of children, young people and parents who are from either refugee, asylum seeking or migrant background, I carried out a second search, focussed on older children and young adults, to find relevant work, which used different aspects of post colonialism to frame the research. Seven studies were identified, which were specifically relevant to this study. They were undertaken in a variety of countries including: Iceland, Australia, Lebanon, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Finland. The children and young people's ages ranged from 9-30. Two studies focussed on the experiences of women, whilst one study concentrated on the experiences of parents. There were similarities between each of the studies with this piece of research and interestingly, the findings resonated with the findings in the main body of the literature review. The results have been set out in Figure 25 below.

Figure 25. Summary of recent literature

Summary of recent literature about the lived experiences of women and children from refugee and migrant backgrounds										
Authors	**Date of publication**	**Location of study**	**Nationality of participants**	**Status of participants**	**Participants**	**Focus of study**	**Research methods**	**Similarities to this study**	**Link to themes found**	**Summary**
Kristjansdottir and Skaptadottir	2019	Iceland	Middle East	Quota refugee Women at risk – divorced or single mothers and children	8 women	Lived experiences	Semi structured interviews in English with an interpreter in the women's homes	Quota refugees Use of an interpreter Little experience with refugees Few community links available Availability of welfare Narrative descriptions, themes identified then interpreted. Islamic participants	Negative discourse around Islamic women (link to Orientalism) Women's welcome of the researchers Microaggressions and microinvalidations Isolation and lack of social ties Language barrier	The women refugees lived experiences in Iceland left them often feeling isolated and excluded. Adjusting to living in a different society is complex and support needs to be ongoing to account for the women's loss and trauma.
Liamputtong and Kurban	2018	Australia	Middle East	Refugee	10 young people (18-30)	Health, social integration, and social support	In-depth interviews and mapping activities	Drawing/ mapping exercise (visual data collection)	Mental health issues connected to pre-migration and post migration experiences.	Refugees in Australia have a similar experience to refugees in England because of discriminatory

								Thematic data analysis Islamic participants	Language was perceived as a barrier. Learning English assisted their interpersonal connections. Importance of social connections	governmental policy which negatively influences the population who perceive refugees as a threat.
Kalaf and Plante	2019	Lebanon	Syrian	Refugee	9 young (12-16) people	Mental health and resilience through an expressive arts workshop	Interviews Direct observation of participants Parental and facilitator feedback	Use of Bronfenbrenner (1979) to frame the study. Use of an arts-based methodology Islamic participants	The participants demonstrated positive levels of resilience. The research project was transformational.	Whilst thinking about overcoming adversity, the art workshops provided the participants with sources of resilience which impacted each area of their social ecology
Whitmarsh	2011	United Kingdom	Afghan Iranian Moroccan	Asylum seekers Mothers	6 women	Parent partnership in early education	3 group interviews	Located within the early years. Considers the relationship between early educators and mothers. Snowballing technique used. Islamic participants.	The mothers experienced barriers which prevented them from participating in their child's ECEC setting	Although ECEC settings are tasked with promoting positive parental relationships, there were many unseen barriers for the mothers in this study.

								Use of field and data notes		
Stewart	2015	USA	Myanmar Democratic Republic of Congo (1)	Refugee	7 high school students 13 and 14 yr old)	The improvement of education for students from refugee backgrounds	Through lessons students engaged with texts and created their own migration narratives using oral, drawing and written methods.	The importance of educators learning from the students experiences and the wealth of what they bring. The re-telling of the students' stories, through writing and drawing was important to increase their agency and enabled their teacher to better understand their lives. The researcher positioned herself as a learner. Transformational for the researcher.	Positionality of researcher Funds of knowledge of the students from refugee backgrounds Importance of storytelling (Strekalova-Hughes and Wang, 2019).	Students from refugee backgrounds bring their own positive funds of knowledge and contributions to the classroom and the enhance the learning of teachers.
Turtiainen and Hiitola	2019	Finland	Various Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Turkey,	Migrant	24 parents	The complex relationship between family welfare services and migrant	Semi structured interviews in 5 cities. 9 group interviews and	Common narratives about migrants are challenged and disrupted by the findings.	Categorisation of migrants as being less able parents and impact of racialised stereotypes (Orientalism).	The everyday lives of the participants demonstrate acts of resistance which challenge the negative discourses surrounding

			China, Armenia, Thailand, Russia and Estonia			parents and parenting practices.	5 individual interviews Interviews with 2 experts who were members of the migrant community and working with them.		Invisibility of experiences. Perceptions of the migrants as being the Other. (Outsider)	migrants and their lives.
Hanna	2020	England	Middle East (2) Central Africa	First generation migrant	3 pupil-researchers (9-10 years)	Educational inclusion of migrant children in primary school	Creative research methods including photography and picture books to enable children to connect to their own experiences. Observations Interviews and discussions	Visual creative methods: specifically, photography to capture parts of their school experiences. Emphasis on children involved in the research process	Highlighted issues around the hidden curriculum and the unseen barrier facing migrant children. Recognition of the children as experts bringing knowledge to the teacher and other pupils 'Us' and 'Them' messages being transmitted unknowingly within the school and classroom. Highlights issues of power	Challenges the deficit notion of migrant children as learners. It expands the ideas of inclusion to include the exclusion of migrant children as a group. Posits that migrant children are experts in their own lives.

3.8 Bilingualism, multilingualism and translanguaging

Figure 25 demonstrates that becoming proficient in a host country's language is important for refugees as part of their resettlement as it reduces social isolation (Liamputtong and Kurban, 2018; Whitmarsh, 2011; Kristjansdottir and Skaptadottir, 2019). So, although this study's primary focus is not multilingualism, given that all the children were Arabic speakers and by the end of the study had become bilingual, and in Amira's case multilingual, issues surrounding the children's language acquisition reverberate through the study. Therefore, in order to firmly situate the research in relation to this field, a literature review of key works follows on bilingualism, multilingualism and translanguaging to trace the history and emerging works concerned with this subject.

Needham (2023) defines a bilingual learner as, "*someone who is learning two languages*" (Needham, 2023: 88), a multilingual learner as, "*someone who is learning in more than two languages"* (Needham, 2023: 88). Both Bligh (2011) and Drury (2013) describe a 'silent or non-verbal period' in which "*children need time to acclimatise to their new context, environment and begin to 'tune in' to the sounds of the setting and begin to know what is expected*" (Drury, 2013:384). Drury (2013) also suggests that learning language is closely linked to children's social and cultural interactions. Safford and Drury (2013) trace the history of arrangements for bilingual learners and suggest that multilingualism can provide a pedagogical resource for teachers. However, they also point to a "*Western perspective*" which is, "*privileging or imposing a single language or variety*" (Safford and Drury, 2013:70) and go on to describe "*monolingual institutions*" and a "*monolingual mindset*" (Safford and Drury, 2013:74) which is found in ECEC settings. More recently, Hanna (2020) notes that currently in primary schools within England, migrant children are often described as "*EAL learners*" (English as an Additional Language) and that "*research in this area tends to emphasise language deficit of migrant learners*" (Hanna, 2020:545). Yet Smidt (2016) begins her book about multilingualism in the early years reiterating the normality of multilingualism around the world. Currently early years policy in England expects all children at the age of 5 to be assessed in English and suggests that, "*the number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language rich environment is crucial*" (HM Government, 2021:8). However, Peleman et al's (2020) study highlighted that migrant children have fewer

quality interactions with their teachers than their peers which suggests that those children who potentially need greater quality and quantity of interaction with their educators, to support their bilingualism, actually experience significantly less. Both the statutory and non-statutory guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage is peppered with laudable statements of intent which include the importance of each child being supported to have equal access to learning opportunities and being given the best start, there is little in-depth instruction how to support bilingual, or multilingual learners. The same is true in Birth to 5 Matters, another prominent non-statutory guidance (Early Education 2021). There are many references to inclusion, the importance of supporting each child uniquely and although mention is made about tackling racism and statements about equity, again very little is written about bilingual or multilingual children specifically.

Safford and Drury (2013) suggest that the issue is twofold. Firstly, that teachers often lack knowledge and expertise and secondly that as Drury (2013) writes there is a "*widespread view that young bilingual children will simply pick up English very quickly by osmosis by being in an active learning environment*" (Drury, 2013: 389). Ideas from postcolonialism may interpret this vacuum differently, suggesting that this "*privileging*" (Safford and Drury, 2013:70) of English is rooted deeply in colonial thought, or as Said (1978) would describe the elevation of the Occident language, which is conceptualised as superior to other languages.

Given the ongoing needs of bilingual learners being largely ignored by both statutory and non-statutory guidance in England, it seems that refugee children have even greater needs beyond the acquisition of a second or multiple languages. Paradis et al (2020) have noted that, "*the life experiences of refugee children and youth can be different from those of other populations of bilinguals*" (Paradis et al, 2020: 1252), so it is important to draw the distinction between bilingual learners and refugee children. Writing about Syrian refugee children's language development in a Canadian context, MacLeod et al (2020) draw attention to the importance of the children's socio emotional, cultural, religious, and family context and the need to be mindful of these factors when considering their language acquisition. Through three case studies of Syrian refugee boys aged 5 and 6, they highlight the barriers that refugee children specifically encounter when learning both a first and a second language citing the disruption caused by the refugee experience to this process. They also

point out the paucity of research and literature concerned with the language development of children from refugee backgrounds. Like Tobin (2020), MacLeod et al (2020) note the difficulty refugee parents encounter when attempting to become involved in their children's education. Their conclusions describe the children's "*protracted language development*" (MacLeod et al, 2020: 1347), teachers struggling to engage with refugee families as well as the children's parents encountering significant barriers accessing the school language themselves.

Sitting within the enclave of multilingualism and postcolonialism, are ideas about translanguaging. Needham (2023) describes translanguaging as, "*combining different languages together"* (Needham, 2023:89), however translanguaging is an approach which incorporates far more, speaking to power, identity and pedagogy. Although this study is not primarily about second language (L2) development, translanguaging echoes many of the themes already identified and offers another lens to consider refugee children's lived experiences. Ideas about translanguaging appear to have been initially developed by Garcia and Levia (2014) and many articles about translanguaging use their definition describing it as, "*the flexible use of linguistic resources by bilinguals in order to make sense of their worlds*" (Garcia and Levia, 2014:200). Writing within a Greek context, Mammou et al (2023) worked with 6 unaccompanied refugee boys from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The boys were between 15-17 years old. Their study suggested that translanguaging can be used as a pedagogical approach which they found was transformational for the boys in that by actively welcoming the boys first languages, teachers were able to create, "*a dynamic space in which socio-cultural transformations are allowed*" (Mammou et al, 2023: 141) and this in turn supported the boys to occupy positive identity positions. There was also a suggestion that a translanguaging pedagogy supported the refugee boys to, "*cope with their new reality*" (Mammou 2023: 154). The authors talk about the positioning of the teachers in the research and describe how they chose to occupy a partnership position, similar to the alongsided positioning adopted by Pound (2003). Although there is little direct reference made to power in its widest sense, or to postcolonialism, it is clearly implied throughout the study that translanguaging as a pedagogy not only empowers, "*bi and multilingual refugee students identities and developing their multilingual voices*" (Mammou et al,

2023:140) but also aims to actively, "*fight monolingual bias in educational settings*" (Mammou et al, 2023:141).

Toker and Baytas (2022) also recognise the transformative nature of a translanguaging pedagogy and highlight more overtly its political implications. Toker and Baytas' (2022) research was situated in an elementary school, in post-coup Turkey with two bilingual teachers who were employed to support Syrian refugee children. Both the teachers were from minority groups within Turkey and were working within a system which they describe as "*institutionally monolingual*" Toker and Baytas, 2022:148). They discuss the political implication of the insistence of monolingualism and suggest that it can be used, "*by nation-states as a tool for domination*" (Toker and Baytas, 2022:150). Again, although they do not specifically reference postcolonialism, they discuss issues of power and control which are predominant themes within this thesis and are echoed in the work of Freire (1970). There is also a resonance with the work of Alan Rayner (2017) who put forward an alternative natural process to Darwin's ideas about Natural selection and the survival of the fittest which charts the domination of both space and territory by one species over another. Natural Inclusion Theory (Rayner 2017) suggests that there are processes in nature which afford opportunities for dynamic spaces in which the Other, or new species can be welcomed. Translanguaging appears to offer this linguistically to refugee students, disrupting the political power patterns previously established.

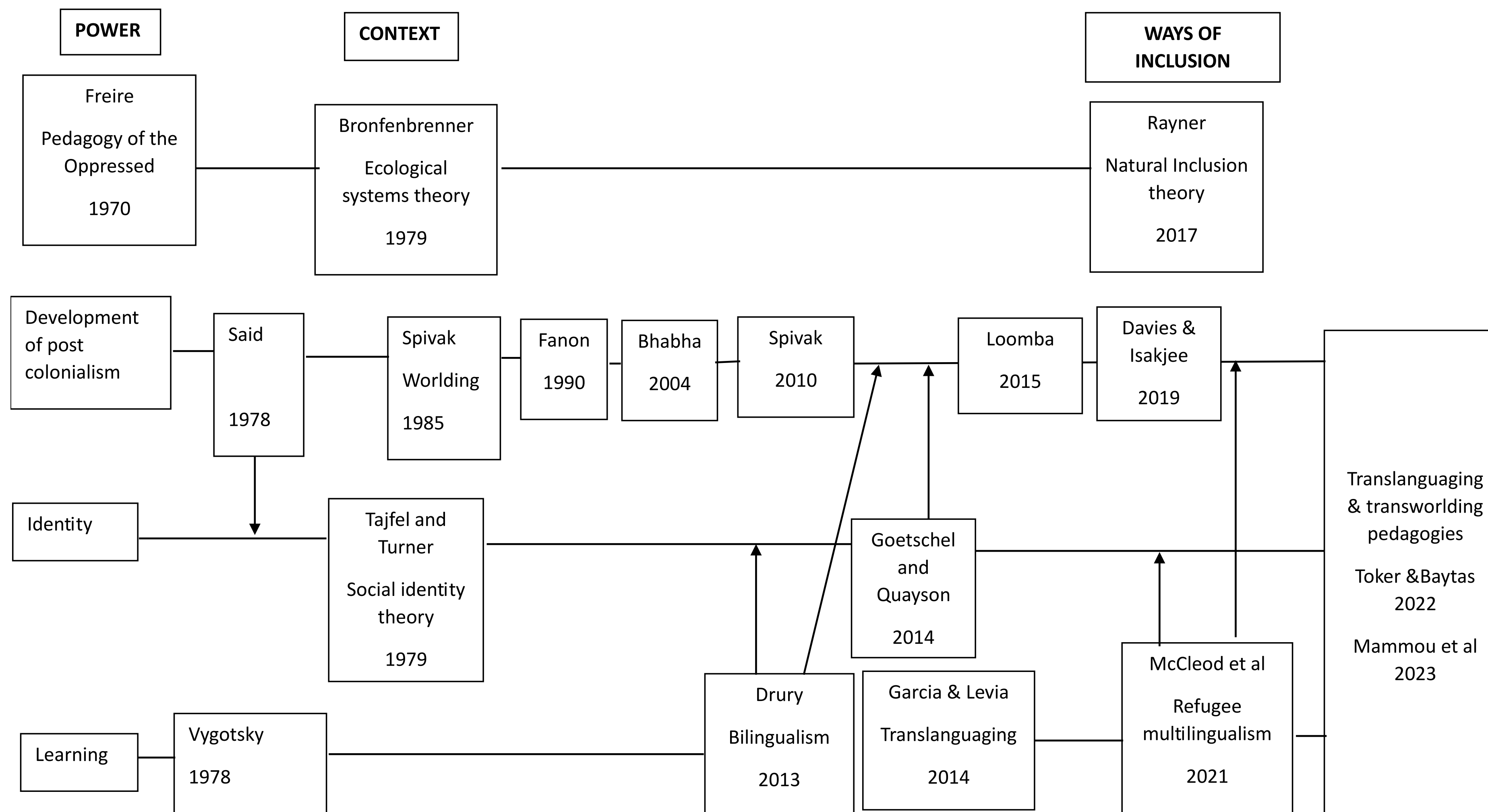
In their US study with refugees, Koyama and Kasper (2022) findings reiterate several of these themes and they are also interested in pedagogical, transformative practices. They trace the language policies in different countries and discuss the idea of transworlding which builds on Spivak's (1985) notion of worlding which she suggests has been used as a way to "*cover up its practices of colonizing*" (Koyama and Kasper, 2022: 4). The authors describe worlding as a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world relationships within it. They suggest it is connected with power and the control of what is valuable, how people think, things which are considered the norm and notions of sense making. Koyama and Kasper (2022) put forward transworlding as a pedagogy to sit alongside translanguaging. They describe is as,

“*a traversing, a disruption of worlding in which the refugee students reject monolingualism in favor of something more fluid, more possible – a combination of the imagined and the actual – as knowledge and learning. It is a combining and recombining across spatial and temporal dimensions to make sense of learning in a new context. Transworlding is unregulated, variedly represented and multiply enacted*.” (Koyama and Kasper, 2022: 4).

There is a congruence between the concept of transworlding and my study. Transworlding recognises the complexity of the refugee experience which requires multiple representations, and the polyvocal (Tobin 2016) aspect of the methodology seeks to do the same by capturing the multiple voices which influence and impact each child’s lived experiences. In addition, within the research, multimodal methods were used to not only gather data but also to present findings using poetry, drawing and visual representations. This usage was purposeful and posits a more fluid way of knowing using creative methods to disrupt traditional notions of worlding.

Figure 26 is a visual representation of how the theories concerned with post colonialism, bilingualism, multilingualism, translanguaging and transworlding pedagogy have developed over time. It also shows how the theories of identity and learning interconnect and interact with postcolonialism. I have included three overarching themes concerned with power, context and inclusion to demonstrate how these frame my thesis.

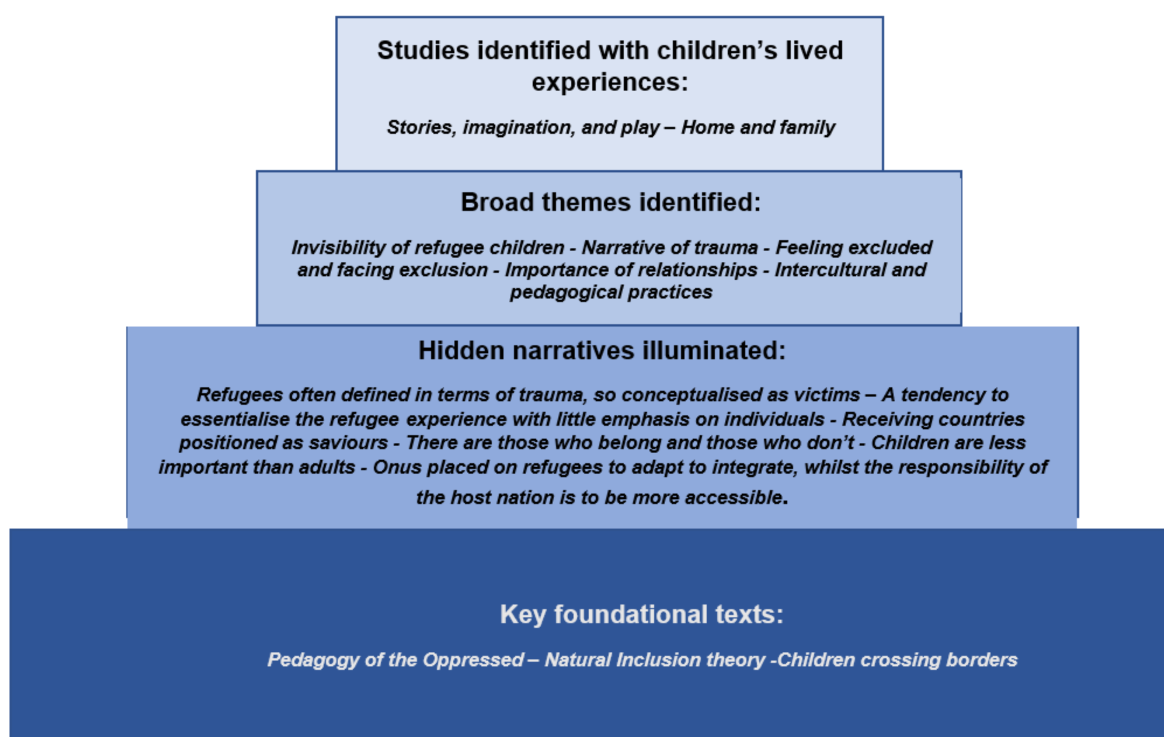
Figure 26 Diagram to show the development of theories over time.



3.9 Summary

The aims of this literature review were varied. I intended to locate my own research within a broad and complex field, outline and describe the themes and narratives within the literature and also create a strong scholarly basis on which to build my research design. Below is a diagram which outlines a summary of the literature review findings.

Figure 27. A summary of the findings of the literature review



The impact of the literature review has been significant and has shaped the construction of the theoretical conceptual frame, the ethics adopted, the methodology and methods used as well as the research design. It has been invaluable to have identified the broad themes within the field whilst illuminating a series of hidden narratives. The final eight studies have also given me a clear basis on which to construct my own research, enabling me to select from an array of methods and foci. Through the analysis of these works, I identified two clear themes which resonated with me, which I have incorporated to a greater or lesser extent in my research design.

My study will be the first located in England which is primarily focussing on the lived experiences of young refugee children. It is multi-layered and considers not only the child, their family and the early educators' perspective but recognises the voices of others within the child's eco-system, including my own voice as the researcher. I have also addressed the hidden narratives which this literature review has illuminated through the research design to address the complexity of the refugee children's experience. Considering the issues of invisibility of refugee children, I have developed a unique set of methods to elicit the child's voice, based on my artistic professional heritage. As a practitioner researcher, pedagogy and practice have remained central to the design, with research questions asking the implication of findings for everyday praxis.

Further discussion about the impact and influence of the literature review will be included in more detail within Chapter 5, the methodology chapter.

Chapter 4: Theory

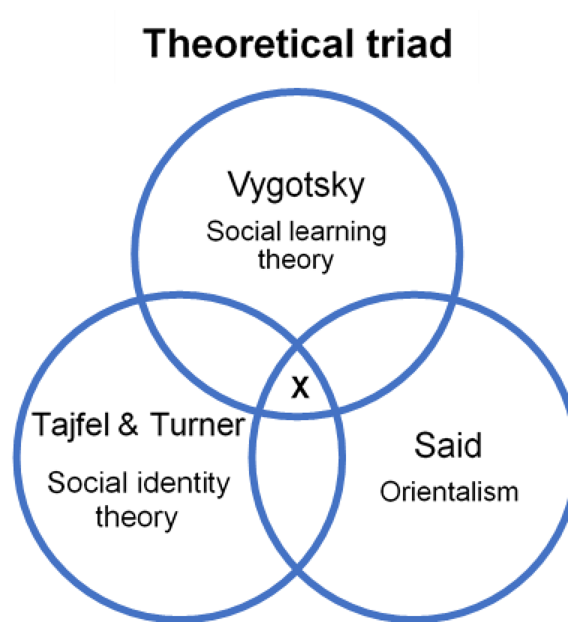
4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical approach that has been adopted and used to frame this study. I have used several theoretical models which have been used for different purposes and provided multiple multi-layered lenses through which to explore the children's lived experiences. As already stated, the work of Freire (1970) and Rayner (2017) have heavily influenced my conceptual understanding of pedagogy, power and its distribution, which will be discussed in further chapters, whilst Bronfenbrenner (1979) was helpful when describing the participants context and I have used notions of intersectionality across the whole thesis to describe and capture much of the nuances found within the study. However, to examine refugee children's lived experiences more closely and answer the research questions:

- *How do very young refugee children experience ECEC?*
- *Do they share any commonality of experience?*
- *What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy?*
- *What are the implications for future practice?*

I developed a more complex theoretical lens which is concerned with the educational social world of the children and draws on the work of Vygotsky (1978), Said (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979). The lens has evolved throughout the study with the final version using the overlap of the three theories as the focal point. This theoretical triad offers a multi-layered lens to examine the complex field, and alongside the other intersectional models used in the study, forms part of my original contribution to knowledge.

Figure 28 Revisiting Figure 5 - Complex intersectional theoretical triad



4.2 Chapter structure

This chapter will first explain the **rationale for creating a complex theoretical frame**, then give a brief description of **the stages of development of the lens**. Next there will be an explanation of the rationale for including each theory in turn, within the final theoretical triad, **an examination of the theories**. There will be a short individual summary of the theory used, followed by an overview of how others have used the theory in research with refugees. Finally, there will be a section which outlines **how the theoretical lens has been used throughout the research.**

4.3 Rationale for creating a complex theoretical lens

The theoretical frame needed to be responsive to the ongoing challenges of the field as well as the findings of the literature review. Therefore, it had to be sensitive to the issues raised in the literature of the invisibility experienced by refugee children, the narrative of trauma which appeared to surround them and consider feelings of exclusion as well as the realities of being excluded. The frame had to be able to reflect the importance of relationships for the children as well as consider the intercultural and pedagogical practice of the staff who were working with them. To reflect the ethical commitments and values which are integral in this study, the theoretical frame also

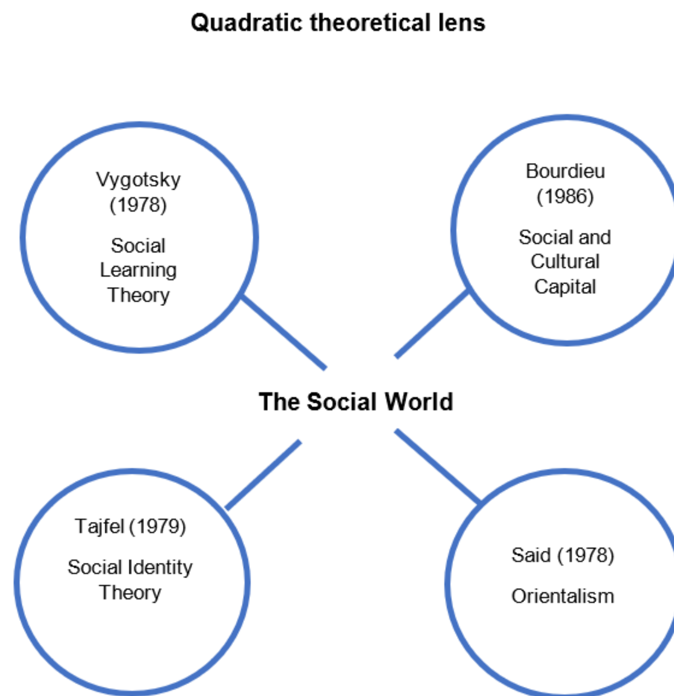
needed to be able to address the often-hidden narratives which the literature review illuminated. Where refugees' experiences may have been essentialised or they might have been seen as victims or the Other whilst the host country took on the role of saviour, it was vital for the theoretical frame to re-dress this balance and offer a lens to examine and frame the very young refugee children's experiences, which are multi layered and multi-faceted.

4.3.1 Stages of development of the theoretical lens

Constructing the theoretical frame for this study required much thought and consideration to ensure that it was not only responsive to the complex field, but also that it could frame the research process and findings. Several theories were initially examined which provided an important grounding for the study, these included Critical race theory (Delgado et al, 2017), Critical Refugee Theory (Strekalova-Hughes et al, 2018) and the work of Foucault (Ball, 2013). All could have possibly been used. Critical Race Theory could have framed the issues of racial inequality faced by the refugees, particularly in the wake of the rise of Islamic State and the subsequent Islamophobia experienced by Muslims across Europe (Bruneau et al, 2018). Instead, I chose to develop the ideas offered by Critical Race theory around intersectionality and have used it to frame ideas concerned with power. Critical refugee theory was developed by Strekalova -Hughes et al (2018) and offered a theory which had its roots in Critical Race Theory, but was specifically concerned with refugees' experiences, cultural practices, and power dynamics. Also, Foucault's ideas about power being diffused and activated through societal structure provided an attractive way to consider power within this study. Whilst I decided to draw on and develop the notion of intersectionality, which was put forward by Critical Race Theory, I choose to look for other theories which had deeper resonance. As this is a study which is set within early education settings and is concerned primarily about the daily lives of the participant children, it seemed important to use theories which were centred on the social world of the children, whilst still able to conceptualise some of the power dynamism which was in operation.

Initially a quadratic theoretical lens was developed (Gaywood et al, 2020) which used the three theories in the theoretical triad (Figure 5) but also included the work of Bourdieu (1986).

Figure 29. Early iteration of theoretical lens.



Gaywood et al (2020)

Initially, Bourdieu's ideas about social and cultural capital were helpful to understand refugee experiences, supporting an understanding of the dynamics in a social context without replicating a narrative of helplessness, but acknowledged issues of power and influence. Rogers (2014) used Bourdieu's ideas effectively in his work with refugee adolescents in the care system as did Gaywood et al (2015) (Chapter 2). Early in the study, it became clear that there was a class divide amongst the participant families, and I was looking for a way to describe this. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) which inspects every early educational setting, included the concept of 'cultural capital' in the Education Inspection Framework (Office for Standards in Education, 2019), making it a requirement for ECEC settings to ensure they were supporting all the children to develop their 'cultural capital.' This change in policy seemed to solidify my ideas about including Bourdieu in the theoretical frame. However, although there was some initial resonance with Bourdieu's theories, they seemed to lose traction when analysing the research findings, becoming less and less useful. In addition, with further examination the concept of 'cultural capital' seemed Occidentally biased (Said, 1978) which felt problematic given the research context,

therefore the decision was made to discard the theory developing a theoretical triad (Figure 5).

4.4 Examination of the theories

4.4.1 Vygotsky: Social learning theory

Much of my own professional practice is influenced by Vygostkian thinking so when considering the theories to frame my research, it seemed wise to first look at Vygotsky. Early in the formation of the research design, I had been concerned with how refugee children developed a sense of belonging, in ECEC, and re-establishing a sense of self. Vygotsky's ideas about the social aspects of children's learning and the More Knowledgeable Other, offered a lens to consider the formation of peer relationships and their role in supporting the refugee children to access the Zone of Proximal development.

When considering the experiences of refugee children, other researchers have also used Vygotsky's work to frame their work (Shah, 2016; Allport et al, 2019; Womersley and Kloetzer, 2018, Pastoor, 2015). In her doctoral study Shah (2016) investigates the early learning experiences of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda within an emergency humanitarian context whilst Allport et al (2019) explored Somali mother's perceptions of their children's social interactions and play opportunities in early childhood (Allport et al, 2019: 193). Both seemed to find Vygotsky's ideas about the importance of the social aspects of learning, useful to underpin their research, and Shah (2016) was able to generate new culturally relevant practice as a result. Womersley and Kloetzer (2018) use Vygotsky's theory to consider the treatment of refugees with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in their yearlong study at a refugee centre in Athens, which treats victims of torture. They argue that refugee experiences should be understood in the context of their socio-cultural history, which is set in the context of human interactions and consider Vygotsky's work suitable and able to do this,

> *Vygotsky's strong influence on culture and the social origins of psychological processes is particularly relevant to our increasingly diverse multicultural societies, and in particular giving the influx of refugees into Europe* (Womersley and Kloetzer, 2018: 89).

Comparable to my study, Pastoor (2015) draws on the work of Brofenbrenner and Vygotsky to assist his investigation into the role of schools for supporting psychosocial issues of unaccompanied refugees in Norway. Using these theorists, he was able to identify three processes that the refugee children experience, that of: socialisation, integration, and rehabilitation (Pastoor, 2016: 247). My research is set within an early education context, where the primary actors have also been sent to learn in a social context. Given Daniels (2016) assertion that "*Vygotsky developed a theory within which social, cultural and historical forces play a part in development.*" (Daniels, 2016:7) and other scholars have found Vygotsky's ideas useful and culturally sensitive in refugee or immigrant research, the inclusion of Vygotsky in the theoretical frame provides a good starting point for this study.

However, this study is less interested in Vygotsky's ideas about the role of speech in the development of thought and inner speech. These ideas suggest a "norm" in terms of development and the experiences of the participant children were diverse. All of them were either bi-lingual, emerging bi-lingual or multilingual. Amira was developing fluency in Arabic, English and British Sign Language, so she could communicate with her brother who was deaf. Amira was the first in her family to be able to communicate by signing with her brother. Hassan had limited fluency in Arabic, could understand English but chose to speak neither, in his ECEC setting and rarely at home. It was generally agreed that this was due to his traumatic experience. Ahmed had recently received cochlear implants, so was at the early stages of learning any speech, having been born deaf. Whilst Karam was fluent in both Arabic and English and could interchange the languages according to which friend he was speaking to.

4.4.2 Tajfel and Turner: Social Identity Theory

The inclusion of Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, which is concerned with In and Out-groups, fits well with this study for a variety of reasons. Tajfel's own experiences as a Holocaust survivor which caused him to question how such things could happen, resonate throughout this study. His study of intergroup conflict, social categorisation and social comparisons serves as a comprehensive frame to understand the wider narrative about refugees in their exo and macro contexts as well as a useful tool to examine the experiences of the participant children coming into an established group, in the ECEC setting, and consider their reception by their peers and adult staff

members. Ideas that suggest that members of groups tend to satisfy feelings of belonging to their group by exaggerating shared positive characteristics amongst in-group members to increase self-esteem, whilst at the same time negatively framing those in the out-group, have been helpful throughout this study. Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggest that this can lead to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination towards out-group members in addition to producing a homogeneity effect, which casts all out-group members as a homogenous group. It is very easy to see how this can translate into the Us-Them narrative which has been so prevalent in this study, which can also be found in the ideas that there are those who belong and those who do not belong.

These discourses were clearly illuminated by the literature review whilst the field work noted the significant isolation experienced by the younger three children, at the start of the study. Within the public domain, refugees and migrants are often framed as the "Other" (Bennett, 2018:25). The process of "Othering" can be better understood in the light of Social Identity Theory. Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) acknowledge the narrative of othering within research and suggest that,

> *"Knowing the Other is one of the major motivations for doing qualitative research. The researcher wishes to know the Other in order to give a voice to people who were previously ignored or were the object of distorted conceptions.* (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi, 2012: 299)

Baum (2016) notices the discourse of the Other but describes it as "'*mixaphobia'* (*fear of the unmanageable volume of the unknown*)" (Baum, 2016: 9). This fear of the Other, the unknown, the homogenised Out-group can clearly be seen in the security motivated policy making. In their study, Piotrowski et al (2019) examined national attitudes to ingroup and out groups and considered how they affect willingness to host refugees in Poland. They draw a distinction between patriotism and nationalism with patriotism, the "*love of one's country*" having a more inclusive attitude to refugees as an outgroup (Piotrowski et al, 2019:723). The researchers also apply zero-sum game theory to understand host citizen's responses to refugees, suggesting that host citizens can view refugees as competitors for resources, and any successes or gains made by refugees are framed as losses for them. This in turn leads to feelings of anxiety and fear where the outgroup are perceived as a threat (Piotrowski et al, 2019: 723). Bruneau et al (2018) also used Social Identity Theory to examine dehumanising

policies regarding refugees in four European countries. They note the language used by politicians where,

> *David Cameron referred to refugees as a "swarm", Janusz Koran-Mekka, a Polish Member of the European Parliament (MEP), referred to an "invasion of human trash", and Zsolt Bayer, founder of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party, published an editorial referring to the "hordes" of migrants as "wild beasts" and "lice*" (Bruneau et al, 2018: 645).

They argue that where refugees are conceptualised as "*outgroup others*", alongside blatant dehumanisation, there is a "*stronger predictor of hostile and aggressive outcomes"* (Bruneau et al, 2018: 646). Mention is made of the images of Alan Kurdi the toddler who was drowned during his migration journey, which provoked a level of empathy which seemed to reduce instances of blatant dehumanisation. However, they noted that in the Czech Republic, Spain, Greece, and Hungary, Muslim refugees were openly and "*blatantly dehumanized*" (Bruneau et al, 2018: 647).

Soylu Yalcinkaya et al (2018) also refer to Alan Kurdi in their work discussing the role of emotion on the acceptance of refugees as an out-group, explaining that "*media portrayals of refugees can guide public opinion in either direction."* (Soylu Yalcinkaya et al, 2018:125). They introduce the concept of "cultural malleability" suggesting that host countries acceptance of Syrian refugees is influenced by how keen the refugees are to "*adopt the host culture*" (Soylu Yalcinkaya et al, 2018:126), with children being perceived as less of a threat as they are perceived as being more culturally malleable. Refugees who are perceived as wanting to preserve their own culture are often given less of a welcome. Also introduced is the idea of "*cultural essentialism"* which suggest that host country citizens can perceive a fixed commonality of culture with an outgroup. They suggest that "*exposure to child refugees can challenge broader essentialist perceptions of refugees as a uniform group of cultural "others" with fixed characteristics"* (Soylu Yalcinkaya et al, 2018:126) and by breaking down these perceptions which create strong divides between in and out groups can enable more inclusive attitudes.

4.4.3 Said: Orientalism

The inclusion of Said's work on Orientalism has been an important addition to the theoretical lens. It has enabled me to scrutinise the study with ideas that are sensitive to historical power dynamics yet still seem to resonate today. Said, as a Palestinian-American academic, developed a discourse which is reputed to have birthed post-colonial studies (Mayblin, 2017). Orientalism describes how people from the "Orient," the East, which includes the Middle East, have been cast in certain roles, over centuries by European imperialists, whom he describes as the "Occident." Those from the Orient have been conceptualised as exotic or strange, but also as childlike, less culturally developed and potentially dangerous whilst the Occident, the European, have imagined themselves in a conceptual binary enabling them to take on the role of protector and rationale thinker, who is more powerful. Inevitably this discourse essentialises and reduces the lives and experiences of people from the East, which has led to stereotyping and prejudice (Kyriakides et al, 2018:66)

As the study's participant children are Syrian (in Said's terms, from the Orient) who now live within a predominately white British community (the Occident) it seemed helpful to include Orientalism as a discourse to make sense of representations of the children and their families. It enabled me as researcher to critique my own perceptions and possible prejudices. (Gaywood et al, 2020:151). Also, there is a clear congruence between Said's work and this study. He suggests that historically "*The Orient was therefore not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent Other*" (Said, 1985: 93). One of the main aims of my research has been to foreground the voice and stories of the refugee child participants, to disrupt this silencing, which is a thread that runs through the thesis. My own family history influenced the creation of this study, the post migration experiences of Jewish child refugee feature in the literature review and a family member was interviewed about the research findings as an experienced witness, having arrived in Britain as a child Holocaust survivor. It has long struck me that there is an interplay of similarities between the Jewish experience in 1930s and 40s to the experience of Syrian families fleeing their country from 2015. Said also recognises this throughout his book Orientalism (Said, 1978) and in his later work notes,

> *that hostility to Islam in the modern Christian West has historically gone hand-in-hand with, has stemmed from the same source, has been nourished at the*

> *same stream as anti-Semitism, and that a critique of the orthodoxies, dogmas, and disciplinary procedures of Orientalism contributes to an enlargement of our understanding of the cultural mechanisms of anti-Semitism*. (Said, 1985: 99)

Kyriakides et al (2018) use Orientalism to investigate how "*scripts of refuge*" (Kyriakides et al, 2018:59) are framed within a Canadian refugee resettlement programme, which is based on a sponsor-sponsored relationship. They describe the uneven power relationship already in place between the sponsors and suggest that this is exacerbated when refugees are conceptualised as "*objects of rescue*" and are represented as passive and child-like. Noted also is the need for refugees to prove their victimhood to be accepted, and the role of the host country being adopted as saviour (Kyriakides et al, 2018:60). It is suggested that,

> *Edward Said's Orientalism thesis offers a partial way into deconstructing cultural scripts of refuge. The Western historical construction of the "non-Western other" as uncivilised, unruly, and lacking in cultural sophistication, contrasts with "the West" where the cultivation of self assumes a superior and dominant vantage point from which Western imperial interventions are justified*. (Kyriakides et al, 2018:61).

The authors have chosen to re-frame the refugee participants in their study as "*persons of self-rescue*" who were successful in navigating a "*voyage of death*" (Kyriakides et al, 2018:65) to remediate the impact of Occidental power and conceptualisation.

In his investigation of Congolese unaccompanied refugee children's experiences of resettlement in the Global North, Bilotta (2015) also uses Orientalism as a lens to scrutinise the process. Like Kyriakides et al (2018) his findings suggest that the power imbalances highlighted by Orientalism are present. However, he concludes these are wider reaching and impact the whole resettlement process for the unaccompanied children including placements with white foster families who have little or no knowledge of Democratic Republic of Congo and the children's engagement in trauma services commenting,

> *The resettlement process from a refugee camp to life in an industrialized country appears steeped in notions of oppression, marginalization, and subjugation, which are routinely disregarded*. (Bilotta, 2015:24)

Bilotta (2015) notes the Orientalism within the research process and suggests that researchers from the Global North continue to "*portray refugees as victims who are inherently passive and powerless"* (Bilotta, 2015:33). Through an examination of these examples where other researchers have used Said's (1978) work on Orientalism has enabled me to examine the complexity of the process and within my research I have attempted to take on board Bilotta's recommendation that future research should be participatory, "*refugee-centred*" and that refugee children should be considered experts of their own "*true knowledge*" (Bilotta, 2015:35).

4.5 How the lens has been used throughout the research.

The theoretical lens has utilised intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2017) as a model, enabling the complexity of the field to be interrogated through the three intersecting theories described. It been used widely throughout the study: in the ethical approach, the examination of the contexts of the children, the methodological construction of the research, through to the literature review as well as being used to analyse the results and inform the discussions. The three theories have enabled me to bring into sharp focus issues relating to power, and power imbalance which are routed in historical conceptions of the Other, which provided an important backdrop to the ethical approach which has been evident throughout. Understanding the social dynamic concepts of In and Out groups supported the development of my positionality whilst the interplay of Said and Tajfel and Turner's work, coupled with Vygotsky's ideas about the More Knowledgeable Other prompted me to recruit a cultural guide (6.6.1)

The children's contexts have already been described in terms of their micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystems (Chapter 2) however this study is located within each child's social world and the theories which feature in the theoretical frame are all concerned with relationships within their social contexts (Gaywood et al 2020: 151) providing the means to examine these more closely within the daily interactions in each ECEC setting. During the discussion of the children's macro-systems, the image of a three stranded cord was used to briefly examine the British government's

response to refugee and migrants (2.5). Within the three strands of a humanitarian, security and economic response, the theoretical frame offered a more critical lens to examine the emerging findings. The discourse uncovered by the literature review of the *Us-Them* narrative (Maher and Smith, 2014; Pace and Sen, 2018; Bennett, 2018) can be clearly seen in the securitised informed policy and relates directly to the Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). Equally, when examined carefully through the triad lens, the humanitarian strand of the cord appears to contain the subtle positioning of the host country as saviour, which is illuminated by Said's work on Orientalism (1978), and again was highlighted through the literature review (Chapter 3). The children's meso-systems are ECEC settings, and it is within these contexts that the Vygotskian element of the theoretical frame was most useful.

> *Vygotsky (1978) outlines the role of the 'More Knowledgeable Other' which is an important concept when considering how refugee children negotiate relationships as the newcomers in an established group* (Gaywood et al, 2020: 151)

Not only is Vygotsky important to help frame the refugee children's new relationships but he also enables thought to be given to the social aspects of learning which is vital given the pedagogical focus of the research.

The theoretical lens also supported the construction of the research design, helping to frame the historical roots of the qualitative research paradigm. The observation tool used as one of the data collecting methods (Appendix 7) was formed using Vygotsky's theories about learning in a social context. The graphic elicitation method was founded within the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) however this approach was cemented through the work of Theron et al (2011) who used a similar drawing methodology with children who had experienced the Rwandan genocide. The location of this work felt important as it was centred and developed in Africa as opposed to being Euro-centric, thus offering further re-mediation to a potentially Occident-biased study. In a similar vein, this study also took seriously Bilotta's (2015: 35) recommendations so endeavoured to be participatory, refugee focussed and power sensitive. Within the research design, there were layers of member checking and experienced witness input, who either identified themselves as belonging to "Out-

groups” or who had first-hand experience as a child refugee. The focus of the theoretical frame provided the impetus for this inclusion within the research design.

4.6 Summary

I have used this chapter to outline the creation of the theoretical lens and summarise each theory in turn. In addition, I have highlighted various examples of how each theory has been used in other research concerned with the experiences of child and young people who are refugees, to demonstrate the ability of each theory to offer a helpful lens in such a complex field. Although the theoretical lens used within this piece of research evolved, I have used an intersectional approach to combine the three theories which has provided a robust theoretical tool to fully examine the multi-faceted experiences of the refugee children. It has enabled me to ensure consistency to establish power sensitive practices and a clear ethical approach. The lens has brought into sharp focus the multi-layered issues facing refugees, post-migration within the Global North. It has illuminated wider discourses within the children’s macro contexts but has been sensitive enough to tease out the intricate inter-play of social relationships within their ECEC.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this methodology chapter is to demonstrate how I have attempted to answer the four research questions that emerged through my everyday practice as a Children Centre teacher, working in a local authority:

- *How do very young refugee children experience ECEC?*
- *Do they share any commonality of experience?*
- *What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy?*
- *What are the implications for future practice?*

It builds on the foundations which were established in the literature review (Figure 27) and takes seriously Strekalova-Hughes and Wang's (2019) findings which highlight the importance of stories for refugee children's identity formation (3.5.1). I have developed methodological approaches which have enabled me to capture the lived experiences of the four research participant children, Ahmed, Amira, Hassan and Karam, and then present these to each child individually, as their own story of their time in ECEC.

Ahmed Amira Hassan Karam

Lippiatt (2019)

The children, families and their key people authenticated and checked these stories for accuracy and reliability, making their own comments. The stories were shared with a variety of groups to promote subsequent discussions to tease out other emerging issues, using Tobin's study (2016) as a model. This chapter also includes my methodological original contributions to knowledge, which are discussed more fully in Chapter 9.

5.2 Chapter structure

Firstly, **the research design** will be introduced making use of a diagram (Figure 30). Each part of the design will be discussed in turn. There will be a short description of **the paradigm** adopted. Next the **pilot study** will be described, which was used to hone the data collection methods ensuring that they could elicit data and ultimately answer the research questions. The **rationale for the methodology** and the adoption of **a hybrid methodology** incorporating praxeology and a poly-vocal approach, will be explained. I will discuss the methodological decision to **write in the first person** then the **participant recruitment selection** and process will subsequently be described. Following, the **data collection methods** will be outlined and then the approach adopted for the **data analysis** will be expanded. There will be a discussion about **methods employed to ensure trustworthiness and rigour,** which include the use of a reflective journal to promote reflexivity and member checking processes which I have presented as *five pillars of trustworthiness* (Figure 36).

5.3 The research design

Figure 30 sets out in broad terms the research design adopted for this project. It incorporates the research paradigm, methodology, participant selection process, the methods used and the pilot study. A layered approach was used, and the diagram reflects this. It also highlights the triangulated model used in terms of the research participants, the need to find a cultural guide and the important role of the reflective journal in capturing my own voice as researcher. Towards the bottom, the diagram illustrates the importance of establishing trustworthiness, transferability and applicability to practice ensuring the research is rigorous by design. The participants arrived in England between December 2015 – May 2016. The research was undertaken in phases which began in May 2017 with the pilot study and was completed

in October 2021 with a final round of ethical checks. Figure 31 shows the full spectrum of events and offers a comprehensive timeline.

Figure 30. Research design diagram

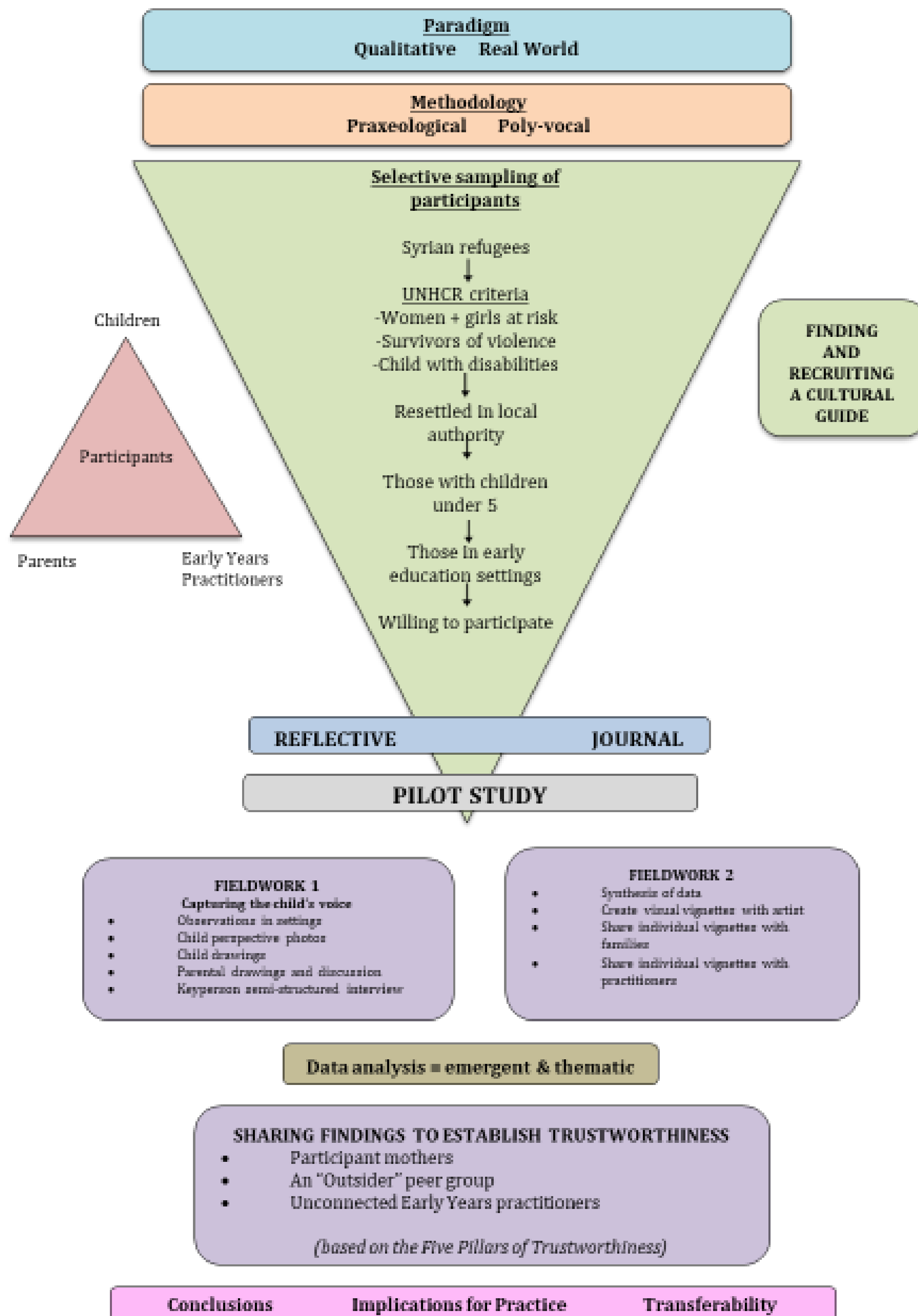
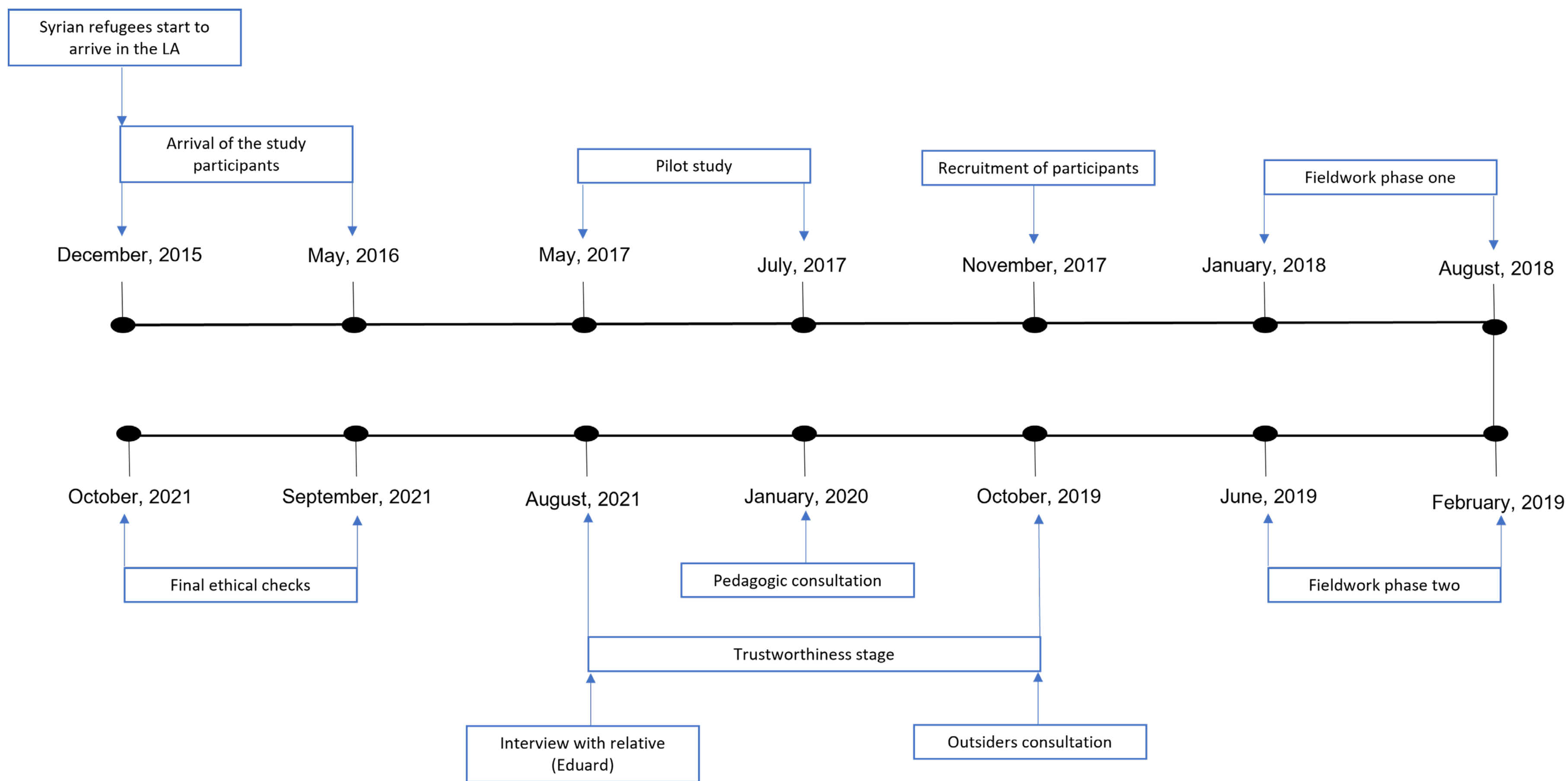


Figure 31. Methodological timeline



5.3.1 Paradigm

The paradigm chosen within which the research has been conducted is first and foremost qualitative and secondly real world (Robson, 2016). A qualitative approach to research in early education is commonplace and is used almost exclusively by the researchers referred to in the literature review whose studies were concerned with the lived experiences of refugee children (Figure 24) therefore to adopt this approach seemed appropriate, particularly as it enabled me to use a range of data collection methods. The paradigm also includes a "real world" research approach (Robson, 2011) which typically,

> *focuses on problems and issues of direct relevance to people's lives, to help find ways of dealing with the problems or of better understanding the issue* (Robson, 2011:4)

The issue in this case is the post migration everyday experiences of refugee children in ECEC and the real-world approach enables an examination of the issue with an acknowledgement of the complex, political and "*often volatile*" field (Robson, 2011:4). The use of a real-world research paradigm has been helpful to frame the study and answer the original pedagogical questions as a clearly stated aim of this paradigm is practical and for the researcher to apply their findings and *"suggest ways in which desirable change might take place*" (Robson, 2011:7)

Although practically orientated, the real-world research paradigm also adopts a "*scientific attitude*" (Robson, 2011:14/5). This scientific approach which Robson describes as systematic, sceptical, and ethical (Robson, 2011:15) is congruent with the methodological approach (5.4.2) and are principles which I have attempted to follow throughout the investigation including in the approach to the literature review and the construction of the research design (Figure 30) to add rigour within a qualitative approach.

5.3.2 Pilot study

Built into the research design was the opportunity to undertake a pilot study, with the primary purpose of trying out data collection methods to ensure they could adequately elicit the child's experience of early education and answer the research questions. The decision was taken to use my professional contacts, for ease, to help identify potential participants and I developed the following criteria in an attempt to replicate the possible challenges experienced by refugee children.

- The child and family had faced significant challenge.
- The child either spoke English as an additional language or was significantly delayed in their speech and language development.
- The child had a diagnosed special educational need or disability (SEND)
- The child was not in their pre-school year (3 years old or below)

Contact was made with the two nursery managers that I lined managed, who helped identify possible participants and letters were sent to parents to gain consent (see Appendix 1) The diagram below outlines the plan.

Figure 32. Pilot study plan

Pilot study May - July 2017
Children: 2/3 children in each setting to be identified by each nursery manager with any of the following experiences • English as an additional language • Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND) • Experienced significant challenge

<table>
<tr>
<td>Setting one

Local Authority nursery which has children from 2-5. Located within a 30% area of depravation, outside the city. 80 + % of the children have been identified as having factors which could make them vulnerable learners (Ofsted, 2015:6)</td>
<td>Setting two

Local Authority nursery which has children from 2-5. Located within a 30% area of deprivation and experience rural isolation. Predominately a white working-class mining area with high rates of unemployment. 50 + % of the children have been identified as having factors which could make them vulnerable learners (Ofsted, 2015:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Methods:
• Using a camera to take photos of “what you like best in nursery”
• “Can you draw yourself in nursery?”
• Observations of the children using:
* AcE social competence and self-concept
* Leuvan scale
* EEL Target child interactions
* Conversations with the keyperson
* Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Parents
Capturing their child’s life story by making three separate drawings covering:
• before nursery
• when they first came to nursery
• how they experience nursery now</td>
</tr>
</table>

It soon became clear that including such a high number of children in the pilot study was overly ambitious and not practical, so it was decided to work with just one child and their family, who were facing significant challenge, and this would be adequate to

test possible data collection methods, which were broadly based around the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) and a drawing methodology. The rationale for adopting a visual approach is discussed later (6.5.2)

5.3.2.1 The primary participant: Liam

(Lippiatt 2018)

Liam was two years old and at the time of the pilot study was subject to a child protection plan. He had not yet developed understandable speech and there were concerns about his cognition and development, due to his traumatic early childhood experiences. The family are White British, living with significant socio-economic disadvantage. Liam has two older brothers who were both in primary school. The boys were being cared for by their father, Andy, following their abandonment by their mother after her unsafe life choices and subsequent assault on the children and Andy. Andy was an older father, in his fifties, and during the pilot study was having a parental capacity assessment carried out by social care as there were concerns that he could not prioritise the children's wellbeing over his need to see and re-establish his relationship with their mother. Liam was attending setting two (Figure 32) and would often became significantly upset on arrival to nursery. The family were well known to me as the Children Centre teacher for the nursery, and they had joined me and some colleagues on a family break organised by the Children Centres the previous year, prior to their mother leaving the marital home. Andy was keen to be part of the pilot study as he felt it would help us understand more about Liam. He also wanted to contribute to supporting refugee children in some way. Liam's social worker was clear

that Andy had parental responsibility for Liam and was able to make the decision to take part.

5.3.2.2 Gathering of data

Data was gathered to understand the experiences of Liam in nursery from a variety of sources which included: co-drawings (parent and child); the learning diary from the nursery which was shared with the participants (parent and child); photos taken by Liam in nursery who was asked, "*Can you take a photo of the things you like most in nursery*?" Also included were unstructured researcher observations which were primarily focussed on the child's sense of self within the nursery and their relationships with others; an assessment of Liam made with Andy using an element of the Accounting Early for Lifelong Learning programme, which was in use within Children Centre services (Bertram et al, 2008; Gaywood and Pascal, 2016) and a parental interview where Andy was encouraged to draw his response to the question: "*How does your child experience nursery?*"

Having gathered a variety of artefacts these were reviewed, and the key findings were synthesised. Using the principles set out in the Tobin (2016) study which were used when editing the pieces of film, "*a common set of concerns and guidelines"* (Tobin 2016:34) were adopted with a view to make a PowerPoint presentation of Liam's lived experiences at nursery with the intention of showing Liam and his family for review, then present to his keyperson for discussion. To make selections for the slide presentations the following questions were posed for each artefact:

- Does this describe/ represent Liam's experience in nursery?
- Does it specifically demonstrate/indicate his sense of "being" and "belonging"?
- Can this be represented visually?
- Is this accessible for the whole family?

As part of this editing process, it was important to meet with the graphic artist to ensure that what had been selected could be adequately represented visually. Any artefact which was unable to comply with the criteria above was discarded.

5.3.2.3 Creating, sharing the slideshow, and recording responses

Having selected the artefacts, I created a PowerPoint slideshow which was presented as Liam's story and represented his experiences at nursery. The aim was to create a dialogue process (Tobin, 2016: 36) between Liam, his family and the ECEC professionals who were caring for him. Building on two of the questions used by Tobin (Tobin, 2016:45): *What do you think of that?* and *What did you like or not like?* The following questions were added:

- What are your feelings about Liam's experience in nursery?
- Do you recognise Liam in this story?
- To Liam's brothers: Do you have similar experiences/ feelings in school?

All the participants, Liam's family and the ECEC professionals recognised Liam and his experiences in the story. Initially I tried to audio – record the family responses, then add them to the PowerPoint before showing the staff at Liam's nursery, but the quality was poor and through discussion with my supervisors it became clear that the sound clips did not add anything and interrupted the visual flow of the story.

5.3.2.4 Issues arising from the pilot study

Several issues arose from the pilot study, these included: maintaining focus, strong and feelings emotion, encountering ethical dilemmas and ensuring a positive ending. During the editing process it was necessary to apply my professional knowledge of children, and their drawing development, to understand co-drawing process, but there was also a strong temptation to try to draw conclusions about Liam's state of mind, particularly in relation to the trauma and difficulty he had experienced. I found myself very easily being drawn into conjecture of this nature, which potentially could have de-railed the editing process. The fundamental question that I kept asking was: *does this add to Liam's narrative about how he experiences nursery*? This was an important piece of learning going forward because it highlighted the need for me as a researcher to remain focussed.

During the pilot study I became acutely aware of the emotive nature of relational research. As a result, during the field work phase, I engaged with a counsellor regularly, as part of the ethical requirements, to enable me to process in a safe space some of the more challenging trauma I encountered through interactions with the children and their families.

The pilot study also alerted me to the ethical dilemmas I could possibly face, when working with children who are facing significant challenge as a practitioner researcher. I had to negotiate being a researcher and the need to collect data alongside my professional role of supporting Liam's learning and development whilst he was on a child protection plan. Ending my involvement as a researcher proved complex. I found that an exit strategy needed to be inbuilt and thought about to ensure that there was a clear ending. (Research Diary: 23.2.18)

Conducting the pilot study with Liam and his family offered these significant insights which were invaluable for the primary research. The complexity of Liam's life experiences enabled me to try out the various methods and approaches which were easily transferable and able to be used with the refugee children. His additional needs, traumatic background and lack of speech in a small part resonated with their lives, however the children's bilingualism offered another layer of complexity for the methodology.

5.4 Methodology

5.4.1 Rationale

The pilot study proved invaluable for enabling me to not only make methodological decisions and refine data collection methods, but also provided the opportunity to firm up my identity as a researcher, address challenging issues when working with children who have experienced significant challenges and hone the purpose of this research. As the pilot study developed it became clear that because of its nature, the final study would need a methodology which considered the strongly relational aspect of the research. In addition, through the pilot study I also became acutely aware that in terms of ethics, the research had superseded the ethical requirements of '*Do no harm'* as for Liam and Andy taking part in the research had been both restorative and transformational. Andy felt that he had gained important insights into his son's life and

by giving voice to Liam's experiences, the adults who cared for him in his ECEC setting, responded differently to him so Liam grew in confidence.

To answer two of the original pedagogical research questions: *What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy? What are the implications for future practice?* this study needed to be grounded in practice and the methodology employed needed to encompass this. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, a central concern of this thesis is the issue of power, so the methodology adopted needed to be power sensitive and able to structurally re-address issues of disempowerment of the participants. With all these concerns in mind, I set out to develop a methodology which was fit for purpose.

5.4.2 Hybrid methodology

This methodology emerged and is a hybrid, in that there is a merging of two separate methodologies, with the final methodological approach located within the intersection between the two. (Gaywood et al, 2020:153). Haillovich (2013) writes about the challenge of researching with refugees and suggests the need to, "*develop "customised" methods and methodologies, rather than relying on standardised research techniques"* (Halilovich, 2013:136) and through the pilot study it became clear that,

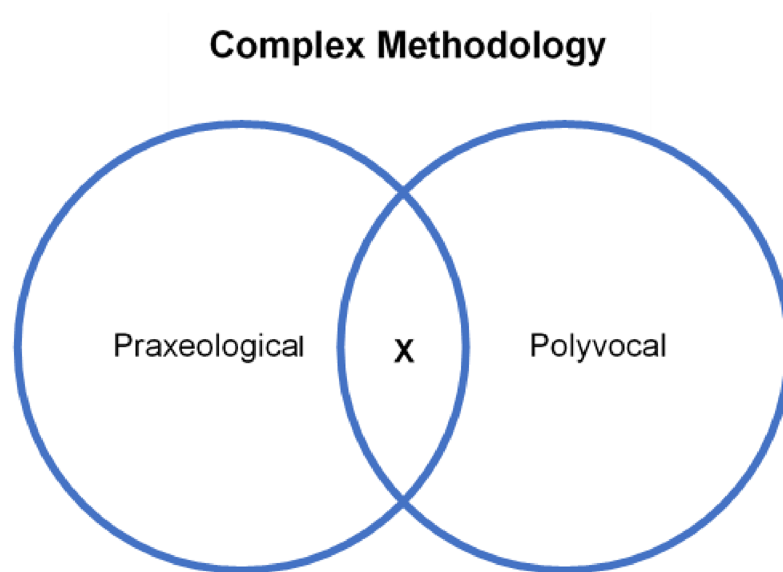
> *the methodology for this piece of research is dynamic and evolving by nature. It seems to need to be responsive to the needs of the research and therefore is fast becoming a hybrid.*
>
> Reflective Journal (9.5.18)

The two methodologies selected, praxeology (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012) and poly-vocal (Tobin, 2016), individually offered much to the research design. Both sit well within the qualitative and real-world research paradigms because the study is concerned with people as the primary data source (Gentles et al, 2015:1776) and there is a "*focus on gaining a deeper understanding of an experience"* (Matua and Van Der Wal,2015:23). Robson (2011) acknowledges the political nature of real-world research (Robson, 2011:4) as do Pascal and Bertram (Pascal and Bertram, 2012:484) when outlining the features of a praxeological

approach. The praxeological approach has been described as, a "*science of the social*" (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012:597) which is also in keeping with the real-world paradigm's requirements of a systemised, scientific and ethical approach (Robson, 2011).

The complexity of the field and the sensitivity to the ethical issues already described, also drove the adoption of a complex methodological approach, as I needed the methodology to address issues of power, emotion and consider the often-hidden discourses illuminated by the literature review.

Figure 33. Revisiting Figure 4: An intersectional complex methodology



Gaywood et al (2020)

5.4.2.1 Praxeology methodology

Praxeology is a methodology strongly grounded in praxis. Formosinho and Formosinho (2012) describe praxis as,

> *a grounded and reasoned, situated and contextualised practice. It is a practice infused with beliefs and values, based on educational theories and situated in specific contexts with specific educators and for specific beneficiaries, thus including power relationships*. (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012: 597)

These eight characteristics described are clearly visible within my study. The rationale for the research is both grounded and reasoned and has been situated and contextualised in practice (Chapter 2). I have been open and clear about my own positionality and transparent about the beliefs and values which underpin the construction of the research. The theoretical triad has been used to provide an educational lens through which to gaze and one of the aims of the research is to use the findings to develop a pedagogical approach which is beneficial to both refugee children, their families, host country children and early educators. In addition, there has been much acknowledgement of power dynamics within the study, alongside a commitment to a redistribution of power (Pascal and Bertram, 2012: 484) ensuring that the children who participated were apportioned both "*voice and power*" (Pascal and Bertram, 2012: 485). Other praxeological characteristics found in this research are described by Gaywood et al (2020), these include the acknowledgement of feelings and emotions, the attached nature of the research and ethical elements (Gaywood et al, 2020:153).

5.4.2.2 Poly vocal methodology

When looking to investigate refugee children's everyday experiences in ECEC, the primary concern was to elicit each child's voice in their own narrative. The pilot study and the examination of each child's context (Chapter 2) suggested that many narratives inform each child's story and should be included this inquiry. Praxeology methodology recognises the role of the researcher as "*the main instrument of research*" (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012:602), but it seemed important in the creation of this hybrid methodology, to not only acknowledge the role of the researcher but also my voice within the children's stories. Therefore, it has been necessary to incorporate a polyvocal methodology to account for these multiple voices. Figure 34 illustrates the many voices who form part of just one child's story. They have been represented in a layered format to illustrate each voice's positional importance within the research project. The children occupy the pole position, indicating their centrality within the research, followed by their parents and the early educators who were their key people, who were the primary research participants. Each child's siblings were included as they took part in the story feedback sessions, as did the colleagues of the key people, who formed the wider professional team in each ECEC setting. My own

voice is included, followed by the interpreter, who mediated all the interactions with the children and their families.

Figure 34. Voices for one child's story

Refugee child
Child's Parents
Child's keyperson
Child's siblings
Early Years Professionals in each setting
Researcher's voice
Mediated through the interpreter

(Gaywood et al, 2020)

The inclusion of the interpreter's voice is deliberate. Halilovich (2013) describes interpreters as "*invisible actors*" (Halilovich, 2013:134) who can provide another voice in the research (Halilovich, 2013:135). It has been my experience that the interpreter in this study has not only acted as a cultural guide and a valued gatekeeper but also her voice has also added to the wider narrative.

5.4.3 Writing in the first person

Given the inclusion of my voice within the poly vocal approach and the praxeological recognition of the role of the researcher, it seemed ethically important to be overt about my presence in the research. By locating my positionality as a researcher (6.7) I was able to acknowledge my values, reduce the opportunity for bias and recognise the potential power imbalance that the research process can bring. This is consistent with the methodological approach. To maintain the ethical and methodological integrity, I

made the decision to write in the first person, rather than potentially hiding myself by writing in the third person. Writing in the first person also re-iterates my commitment to the value "*of personal knowledge*" whilst acknowledging, that research knowledge and evidence "*is not located only in experimental research*" but can be found in experience (Fulbrook, 2003:229). Using this narrative approach of writing in the first person, is consistent with the story telling aspect incorporated within the methodology. More importantly, "*it is a de-constructive-reconstructive process that enables knowledge to surface, which might otherwise remain buried"* (Fulbrook, 2003:229), offering the study more opportunity to illuminate and give voice and honour to the children's stories. Writing in the first person also aims to ensure that this thesis is accessible and personal which is a further attempt to re-dress power towards the reader who may be outside of conventional academia. Interacting with the reader in this way also reflects the relational aspect of the research and is congruent with the methodological approach.

5.4.4 Participant selection

The strategy employed to recruit participants for this study was purely practical. The research questions were borne out of my personal and professional concerns about refugee children but within my working context, as already described, (2.4) there were few refugee children and families. As part of the SVP resettlement scheme Syrian families began to arrive within the local authority from December 2015 and at the point of recruitment (Autumn 2017) there were only seven refugee families who were part of the government scheme (Gaywood et al, 2020:150) which meant the potential field was small. Other communities of refugees or asylum seekers were considered to broaden the field, but by nature of their situation, these communities can be transitory and elusive. In addition, host professionals who were offering support to refugees, were reluctant to allow an unknown researcher access, understandably acting as gatekeepers. It was necessary then to use my own contacts within the local authority who at that time were co-ordinating the SVP resettlement scheme locally, using the same snowballing approach (Vogt, 1999) which I employed to find a cultural guide (Figure 43). So, when a bi-annual gathering of the Syrian community was hosted at one of the Children Centres, a colleague suggested I ask for an opportunity to present my research proposal to the families and seek volunteers. Following a PowerPoint

presentation and a question-and-answer session, which was supported by an interpreter (Mina), four families decided to join the project. Information outlining the project and consent letters in Arabic were shared with the parents. All signed these apart from Hassan's father, who is unable to read or write. Extra time was spent with him and the interpreter explaining in more detail the project. He made his mark to agree to join the research. The research design diagram (Figure 30) outlines the selection criteria for the participants. All the families were Syrian refugees who had been selected for resettlement by the UNHCR to take part in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme and had a child under five years old who attended an ECEC setting. The families gave permission for me to contact the education settings of each child and an initial visit was made to the senior leadership to explain the project and ask for access. In the case of Croft's End Nursery and Infant school, I contacted the chair of governors, who had been my service lead and former line manager, to proffer an introduction to the head teacher. He agreed and asked two teachers to become participants. I presented the project to both the manager and Ahmed's keyperson at Dog Lane Children Centre nursery, and they agreed to participate. Whilst at St Swithin's pre-school, the leader was also Amira's keyperson, so agreed to contribute. Written information was also given to the senior leaders to outline the project and to be clear about the expectations of the participants (Appendix 3)

Figure 35. A summary of the research participants (Phase One)

Children	**Ahmed**	**Amira**	**Hassan**	**Karam**
Age	3-4	3-4	3-4	Unknown poss: (5-7)
Parents	Zahra (mother) Father (did not take part)	Rahima (mother) Adeel (father)	Fatima (mother) Omar (father)	Yara (mother) Father (deceased in Syria) Grandmother
Occupation in Syria	Archaeologist	Mother/homemaker	Mother/homemaker	Unknown

	Hospital doctor	Owner of nut selling business	Bedouin farmer	Surgeon
Work status in UK	Volunteer at local historic sites Interpreter (working towards registration)	Mother/homemaker Working at a fruit market	Mother/homemaker Unemployed due to mental health needs	Volunteer in school
Siblings	Younger sister born in UK (under two)	Older brother (primary school age) Younger brother born in UK (under two)	Two older brothers and a sister (primary school) Younger brother born in UK (under two) Baby sister (by the end of the project)	Older sister in secondary school
Name of setting	Dog Lane Children Centre Nursery	St Swithin's pre-school	Croft's End Nursery school	Croft's End Infant school
Keyperson demographic	White female, late 40s. Level 3 qualified	White, female, late 30s. Level 3 qualified	White, female, 20s. QTS.	White female, mid 50s. QTS and Early Years Lead

5.4.5 Methods: First phase (January – August 2018)

The use of a polyvocal methodology differs slightly from the Mosaic approach. Clarke and Moss (2011) conceptualise each method as a part of a mosaic using observation, child conferencing, cameras, tours, mapping, and role play within an ECEC setting to capture the child's voice and then interviews with parents and practitioners. They analyse each method, bringing them together to create a mosaic which reflects the children's lived experiences. The methods I developed for the polyvocal methodology included comparable approaches. I used child and parent

drawings, child photos, practitioner interviews, researcher observations, field notes and a reflective journal. Although similar, the aim is slightly different. Tobin (2016) employed a polyvocal methodology and was committed to capturing the many voices involved with migrant children, including their families. He filmed the children at play, then used those films as a provocation for discussion between parents and practitioners. Due to the potential of traumatised behaviour, it felt inappropriate and unethical to capture the children on film in their ECEC. I therefore needed a slightly different approach and chose to extend the drawing methodology (Theron et al 2011) and develop a set of still images which could provide a similar provocation to discussion as Tobin's (2016) film did. Although I used a similar concept to Clark and Moss (2011), I made choices about the methods I employed. My research differed in that I visited the children at home and interacted with their families, developing a relationship over a period of time and also saw them in their ECEC setting. I was mindful that the dynamic of my relationships with the children, their siblings and their parents were both complex and sensitive (see Chapter 6) so I had to negotiate the methods used differently. It felt uncomfortable to have formalised conversations with them in a child conference, but that did not mean that conversations did not happen. Many of the conversations were whispered or in Karam's case took part as he cuddled me. These were captured in my field notes and reflective diary. In my professional role as a specialist teacher working with very young children coping with social, emotional, or mental health needs, I was wary of introducing small world play with the children because of the link to therapeutic sand play interventions and the potential for an unplanned response from the children, based on their possible trauma. I was concerned it might breach my ethical commitment to the children. The 'tours' and 'mapping' element of the Mosaic Approach did not seem relevant to the children either. When I first met the children, they all, apart from Karam, were very isolated and did not appear particularly comfortable in their educational space. Asking them to conduct a tour of their ECEC seemed unfair as it presumed a secure sense of belonging was in place and was necessary to be able to undertake the task. Hassan, Amira, and Ahmed certainly did not exhibit high levels of confidence in the initial stages of the fieldwork. Equally, it was uncertain if the children would understand the concept of mapping and there was concern if a conversation was initiated about travel and journeys, it might cause a trauma re-trigger, due to their

per-migration experiences. Again, it would have been in direct opposition to the advice I received at the start of the project (Chapter 6).

These methods used to elicit data and attempt to answer the research questions had been tried and tested through the pilot study (5.3.2). Having chosen to collect data from a variety of sources, I will refer to each piece of data gathered collectively as *artefacts.* The data collection was divided into two phases. During the first phase the artefacts were gathered to understand the lived experiences of the children within early education, using a triangulated approach (see Figure 31 Research diagram). The second phase was concerned with creating each child's story in a PowerPoint vignette, then presenting it to all the participants for member checking, but also to tease out any other issues or concerns, in a similar vein to the Tobin (2016) study. A full record of the data gathering schedule can be found in Appendix 15.

5.4.5.1 Focussed child observations

Close observation of children is part of my ongoing professional practice and as discussed previously is commonly used in early years practice to make summative assessments of children's learning (Carr et al, 2002). The focussed observations used within this piece of research (Appendix 7) were broadly based on a Vygotskian understanding of children learning through social interactions, in keeping with the theoretical frame. They were built around two themes drawn from The Accounting Early for Lifelong Learning programme (Bertram et al, 2008): Effective Relationships and Connectedness, both of which are concerned with how the children interact socially and construct learning with their peers. Also included were the Leuven wellbeing and involvement scale (Laevers, 2003) which indicates how involved a child is in their play which suggests their levels of wellbeing and the Zone of Initiative scale from the Effective Early Learning Programme (EEL) (Pascal and Bertram, 2001) to chart how much each child was able to initiate their own play. Each observation was timed for fifteen minutes during which I wrote down everything I saw and attempted to maintain a fly-on-the-wall presence, keeping interaction with the child and other children to a minimum. In addition, the type of play was recorded, in terms of whether the child was playing alone, alongside, with one other child, in a group or with an adult. Each child was visited and observed on three separate occasions at their ECEC setting.

5.4.5.2 Child perspective photographs

Whilst this activity was simple, some of the logistics involved in its execution were more complex. There were numerous ethical issues encountered which required sensitivity and forethought. It was agreed with each of the settings that on the fourth visit, when I asked the children to take photos of what was important to them in nursery, pre-school and reception, the children would be able to use the designated staff camera to avoid the safeguarding issues of introducing a nonregulated camera which may capture pictures of other children during the activity. Generally, this worked well. Ahmed took two photographs which had children in. Parental consent was sought to use these images but in the end those photos were discarded in the editing process and the original images destroyed. When Karam exclusively took pictures of his classmates, staff at Croft's End did not feel able to share the photos with me, even though I was prepared to seek parental consent to use the images of the children in the photos. Amira's parents were originally concerned about her completing this activity, as they felt that she might be singled out, and identified as being different or become known as a refugee, so it was agreed with the leader of St Swithin's that other children would be offered the same activity by the staff at different times to avoid any undue attention being drawn to Amira. When I came to do this activity with Ahmed, he indicated that he did not want to do it with me. It was important to respect Ahmed's feelings, so I withdrew. However, one of the members of staff at Dog Lane was well versed with the Mosaic approach and had a positive relationship with Ahmed, so when she offered to support Ahmed with the task, I agreed. He subsequently completed the activity happily with her. None of the children had access to an interpreter for this primarily because I was aware that whilst in their ECEC setting, the children were never able to access interpretation support and their keypeople reported that each one was able to fully understand English, even if they were reluctant to speak. I chose to maintain the same conditions they were used to when interacting with them in their settings.

5.4.5.3 Mina the interpreter

From early in the project, I was advised to use an interpreter to ensure clear communication. The local authority I worked for insisted that the interpreter was chosen from their approved list. I paid Mina personally according to her hourly rate.

She became an important figure in the research however, given the concern with positionality and power in this research project, the use of an interpreter needs to be considered carefully. Reflecting on her seminal essay, Spivak (2010) comments, "*Women outside of the mode of production narrative mark the points of fadeout in the writing*" (Spivak, 2010: 21). Mina, the interpreter in this study, could possibly be one of those women, whose story could easily be faded out, partly due to her low status as a sessional worker with a zero-hours contract and partly because of the professional guidelines for interpreters which suggest that they, "*serve as a conduit (neutral and invisible)*" (Rosenburg et al, 2008: 87). Mina was far from invisible in this research and her story was captured well by the polyvocal element (Tobin 2016) of the hybrid methodology. Mina provided a significant bridge within the study as she managed to connect me to the families of the children and the families to the people who ran the vital services for refugees in the local authority. In their Canadian study, Yohani et al (2019) talk about interpreters being "*cultural brokers*" (Yohani et al 2019) concluding that they are important. The relationship I developed with Mina is represented in the Axioms of Positionality (Figure 49) and she acted not only as my cultural broker but my passport through the gatekeepers to be accepted by the Syrian families. Mina worked across the region supporting the Syrian Vulnerable Resettlement scheme in two local authorities. She met most of the families from the airport on their arrival in the UK and acted as their cultural guide helping them settle. She attended a whole variety of appointments acting as their interpreter including hospital appointments, school meetings, counselling sessions and was present at many of the new births. Mina was trusted by the families and used extensively by the local authority. However, there were a number of tensions Mina had to navigate. She spoke of harrowing situations she experienced with the refugee families where she found it necessary to spend the day in bed on a Saturday to recover her equilibrium. Mina, like the other interpreters, was employed by an agency, paid an hourly rate, and was offered little or no support to process her experiences.

The professionals who employed her often seemed to have their own understanding of an interpreter's role and very few credited her with being an important attachment figure for the families, rather expecting her to remain "*neutral and invisible*" at all times, irrespective of the circumstances. In her work she had to navigate displeasure from some Islamic men (not within this study) who felt she should wear the hijab, levels of

ignorance from professionals who did not appreciate that some of the cultural norms needed explanation, so often cast doubt on Mina's accuracy, assuming that she was merely supposed to be translating the words of the refugees, rather than interpreting the cultural contexts. The connection that Mina offered to me and to the families outside of this project was undoubtedly invaluable. However, her poor working conditions and often ignorant treatment by the host professionals provides further evidence of a disconnect between members of an in-group (host country professionals) and an out-group member (an Islamic Egyptian woman who has lived in England for many years). There are issues of power to be recognised, for although Mina provided a huge service in the welcome, orientation and settling process for the refugees her job was notoriously insecure, and her role unseen and underestimated. Examining this through Said's Orientalism lens (1978), again it is clear that Mina was cast as of less worth, at times incompetent, or possibly troublesome, which was informed by cultural insensitivity.

5.4.5.4 Child drawings

Eliciting the child's perspective through drawing was less problematic than the camera activity but still was not without its challenges. For the children to complete the drawing activity, I visited them at home, and we sat with their mother and the interpreter. It was decided to conduct this part of the data collection in the children's homes for a number of reasons. Firstly, I felt that they would be more relaxed and more open to share within a familiar space. Secondly, I was keen to include home visits to take into account the children's whole context. Lastly, my professional working practice, as a Children Centre teacher, incorporated visiting children at home as well as in the ECEC setting, as a more holistic approach to their learning and development. During these home visits I asked the children three questions:

- *Can you draw yourself at nursery?*
- *Who is important to you at nursery?*
- *Can you draw what you like to do at nursery*?

The children were offered a variety of pens and paper and were encouraged to draw their responses. The children each responded to the activity differently highlighting some unforeseen ethical dilemmas.

Hassan initially was happy to take part and drew pictures of trees and birds, indicating that he preferred the outside at nursery. When I asked if I could take his drawings home, or photograph them, Hassan became slightly aggressive and defensive. He initially crouched over his drawings, then he roughly stuffed them under the cushions of the sofa. I told him that they were his and I would not take them away, but he continued demonstrating highly defensive behaviour, protecting his drawings, which resulted in him taking his drawings upstairs to his bedroom. His mother Fatima was very distressed by this incident and expressed to me how worried she was about him. She asked me for a professional opinion about what I had seen.

Karam enjoyed the activity, drawing a person driving a car. He whispered to his mum to pretend to me that they had a car and seemed surprised when the interpreter translated this for me, but we all laughed together about his joke.

Ahmed completed the task with no interpreter present as Zahara, his mum, has stated categorically that she did not want an interpreter present. She felt that the family could engage in the research project without one. Zahara was unsure that Ahmed could understand what was being asked of him, but he managed to complete the task and his responses were clear.

Amira initially struggled to engage in the activity asking me to draw for her. Rahima and Adeel, her parents, expressed concern about her lack of confidence and told me that they were worried that she would be dominated at nursery and school. Eventually I employed a hand-over-hand method, supporting Amira to take control of the pen while I positioned my hand gently over hers. Once Amira felt comfortable, she took control of the drawing and was able to complete the task. The ethical issues raised will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.4.5.5 Parental drawing and discussions

Visits to the family home were also conducted giving opportunity for the parents make drawings in response to the questions:

- *Can you draw a picture of how your child experiences nursery/school?*
- *Can you draw a picture of how you experience nursery/school?*

I also asked a follow up question:

- *Does your child ever talk about nursery when s/he is not there?*

Only the mothers took part in this activity and subsequent discussions. Although during each interview, the study children were in their early education setting, all the women, apart from Yara, Karam's mum, had younger children present.

The women were offered a range of pens but tended to choose either a pencil or a biro to complete the task. The drawing aspect caused much laughter and seemed to relax the women, enabling them to talk about their children, experiences at the ECEC settings, their concerns and hopes for the future. The women recognised me as a fellow mother, and a professional over and above a researcher. They were keen to access my knowledge and experience to answer questions about their children and discuss worries. It was through wrestling with the ethical complexities thrown up through this activity that I developed the ethical approaches outlined in Chapter 6.

5.4.5.6 Keyperson semi-structured interviews

The keyperson semi-structured interviews were conducted in Spring 2018. A set of five questions were asked of each child's keyperson and the responses were recorded using a computer audio programme. Each interview was transcribed. As the interviews were semi-structured, follow up questions were occasionally asked for clarity, but these were noted. The five key questions were:

- *How do you think x experiences nursery?*
- *Can you talk about how they demonstrate a sense of belonging whilst in nursery?*

(how are they forming relationships with their peers, and with other adults)

- *Can you describe how they demonstrate their sense of self?*

- *Do you think their experience is “typical” for their age?*
- *Any other comments?*

5.4.5.7 Research journal

A research journal was kept throughout the whole project (18.2.16 – 26.9.20) to document the development of the research and capture my own thinking. It was an important data gathering tool and was used to acknowledge the researcher’s own narrative within the poly vocal methodology. The research journal became an intensely reflective record which enabled me to,

> *rigorously interrogate self, identify issues regarding positionality……(and) reflect on the intricate patterns of power in operation, within the relationships, contexts and interchanges* (Gaywood et al 2020:157/8).

Using the research journal as a data collection method was also in keeping with the praxeological approach where the researcher is considered, “*the main instrument of research”* (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012:602).

5.4.6 Methods: Second phase (February -June 2019)

In the second phase of data collection (February - June 2019) further methods were employed. The aim was to create PowerPoint representations of the children’s stories, which could be shown to the children, their families and the teams of Early Years Practitioners who were caring for them. The graphic artist, who was working with me, created images of the children based on my description of them and their character, navigating the ethical sensitivities around their clothes and skin tone. She depicted them in a variety of ways to reflect their experiences. This example represents Omar, Hassan’s father’s, perception that Hassan looked like he was in prison whenever he collected Hassan from Croft’s End Nursery school.

(Lippiatt, 2019)

These key experiences, which the artist depicted, were initially identified through a scrutiny of the data, then sifted, using the same process that was developed in the pilot study, answering the same key questions:

- *Does this describe the child's experience in nursery?*
- *Does it specifically demonstrate/indicate their sense of being and belonging?*
- *Can this be represented visually?*
- *Is this accessible for the whole family?*

A PowerPoint was made for each of the children using the artist's representations and the artefacts collected during the fieldwork. These were arranged and presented as their story. A copy of Amira's story can be found in Appendix 13 as an example.

The literature review highlighted the importance of stories for young refugee children (Chapter 3) and their use is a fundamental element in RefCrit theory (Strekalova-Hughes and Wang, 2019). The polyvocal element of the methodology required a conversation provocation and it had already been decided that film was not an option, therefore a credible alternative had to be found. Cameron and Theron (2011) discuss how migrant teenagers used cartoons to depict aspects of their lived experiences.

They outline the history of cartooning suggesting the cartoons have been used to depict events from 1300BC and beyond, whilst making the link to very young children's emerging drawings suggesting that "*cartooning as a literary and artistic form of autobiographical reflection is increasingly noted and lauded*" (Cameron and Theron, 2011: 206). Theron, Stuart and Mitchell (2011) provided a strong case for the methodological decision to pursue a drawing methodology as a culturally sensitive and accessible method. Given these considerations, the decision was taken to expand the drawing methodology, build on the cartoon element highlighted by Cameron and Theron (2011) and work with a graphic artist to create an alternative to a piece of film for each child. It was decided to use the varies elements described above to depict each child's story.

However, in her critique of art works, literature, and film about refugees, Gallien (2018) uses a postcolonial lens and highlights some of the issues around the representation of refugees suggesting that there can be, "*problematic modes of representation of forcibly displaced people*," (Gallien, 2018:722). In the same vein, when examining the pictorial elements of stories recounting refugee experience within children's literature, Savsar (2020) uses postcolonial theory and quite rightly askes the question, "*Does children's literature liberate or subjugate with these representations"* (Savsar, 2020:121). Both authors draw attention to the relevant concerns of refugee children being represented in a way which re-enforces colonial attitudes or unhelpful troupes about their experiences. The literature review (Chapter 3) highlighted the often-hidden narratives about refugees particularly concerning their positioning. The section which discusses the rise of a narrative of trauma (3.2.4) demonstrates clearly how this can place children in a disempowering position of victimhood whilst the following section (3.4.3) points to the issue of the host country being positioned as a saviour. Both of these narratives set up unhelpful narratives which reduce refugee children and force a position of being a grateful recipient of favour. Savsar (2020) posits that, "*the immigrant must be central, not marginal" and "it is essential to look at where migrants are situated in their own narratives"* (Savsar, 2020: 126). When deciding to use the graphic artist, all these issues were foremost in my mind. Savsar (2020) was critiquing representations of children's peri-migration stories and images which linked to homes and homelessness whilst I made an ethical decision early on to focus on children's post migration experiences (Chapter 6). The portrayal of the children in these story

vignettes nestles within the strong ethical frame, a power sensitive methodology and the theoretical frame which takes into account Said's (1978) work which draws attention to the unhelpful representation of people from an Orientalist perspective. Equally, much attention has been paid to issues of power and voice throughout this thesis, with the children being positioned clearly as "*persons of self-rescue*" (Kyriakides et al, 2018:65). Both the children, their siblings and their families approved the images, recognised the stories as their own being told and celebrated the children's achievements, suggesting the children were not subjugated by the process or the images used.

Nevertheless, given the sensitivities much thought was given to the artist herself who was carefully selected not only for her drawing expertise but also because of her experience which was an important element. Dawn Lippiatt was born and raised in Colombia, by an Argentinian mother and British father. Her mother's ancestors were Irish immigrants who arrived in Argentina to build railways and then settled. As a young child Dawn moved from Colombia to Spain, then to Wales before settling in England when she was 10, and so had personal lived experience of bilingualism and being a migrant. In addition, she had to have corrective surgery for an undiagnosed hip displacement as a child so again, she has lived with disability so was empathetic to the some of the children's experiences. Dawn has created artwork as part of extended residencies in Thailand, Cyprus and Mexico focussing on hidden personal stories linked to childhood trauma.

Although now a professional artist, Dawn was a first a trained early educator spending many years with young children. Drawing on her own professional and personal experiences, Dawn was able to work with me to consider how to visually create the children's stories and sensitively represent them, reducing their invisibility through cartoon drawings. In addition, it was recognised by Kellett (2010) that, "*One of the issues in child-led research is that children do still need the support of adults*" and that "*Adults can open gates and seek platforms that children might find difficult to access*" (Kellett, 2010: 201). Using a graphic artist meant that the children's experiences, including the artefacts they produced, could be collated, and presented in an accessible format.

5.4.6.1 Sharing of the individual vignettes

Dates were made with the parents to visit each child and their family at home to share the individual vignettes, for member checking and to generate further discussion. Mina, the interpreter arranged the dates on my behalf and accompanied me to Amira, Hassan and Karam's homes. Again Zahra, Ahmed's mother preferred to liaise with me herself and did not want an interpreter to be present.

Using a laptop, I showed each child their story, as a PowerPoint presentation, asking the following questions based on those used in Tobin's (2016) study. First, I asked the children the two same questions:

- *What do you think of that?*
- *What did you like or not like?*

Then I asked the parents the same adding two extra ones:

- *What are your feelings about x's experience in nursery?*
- *Do you recognise x or is s/he different at home?*

Finally, I asked the siblings all the questions but added a final question just for them:

- *Do you have similar experiences/ feelings in school?*

Due to the difficulties I experienced during the pilot study, trying to make an audio recording of the responses, the method I used to capture the conversations were to engage fully in the conversations, write notes straight after the meeting and then make a fuller write up of the session from the notes within a few days.

Following these meetings, I shared the children's vignettes, with the wider team of staff who were involved with each child, asking them the same two questions:

- *What do you think of that?*
- *What did you like or not like?*

slightly altering the last two, to not only check the validity of the story but also investigate whether the children's experiences were similar to other refugee or migrant children's by asking them:

- *Do you recognise x's experience in nursery?*
- *How typical is this of other refugee/migrant children's experience, from your own experience.*

These meetings were set up as practice discussions, in keeping with the praxeological approach. Staff from St Swithin's preschool invited me to one of their staff meetings to share Amira's story, and they engaged fully with everyone getting involved in the discussions. Gathering the staff team from Dog Lane Children Centre Nursery was more complex because they had been made redundant during the fieldwork. In the last week of their employment, staff gave me their contact details if they wanted to take part in this second phase of the research. By this point, the senior management had left to take up other employment or were on maternity leave, so the staff who attended the evening meeting, were those who had looked after Ahmed and knew him well.

During the first phase of research, the Foundation Stage Leader at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school, seemed to be finding being part of the project more and more onerous, often struggling to find time to meet with me or arrange for me to come into the school. When it came to arranging the feedback meeting with all the staff involved with Hassan and Karam, including teaching assistants, she felt that it would be difficult to arrange these meetings. I re-iterated that she was at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time and she decided that she could not commit to it anymore. As a result, I decided to approach the headteacher and arranged a meeting with him and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, to share the vignettes with them. They were both involved with the children and families, and I felt it was important to try to capture some of the expertise from within the school. They agreed to become expert witnesses.

Figure 36. A summary of the practitioner respondents (Phase Two)

<table>
<tr><td>Name of setting</td><td>Dog Lane Children Centre Nursery</td><td>St Swithin’s pre-school</td><td>Croft’s End Nursery school</td><td>Croft’s End Infant school</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child attending setting</td><td>Ahmed</td><td>Amira</td><td>Hassan</td><td>Karam</td></tr>
<tr><td>Respondent demographic</td><td>Four staff attended and one sent a text with her reflections about Ahmed. All were female.

Three were White British

One was Indian and was a recent British citizen

Three were in their late 40s-early 50s and there was one in her 20s.</td><td>5 staff attended. All female, all White British. All aged between 30-40 years old.</td><td colspan="2">Headteacher -male – Greek Cypriot descendent whose grandfather was a refugee from Greece. Born in Britain

SENCO (teacher) – female – father is Egyptian, mother, English. Raised in Muslim faith. Born in Britain.</td></tr>
</table>

Following the PowerPoint presentations of both Karam and Hassan’s stories, the same four questions were asked:

- *What do you think of that?*
- *What did you like or not like?*
- *Do you recognise x’s experience in nursery?*
- *How typical is this of other refugee/migrant children’s experience, from your own experience.*

There followed a professional discussion. Given that Croft’s End had accommodated a high proportion of the refugee children within the local authority, I decided to add the

following questions to glean as much information as possible, from the expert witnesses.

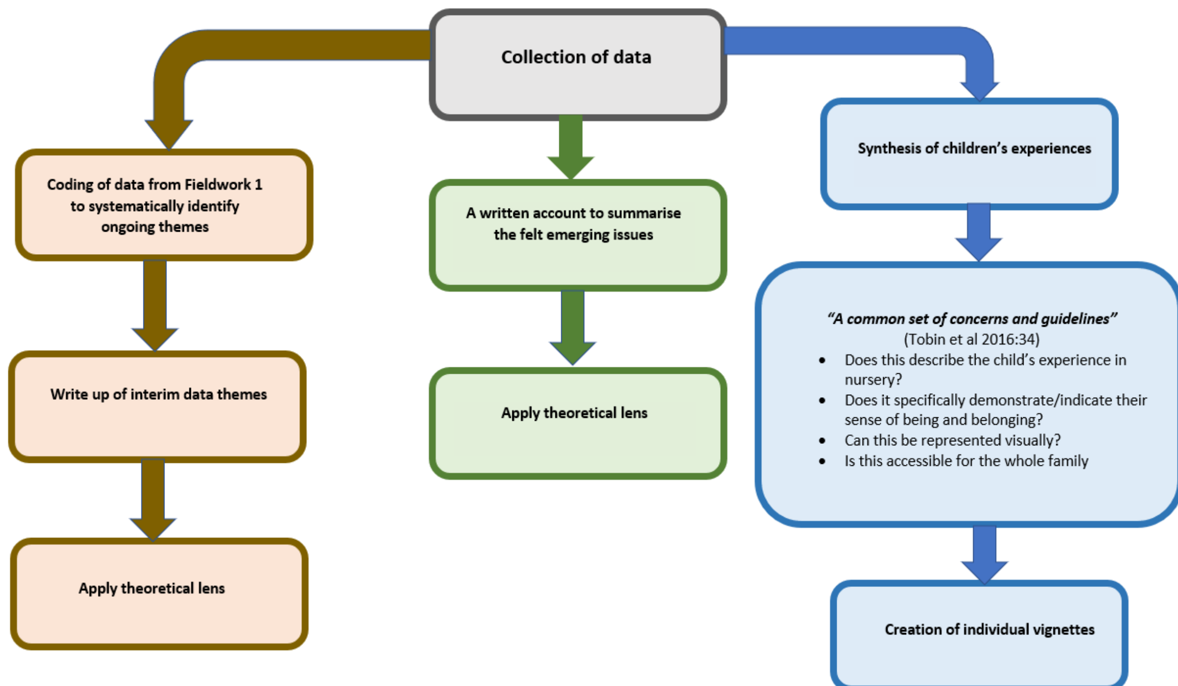
- *How many refugee children in nursery and school?*
- *Are there any policies about including refugees?*
- *What lessons have the school learnt?*
- *I am interested in developing a Pedagogy of Welcome:*
- *How do the white British children cope with new children?*
- *How does the nursery and the school use interpreters?*
- *How are they funded?*
- *Anything else you think would be important for me to know?*

I employed the same method to write up the discussion, as before.

5.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the data. The method is in keeping with the layered, emergent nature of the research design and the flexibility of the approach enabled me to employ it at different junctures within the project. I used a combination of systematic coding to identify emerging themes whilst considering some of the a priori categories which had been identified in the initial literature review. As denoted in the research design diagram (*Figure 28*) the fieldwork was organised in two phases. A first data synthesis was conducted after the first phase of the fieldwork whilst a fuller analysis was completed following the second phase. To create the visual vignettes, for the second phase of the fieldwork, there needed to be a first synthesis of the data to be able to identify the essential experiences of each child, then represent them visually in a story form. Figure 37 outlines the three-pronged process undertaken at the end of the first phase of the fieldwork

Figure 37. Data synthesis and analysis process at the end of Phase One of the fieldwork



The child observations, the key person interviews and the field notes capturing the discussions with the mothers were examined and coded. The child and parental drawings, alongside the photos taken by the children were also scrutinised. A summary was collated of the felt emerging issues (Appendix 18) which was offset against the a priori themes which arose from the initial literature review. This provided the first layer of synthesised data findings. The artefacts were again explored using the same set of concerns and guidelines (Tobin 2016) which were used in the pilot study (5.3.2) in partnership with the graphic artist who supported the development of visual vignettes which formed the narrative account of each child's experiences in ECEC.

Following the completion of Phase Two of the fieldwork, a more in-depth data analysis was undertaken, using the six key principles set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). The entire data set was analysed which included scrutiny of all the fieldnotes of the parent and child drawing activities, the whole research journal, child observations, keyperson interview transcripts, the written records of children, family and practitioner discussions following the sharing of the vignettes, including the professional discussions with the expert witnesses. The decision was taken to complete the data analysis without the

assistance of information technology, purposefully to continue to be methodologically congruent, recognising the personhood of the researcher. I was also conscious of "*the ongoing reflexive dialogue"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006:82) between myself as researcher, and the data. The process involved an initial reading of the full data set, followed by a more careful and systematic reading. 18 themes were subsequently identified and coded (Appendix 16). These were then grouped into 6 overarching codes (Appendix 17). The codes were re-applied to the data, and four key themes were identified. The theoretical lens was used to view these themes.

Pillow (2003) also suggests that deeply reflexive research has the potential to be dominated by the researcher's own agenda and therefore can lack validity. To remediate this, I conducted an analysis of moments of dissonance which occurred within the fieldwork and relationships. The results can be seen in figure 39 below. Each incident was named, the main actors identified, and the presenting issues were highlighted. The researcher's positionality and learning were outlined.

Figure 38. A table to show the analysis of dissonance incidents: February 2019

	Incident name	Main actors	Presenting issue	Researcher's positionality	Researcher's learning
1.	Transition to school TAC meeting	Zahra: Ahmed's mother	Patronisation and assumption about mother as refugee	Practitioner role	Essentialising of "refugee" rather than relational interaction
2	**Name change conversation**	**Adeel: Amira's father**	**Trying to find shared experiences**	**Researcher initial meetings**	**Making assumptions**
3	Blank face in office	Ahmed	Possible withdrawal of Assad's assent	Practitioner role	The participants can dictate researcher's positionality
4	Yucky hair + standing on the table	Amira	Offence taken by Amira	Researcher initial meetings	Fragility of relationship with child participants
5	Interpreter/auntie conversation	Mina (interpreter)	Making relationships and professional boundaries	Researcher	The personal aspect of doing research
6	**Appointment cancellations**	**Karam's mother**	**Fear of avoidance as withdrawal of consent**	**Researcher**	**The "real world" aspect of research. "Life" gets in the way.**

7	Interpreter issues	Mina (interpreter) Yara: Karam’s mum Charity commissioned to support refugees	Awkward relationship issues to navigate	Researcher/Practitioner	Possible “orientalism” in operation Lack of understanding of interpretation as opposed to translation
8	**Passport conversation**	**Zahra: Ahmed’s mum**	**Ignorance of refugee experience**	**Researcher**	**Always remember the participant’s perspective**
9	Tense relationship with teacher at Croft’s End Nursery school	Hassan’s nursery teacher	Teacher unaware of research as access had been agreed by headteacher	Researcher	The participants can determine the researcher’s positionality.
10	Feeding back about Hassan	Foundation stage lead at Croft’s End Nursery and Infant school	What to do about practice and concern for a child	Researcher/practitioner	Pre-empt the issue see: (Newkirk T 1996 Seduction and Betrayal in qualitative research) Advocate researcher
11	Conversation with previous line manager	Previous line manager and chair of governor at the Croft’s End Nursery school	Managing confidentiality	Researcher/practitioner	Being clear sighted when boundary lines are blurred

	Incident name	Main actors	Presenting issue	Researcher's positionality	Researcher's learning
12	Feedback to Dog Lane Children Centre nursery staff	Staff Ahmed's keyperson	Staff could not accept what I was saying about how Assad's mum was experiencing nursery	Researcher/practitioner	Possible "orientalism" in operation. The parental feedback was invalidated
13	The crying incident	Karam's mum Mina Myself	Emotional engagement	Researcher	Attached nature of research. Need for counselling
14	Karam's impulsivity	Karam Foundation stage lead, Croft's End Infant school	My professional observation about Walid's emotional wellbeing	Researcher/practitioner	Create principles for feedback to setting
15	Hassan's presentation during the drawing	Hassan	Concern about Hassan's emotional wellbeing	Researcher/practitioner	There were no mechanisms in place for me to move from researcher to professional
16	Being asked advice about Hassan	Fatima: Hassan's mum	Concern about Hassan and his family receiving the best support on offer	Researcher/practitioner	There were no mechanisms in place for me to move from researcher to professional

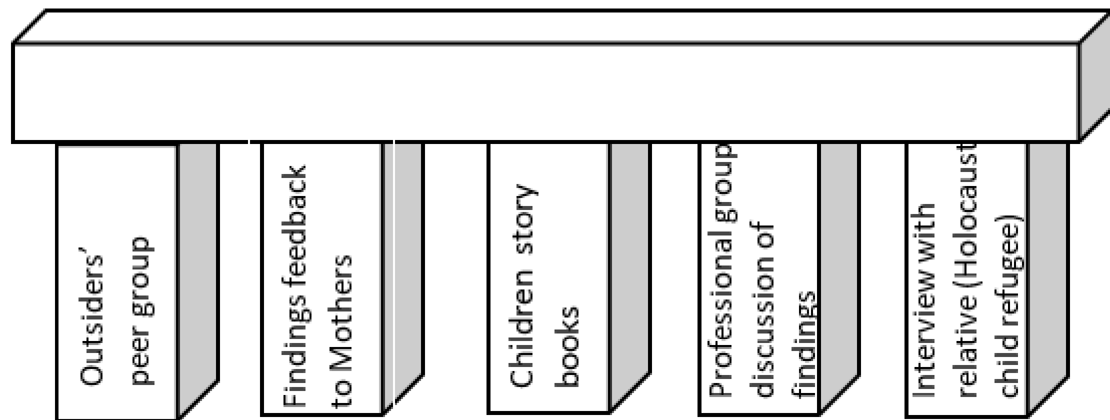
17	Personal stories of pre-migration	Omar: Hassan's dad	It was very interesting, and helped build the relationship and gave good background understanding	Researcher	My own interest in people and their stories can detract from my focus, and sometimes confuse the issues.
18	Personal information about families (Fatima: Hassan's mum and Rahima: Amira's mum)	Mina	"Off the record" conversations with the interpreter, where personal information is shared.	Researcher	The need to remain true to the original consent contract. All other information should be treated and useful for understanding but not necessarily to be included in research findings

GROUPING OF EVENTS		
Parameters for feedback to settings		
Orientalism in operation		
Dynamic nature of relationships		
Retaining research and ethical focus		
Dynamic relationship/poss orientalism	ab	cd

5.6 Methods employed to ensure trustworthiness and rigour.

Taking seriously the points raised by both Pillow (2003) and Robson's (2011) concerns about the "*deficiencies of the human as analyst"* (Robson 2011: 468), led to the development of further safeguards within the research to ensure greater trustworthiness and rigour. Several methods were employed to ensure that this research was both trustworthy and rigorous (Shenton, 2004). The use of triangulation, employing established research methods, regular and ongoing supervision, the use of "rich, thick description (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), regular meeting with peers, ongoing member checking, specific questions relating to how closely the children's experience related to other migrant or refugee children , a rigorous approach to researcher positionality (Gaywood et al, 2020) and a reflective journal were all used as internal validation methods, to support the trustworthiness of the piece. Transferability of the methods and findings are discussed in Chapter 8. However, the emergent nature of the study allowed me to create an additional layer to increase the trustworthiness and rigour, given the nature and sensitivity of the research. The diagram below shows four further activities undertaken following the final data analysis, which served to externally validate the findings. I have named these the '*five pillars of trustworthiness,'* primarily to denote the stability that they bring to the research process and design, rather than any claim of being fundamental aspects of the methodological approach. These 'pillars' include sending a synthesised version of the findings to an Outsiders expert group, presenting the findings to the participant mothers, gifting each child a book which was made from the PowerPoints and told them their own story and a presentation of findings to a group of interested practitioners who were unrelated to the research.

Figure 39. Five pillars of trustworthiness



5.6.1 'Outsiders' peer group

The 'Outsiders' peer group emerged from my membership of two academic groups which enabled group support and critical feedback, one which met weekly and the other, monthly. Through discussions with colleagues at these groups and another colleague following my presentation at EECERA 2019, three women shared with me feelings of being an 'Outsider' within the academic community. One woman was married to a Roma gypsy, the second had been raised within the care system and the other was a black academic. All told stories of prejudice and challenge that they had experienced. Two were, at that time, doctoral students and one had achieved her doctorate. Two were working within universities whilst one was leading a charity. Given the intersectionality of the experiences of being an 'Outsider,' and my concern about obtaining rigorous critical feedback from contemporaries, I asked if I could share a synthesis of my findings with them for feedback, to check the findings and improve trustworthiness. (Appendix 19). Three questions were asked of this group:

- *What did you think of that?*
- *Is there anything which resonates with your own experience of being an "Outsider"?*

- *Can you briefly describe any incidents or experiences which come to mind as a result of reading these findings*?

Two of the women responded and broadly they suggested that the findings resonated with their own experiences.

5.6.2 Findings feedback to mother participants

During the fieldwork phase, both Rahima and Yara, Amira and Karam's mothers, were keen to have a discussion session with just the mother participants. When I began to plan how to feedback the results of the research, it seemed a good opportunity to take and enable this to happen, thus remaining true to the ethical commitment of a participatory research project. Mina, the interpreter, arranged the date and time and we gathered in Rahima's home where I presented my findings as a PowerPoint using a projector and a small white screen. Mina interpreted for about half an hour but had to leave, so Zahra continued. Fatima, Hassan's mother, was not present as she was unwell. The women were asked similar questions to the practitioners:

- *What do you think of that?*
- *What did you like or not like?*
- *Do you recognise these experiences?*

Again, the mothers generally agreed with the findings, but they were keen to remind me that one of the major challenges that the children faced was to have been forced to leave their homes. Also, they wanted to know more about the Pedagogy of Welcome, which at that point (4.12.19) was still under development, because they could see that this would be the method through which to make change to everyday practice. Zahra particularly felt that the findings should be made into a book to help British children and early years practitioners understand better the experiences of refugees. They extended an open invitation for me to return if I felt I had more to share with them.

5.6.3 Gifting of children's story books

One of the issues which was raised by the pilot study was ensuring that for the child participants there was a satisfactory ending of my involvement with them. I decided to make their PowerPoint stories into books using an online company. The visits to give the books to the children provided an end point. By the time I visited, Amira, Hassan and Ahmed were all in school, and they were keen to look at their books with me and reflect on their time in ECEC. The visit arranged to present his book to Karam was disrupted as he was at a birthday party and his mum, Yara had double booked, so I had to leave the book with her without seeing him. The visits offered the children a retrospective view of their experiences, which provided a second layer of member checking, and possible input. In addition, encapsulating the children's experiences in their own book, was another way of honouring their stories and ensuring that their voices were made visible, remaining ethically congruent.

5.6.4 Professional presentation and discussion

During my professional work, I came across an ECEC setting which was in the centre of the city which had the highest number of children from diverse backgrounds within the local authority. The manager and owner asked me for support as they were feeling overwhelmed and unsure how best to support the children. I offered to share my findings, which seemed relevant to refugee children but might also be transferable for migrant children. I suggested that the staff could use the meeting to reflect on the findings, and use them as the basis of a reflective, practice discussion examining their approach and pedagogy for their specific cohort of children. The nursery was completely unconnected to the research and my relationship with them was newly established. Presenting to an unrelated staff team with relevant experience offered a further opportunity of scrutiny of the findings, to increase their trustworthiness. Following a PowerPoint of the presentation of findings, the staff were asked three questions. They worked in four smaller groups and documented their responses.

- *What do you think of this?*
- *Was there anything which stood out to you?*
- *How might you use these findings to inform your practice?*

5.6.5 Interview with a relative

Following the literature review which included perspectives from Holocaust survivors, it seemed a good idea to talk with my last surviving relative, Eduard, about his experiences of being a child refugee, to see if there was any commonality of experience between his experience and the experience of the children in the study. I sent him the synthesis of the results and asked the same questions of him that I asked of the 'Outsiders' group. We spoke on a video call. He gave a retrospective view and initially could not see any similarities in his experience to those of the research participants, which he attributed to the fact that he attended a Jewish school where many others could also not speak English. However, with further discussion he talked about other aspects of being a child refugee which resonated with this study.

Member checking has been an important part of ensuring the trustworthiness of this study (Shenton, 2004). I was keen to ensure that all participants and informants should have the opportunity to view the findings. Initially I proposed to host two feedback sessions on Zoom (7.10.21 and 11.10.21) and invited the professional participants and research informants. No one was able to attend, therefore I arranged to make available a 10-minute video of a presentation I made at EECERA 2021 outlining my findings. The email and subsequent member checking record is found in Appendix 21 and 22.

5.7 Summary

The research design and methodological approach adopted for this research has by necessity been complex, because it needed to respond to the complexity of the field. Finding methods to accurately represent the post migration experiences of very young refugee children, whilst ensuring their voice remains central, has been a challenge. Ethical concerns have dominated the creation of structures and the processes, which has meant that the research design has needed to be flexible and responsive. The study is very much a piece situated in a certain place and time, so whilst the methods and principles could be replicated in future studies, its uniqueness bring certain limitations. My role as a trusted and respected practitioner within the local authority possibly provided me with greater access to the research participants. Other researchers who were not connected professionally to the settings would integrally

have to spend more time and effort building trust with gatekeepers and research participants. Shared cultural experiences with the interpreter, Mina, enabled us to form a bond, as there was mutual recognition even though we came from traditions which are often positioned antagonistically. This relationship enabled me further access to the closed community of the refugee families, who felt more able to trust me as they trusted Mina. Adopting an overtly visual approach to data collection was fuelled by my own background in the art world and having contact with a graphic artist provided the vehicle to create the vignettes. The elements of trustworthiness incorporated into the methodology were made possible by peer and professional relationships, and partially by my own positionality as a second-generation refugee.

Chapter 6: Ethics

6.1 Introduction

The ethics of researching with very young refugee children is complex and multi-layered, therefore I have chosen to dedicate a whole chapter to adequately cover the issues. This chapter is important within the whole thesis as it demonstrates much of my learning about ethics and intends to trace the story of my ethical engagement with people, power structures and processes within a complex field. Also held within it are my ethical original contributions to knowledge, in terms of the development of power sensitive ethical research practices and the ethical positionality of a researcher in this context, drawing on the work of Gaywood et al (2020). I have attempted to chart my ethical journey, wrestle with the ethics of my research and demonstrate how I have created new ethical models and understanding as a result.

Working professionally with very young children and their parents who find themselves facing challenging circumstances, laid the foundation for the early ethical direction of the study. Ongoing decisions have been made through "on-the-job" research experiences and by delving into the work of other academics in the field, most notably Block et al (2013) who have developed clear ethical principles working in the Australian refugee and asylum-seeking context. Underpinning the whole ethical approach are my own values and beliefs about the importance of treating people, who find themselves facing significant challenge, the way I would want to be treated if our roles were reversed. Affording dignity and offering the equity of respect are fundamental to me. Other personal beliefs which have influenced my thinking include the view that children have innate power and agency to determine their own course from birth, (Bertram et al, 2016) and that those who hold power in society, have a moral responsibility to exercise it with an ongoing sensitivity to power imbalances, to enact change for those with less societal power. Harley and Langdon (2018) "*argue that central to any consideration of ethics is power*" (Harley and Langdon, 2018:188). They are referring specifically to research which uses visual methods; however, I would extend their argument and posit that power also needs to be a central concern within a study involving very young refugee children.

Writing this during a historically significant period which has seen demonstrations in Britain and around the world as part of the Black Lives Matters (BLM) movement, following the murder of George Floyd by a white police officer (25.05.2020), is timely. The ongoing debate within BLM has not just been about the toppling of statues (07.06.2020 Bristol, England) but the need to demolish the structures which have enabled systemic and institutional racism in society to be perpetuated over centuries. Similar issues about structures and power within the research process have echoed within my ethical sphere. Therefore, it has been necessary to continually examine, review, and revise the paradigm within which this research was conducted, critically. The theoretical frame, the methodological approach and methods used were also scrutinised, to ensure there was an equity and fair distribution of power facilitated by the structures. Alongside an interrogation of the structures used, it has also been important to consider the dynamic flow of power experienced during personal interface with each research participant.

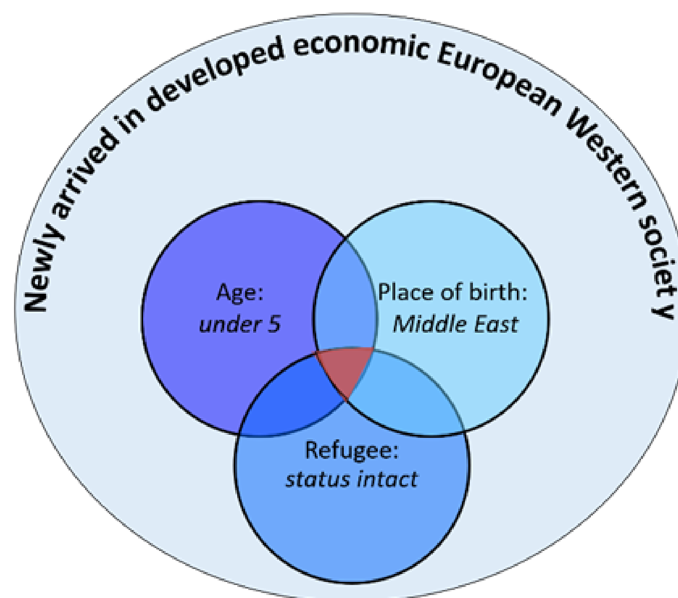
From the conception of the research project, this ethical responsibility has weighed heavy, particularly the need to respond to the obvious and less obvious power inequities. Schroeder et al (2020) have helpfully enabled me to develop my thinking. They use the example of the San people in South Africa to document issues of power. The San people appear to have a genome link to early man, and therefore have experienced high levels of research interest. As a result, they have created their own code of ethics which set forth *their* expectations of researchers, requiring them to abide by a clear set of principles. (San Code of Research Ethics, 2017). Broadly the San ask from researchers, respect, honesty, justice and fairness, care, and due process. This act of negotiating their own ethical code, for researchers to follow, rather than relying on university ethical boards to 'protect' and 'keep them from harm,' appears to me to be a significant re-shifting of the balance of power within the research process, and one I would applaud. The Syrian refugee families in this study did not have the experience of being an overly researched people and were not in a position to organise a critical response to being a research participant, however I have made every attempt to re-calibrate the scales of power to try to ensure power sensitive ethical engagement. Adries Steenkamp, the San leader at the time, asked for researchers, "*to come through the door, and not the window*" (San Code of Research Ethics, 2017). In this study I have attempted to come through the door, by being open and documenting my

ethical journey faithfully, with the hope that the participants were not only kept from harm but also honoured and that my experiences and learning will prove useful to future researchers.

6.2 Early ethical decisions

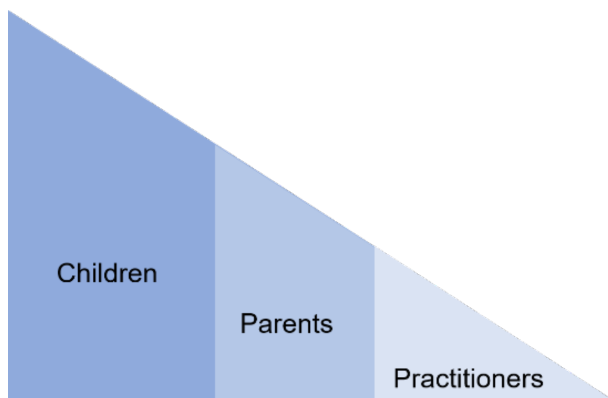
In the introductory chapter, I shared a conceptual model which visually documented the intersectional elements creating reduced power for the study children.

Figure 40. Revisiting Figure 5- The intersectional elements creating reduced power



When wrestling with ethical complexity and decision making, I needed further assistance of a visual reminder to help me maintain focus and remind me how to remediate the effects of this potential powerlessness, giving clear weighting to the primary participants. Although simple, this second model helped ensure the children were my first concern, then their parents and finally the staff who were working with them, when making ethical decisions.

Figure 41 Model to demonstrate the ethical decision weighting process



McAreavey and Das (2013) make a distinction between the ethical requirements of a research ethics committee and the more dynamic approach to ethical decision making in the field. They note, "*ethical decisions and practices in the field are variable, subject to context, and cannot be encapsulated by universal rules*" (McAreavey and Das, 2013:112). This observation resonated strongly with my own experience in the field. All the models which are shared in this chapter have been in response to ethical dilemmas which required responsive decision making. In addition to figure 41, (above), early on I also developed and used the following model to assist in this process of responsive decision making.

Figure 42. The ethical principles adopted to ensure responsive decision making

- **Ensure the smallest least powerful voices are heard most**
- **Remember this research is not just an academic exercise**
- **Be clear about the benefits to the participants**
- **Keep close ties to the cultural guide to remain aware of cultural sensitivities**
- **Be mindful of the ongoing assent of the children**
- **Be responsive to the wishes and requests of the parent participants**
- **Be conscious that the ongoing use of Reflective Journal is vital to maintain reflexivity**

This study adheres to Birmingham City University ethical guidance and has adopted the ethical code of the European Early Childhood Research Association, (EECERA) (Bertram et al 2016) as a base line, so all subsequent discussion flows from the principles enshrined in both. All names in this thesis have been changed to ensure anonymity. The participant children, parents, early education professionals and the ECEC settings have been given pseudonyms as have the interpreter and the various people who acted as cultural guides. The study local authority has also been anonymised. I used a reflective journal in which I kept notes of conversations and incidents from both a professional and research perspective, as a participant researcher. All mentioned have been anonymised and referred to broadly as 'colleagues' whilst all exchanges are described as 'meetings' in order to create further distance from individuals. Prior to submission, I extended an invitation to all mentioned in the journal, to view my findings. This was also offered to all the practitioners who were involved in the study. I suggested a variety of ways to engage with this process, asking for feedback. The responses and lack of response has been documented to ensure ethical rigour. (Appendix 22).

The researcher did not receive any grants or funds to complete the research, so there were no financially related conflicts of interest throughout the whole process. All data was kept securely and stored on a password protected computer.

6.3 Chapter Structure

This chapter is presented in four main sections. Firstly, issues of **safety and wellbeing** are discussed, then the ethical issues related to the research **process and design** are examined. Next, matters arising from the children's **culture and language** are presented and finally concerns about **positionality** are reviewed. Where appropriate this chapter will draw on incidents from the field work, using illustrative anecdotes to highlight the ethical issues encountered, demonstrate the ethical complexities, and outline the decision-making processes.

6.4 Safety and Wellbeing

As in all research, the safety and wellbeing of the participants was paramount. However, working with refugees required further ethical rigour above and beyond the usual high standards of ethical practices, primarily because of the intricate balance of power in the field. This section discussed the importance for the safety of the participants to have **clarity of research focus**, issues surrounding **consent and ongoing assent of the children**, **unforeseen ethics within the field**, and how the research brought **benefit to the primary participants.**

6.4.1 Clarity of research focus

During the search for a cultural guide, I was fortunate enough to meet a Syrian academic who was in England conducting research into the health of Syrian refugees, who was herself a refugee (13.6.17, Reflective Journal). Her advice helped shape both the ethical direction and focus of the study. She asked searching questions about the purpose of the research. At this early stage my intention was to build a picture of the child participant's life experiences pre-migration. The academic asked why it was important to know about the children's life before arriving in England. She suggested that there could be a potential risk of re-trauma for the parents in the telling and asked what I would do if parents disclosed harrowing experiences to me. This led me to re-evaluate the research focus, from an ethical point of view and caused me to reflect more deeply (Reflective journal,1.7.17). I had no wish to be responsible for adding to the children and their parent's suffering. In addition, I was concerned to not use the research to be intrusive and overly inquisitive about the potentially traumatic events pre and peri-migration. From my own personal experience, elderly relatives did not want to talk about their experiences during the Holocaust, but outside the family, with those who were not directly impacted, I noticed what seemed an unusual appetite for the often-harrowing details. Taking this and the academic's advice into account, I used Tobin's study (2016) to re-design the research to focus solely on the post migration re-settled lived experiences of the children. In addition, I reviewed and removed a set of interview questions which asked the parents to draw something describing their own life and their children's both before and during their migratory journey.

Concerns that being involved in this research project could have a negative effect on the participants' mental health, due to the process of remembering, remained. Therefore, I contacted the local Public Health team who had overseen the health support for the refugees on arrival in the local authority, to make them aware of my research project and with them, consider possible support which could be offered to the parents, in case of re-traumatisation. During my time with the parent participants, I remained alert to this possibility and was careful to ensure my questioning remained focused on the children's lived experiences post migration, in their ECEC settings. However, possibly because of the trusting relationships which were established, the parents chose to talk to me about aspects of their lives, according to what was most troubling them at the time. Rahima told me of her guilt about Bilal, who was born deaf. She felt that because she had been so young, and had not understood the birthing process, it was her fault. Yara spoke to me about the traumatic death of her husband, Karam's father, from brain cancer and how this had impacted her children. Whilst Omar described in detail public beheadings he and his older son were forced to watch. Both Omar and Yara were accessing mental health support during this period.

Fortunately, part of the approved ethics had included safety measures for me. From the outset of the project, it had been unknown what stories or behaviours I would encounter as a researcher, so a person-centred integrated counsellor was found who offered weekly sessions during the fieldwork phase. These were primarily to ensure my wellbeing maintained intact and were subject to the confidential requirements of counsellor-client relationship, so did not pose a risk to the research participants themselves. These sessions enabled me to stay safe and manage the emotionally charged conversations I was privileged to be included in.

6.4.2 Consent and ongoing assent of the children

To gain general consent for the children to take part in this research, a leaflet explaining the research proposal in Arabic, was presented to the parents, following a PowerPoint presentation, also outlining the research, then a question-and-answer session, with an interpreter. Where possible, the children's parents gave this in written format, by signing an Arabic consent form (Appendix 5). Omar, Hassan's father, is unable to read or write, so assisted by the interpreter, the permission letter was read aloud to him, and he made a mark where he was directed, but the agreement was

primarily made as a verbal contract. The parents were asked to explain the study to their children and find out from them whether they were willing to be part. It was made clear to both the parents and the children from the outset that they could withdraw at any point.

Although they agreed to take part, Amira's parents, Rahima and Adeel, were cautious. Therefore, extra home visits were undertaken, with Mina the interpreter, to fully explain the project, so they were able to negotiate their preferred terms of engagement. Rahima particularly did not want Amira to be singled out from her peers and labelled a '*refugee*' (Fieldnotes 19.1.18). This was discussed at length with the manager of St Swithin's preschool, and it was agreed that the staff would do a project alongside the research with the other children to mimic the camera activity, (5.4.5) ensuring Amira's confidentiality was maintained.

Involving small children in research and viewing them as active participants necessitated the adoption of the notion of ongoing assent (Dockett and Perry, 2011). Therefore, alongside the children's parents and keyperson, in the ECEC setting, a heightened sensitivity to each child's body language, nonverbal communication and their general demeanour, was maintained. A reflective journal and field notes were used to overtly analyse and record the children's verbal and nonverbal cues to ascertain their willingness to participate in each activity and continue to be part of the ongoing study if they were unable to give verbal consent. Negotiating the children's ongoing assent, was a live and intricate issue. Ryan (2015) describes "*the dynamic rhythms of positionality"* (2015:2) which felt like an accurate description of the dance-like relational navigation of the children's consensual participation in the study. There were times that Ahmed was happy to see me when I visited him at Dog Lane Nursery, waving and smiling broadly (Child observation, 5.2.18) but there were other times when he did not want to interact with me and when I asked him if he wanted to take some pictures of the things which were important to him in nursery, he refused (Fieldnotes: 5.6.18). Equally, I was concerned about Amira's quietly hostile reaction to me, on occasions, when I visited her at St Swithin's. (Fieldnotes: 26.2.18) In both cases the manager and keyperson helped. The manager at Dog Lane suggested one of the Early Years practitioners, who was well versed in the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) and close to Ahmed, should ask if he would prefer to complete the

task with her, which he did. The manager, at St Swithin's, who knew Amira well, recognised that Amira was happy for me to be in the room with her, as long as I did not speak to her, so I respected Amira's preference. Thus said, Amira happily engaged in the camera activity on a future visit and during a home visit asked me to draw with her, so I employed hand-over-hand method, to ensure her security when faced with what she perceived as an overwhelming task. This changing nature of my ongoing relationship with the children required deep sensitivity to their needs and an ability to be responsive in the moment. It was fortunate that I could draw on many years of professional practice working with scores of very young children, living with often highly challenging circumstances. As described previously my relationships all the research participants as well as the children were complex, dynamic and will be discussed further when considering the researcher's positionality in section 6.7.

6.4.3 Unforeseen ethics in the field

This study is situated in a real-world context (Robson, 2011) and so it was always highly likely that unforeseen dilemmas would be encountered. The following section charts the unexpected **closure of Dog Lane Nursery** and issues which arose when **working with staff at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school**. In response to these events, I was keen to ensure that my decision making was true to the ethical approach of the study, and I was able to continue to act in a dynamically ethical way.

6.4.3.1 Closure of Dog Lane Nursery

Midway through the first phase of fieldwork, in March 2018, it was confirmed that Dog Lane Nursery was to be closed as part of the local authority response to the austerity measures introduced by George Osbourne, the UK Chancellor at the time (HM Treasury 2013, 2015). In my professional practitioner role, I had to oversee this closure, reduce costs, support a whole staff team who were being made redundant and ensure the stability of the children who were due to leave in the August to start reception, which included Ahmed. Decisions were made regarding the two-year-olds being transitioned to nearby nurseries as soon as possible, and all the children were asked to use their fifteen-hour Early Years Entitlement over two days, effectively creating two different groups of children and allowing the staff to work four long days, closing the nursery on a Friday, in a bid to reduce staff sickness and maintain morale.

A huge strain was put on the staff, and I was unsure if they would want to continue to be part of the project, which would have meant a withdrawal before the end of the second phase of the fieldwork. I was concerned that any difficult feelings about the nursery closure, and the local authority decision might easily translate to me, and therefore disrupt the goodwill necessary for research participants to remain engaged. It was important to be sure of the staff's ongoing consent, so I approached staff individually to check their willingness to remain involved and ask whether they would be interested in attending a feedback and discussion meeting after their redundancy. Each were privately given the option to withdraw, and offered time to consider their responses, to ensure they did not feel pressurised. Despite the difficulties and stress of the time, the staff all chose to remain involved, and the majority happily attended the second phase of the fieldwork in the feedback meeting (8.4.19) eight months post-redundancy. Interestingly, the necessary changes made at Dog Lane, ultimately benefited Ahmed. He seemed to thrive once the two-year-olds had moved on, and there were less children. Also, the timetabling changes to sessions meant that he attended with Mariam, a fellow refugee, with whom he established strong bonds and enabled him to develop intricate role play games.

6.4.3.2 Working with staff at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school

My own relationship with the staff at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school was complex. I have attempted to document it more fully in section 6.7 when I consider issues related to positionality. The first ethical issue arose following the camera activity with Karam. When asked to take photographs of what was most important to him at school, Karam took pictures of most of his class, and the adults. He spent time staging these, organising both his classmates and teachers. There was a particular photo he took of his friend Rafi which the boys laughed and joked about in Arabic, before Karam captured Rafi pulling a funny face. When I asked for copies of the photographs for Karam's story, the school were reluctant to share them with me as they felt it breached confidentiality of the children. I asked if parents of the photographed children could be approached for their consent, which was what Dog Lane Nursery and St Swithin's had suggested and implemented. This request made by email, was met with silence. Yara, Karam's mother, could see the importance of the photo being included in Karam's PowerPoint story and subsequent book, so she offered to ask Rafi's parents for their

consent to release the photo Karam took of his friend. I re-approached the school to request that particular photo, but the school informed me that all the images had been deleted.

During the second member checking phase of the fieldwork, the Foundation Stage leader at Croft's End Infant and Nursery school, who was also one of Karam's teachers, felt unable to allocate time or release her staff team to be involved in member checking Karam and Hassan's stories, citing external pressure from the Office for Standards and teaching in education (Ofsted). This meant that no one from the teams who taught either Karam or Hassan were available to take part in the subsequent discussion. I viewed this as a withdrawal from the research, however, I was still keen for Croft's End to take part in the practitioner discussion. Thankfully, it was arranged that the head teacher and the Special Needs Co-ordinator, would see the PowerPoints and act as "expert witnesses." As a school, they had welcomed the most refugees in the whole local authority and I felt their knowledge and insight would be a valuable asset, in addition they both knew Hassan, Karam and their families well.

6.4.4 Benefit to the primary participants

The code of ethics adopted by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) in 2018 recognises the need "*to work towards ensuring that our research improves people's situations whenever possible*" (Clark-Kazak 2019:14). The same commitment is found in the EECERA ethical code which requires that research generated knowledge should make "*a contribution to the quality of life of those communities and societies and serve(s) the public good,"* (Bertram et al, 2016: vii). Both ethical codes are clear about the responsibility of ethics to be beneficial for those who participate in research. This was also a concern expressed by Ahmed's father at the first presentation of the project when he asked, "*How will this benefit our children?"* (Fieldnotes: 24.11.17). Also at the final feedback session, three of the participant mothers, were keen to talk about the impact of the findings and understand the difference it would make to their own and future refugee children. In the following sections I have outlined the benefits of the research for each of the children individually: ***Ahmed, Amira, Hassan*** and ***Karam****.*

6.4.4.1 Ahmed

During the first visit to Dog Lane nursery, I noticed that Ahmed was isolated and barely interacted with other children. (Field notes: Observation 9.1.18) Due to his cochlear implants, Ahmed had been awarded inclusion funding from the local authority to reduce the 1:8 adult: child ratio within the setting to support his ability to fully access the curriculum. At the time of the visit the focus had been to improve Ahmed's language skills with his keyperson working closely with the teacher of the deaf. The next time I met with Zahra, Ahmed's mother, I felt it was important to talk about my observation of Ahmed and raise my concerns about his potential isolation.

> *"I mentioned to Zahra that Ahmed doesn't tend to play much with children at nursery. She said that he did not seem to know the children or the adult names and when she asks him, he does not talk about them. Where they had lived before in (another county nearby) Ahmed had attended a nursery. Zahra said that he knew the names of his keyperson and other staff from the pre-school. Zahra said that she has noticed that Ahmed does not particularly like to play with children that he doesn't know well. She noticed this at the park when she has gone with other Syrian women. She said that Ahmed tended to play alone and seemed happy with this. "*

(Parental drawing interview at home: 14.3.18)

It was this incident which led to the development of the ethical principles (Figure 44) which allowed me to discuss Ahmed's social development with the manager of Dog Lane and his key person, with the consent and support of Zahra, who wanted her son to have the same social opportunities as a child who did not face the significant challenges Ahmed did. As a result of this discussion the decision was taken, alongside the teacher of the deaf, to re-focus the support for Ahmed to enable him to begin to make social connections. He began to take part in small group activities with quieter children, in a separate room to assist his hearing, still being supported by his keyperson with whom he had a strong positive relationship. By the time Ahmed left Dog Lane Nursery, he had a small group of friends with whom he was comfortable playing. When I visited him to give him the book I had made of the story of his life at nursery, his social world seemed more secure.

> *"Ahmed is now in Year One. He, his mum and sister really loved his book. Ahmed seemed to remember quite a lot from nursery. At one point he asked his mum if he cried lot when he was at nursery. Ahmed seems happier. His mum says that now he has a lot of friends and that the children call out to him every day. Ahmed listed quite a number of children who were his friends: Charles, Craig, Phoebe, Fiona and Richard."* (Reflective Journal: 30.10.19)

6.4.4.2 Amira

Amira had probably been the most reluctant child in the research project. During the drawing task at home this was very apparent. I had asked Amira to draw herself at nursery.

> *"Amira was very hesitant and wanted me to draw with her, so I started it off by drawing the nursery and she asked me to draw the door. In order for her to start drawing I engaged the "hand over hand" method. As she grew more confident, I relaxed my grip, so she was in control of the drawing. At her request, I drew the toilets then Amira independently drew herself and Alicia (her friend), then toys, books and the snack table with cheese on."* (Fieldnotes: Drawing activity at home: 2.5.18).

Amira's lack of confidence was in stark contrast to when I visited her for the last time to give her the book documenting her experiences at nursery (31.10.19). Even though she had seen the images in the book during a member checking visit when I showed her and her family the PowerPoint version (22.2.19) Amira was particularly proud of the image which depicted her linguistic abilities, returning to it countless times, chatting to me in English, her parents in Arabic about it, and showing both of her brothers, who were celebrating with her.

Amira is very clever. She can speak three languages

(Lippiatt 2019)

6.4.4.3 Hassan

At the time of writing, Hassan is still experiencing difficulties in school, however during the research project, like Amira, Hassan also had a significant moment of recognition from his family. During the second phase of the fieldwork which involved member checking, I visited Hassan and his family at home to show them the PowerPoint story of Hassan's experiences at Croft's End Nursery school (19.3.19). His three older siblings, Omar, his father and Fatima, his mother reflected together about the difficult time Hassan had experienced, recognising his isolation and that it was likely he was very scared. However, they all thought the PowerPoint was "good." When I asked what they meant Hassan's older brother said,

> *"he didn't know that Hassan could do these things. I asked, "what things exactly?" He said, "take the pictures." There was a general feeling of being impressed by Hassan. Omar said that he was very happy with Hassan's development."* (Fieldnotes: Fieldwork phase two, member checking: 19.3.19)

6.4.4.4 Karam

It is harder to consider the benefit of the research to Karam, as I did not manage to see him personally to say goodbye and give him the book of his story. Yara, his mother, shared many stories with me about Karam's life as she was very concerned about his emotional wellbeing. She told me how members of the Syrian community teased Karam because he was 'soft' and prone to cry. Following our discussions, it was decided that Yara speak firstly to Karam, and then speak on behalf of Karam asking people to stop being unkind. Together we worked out a script for her to use. Yara would tell Karam that she is his mother, and she says it is good to cry if you are sad, and that Karam's father would say the same thing. (Fieldnotes: 7.8.18).

However, it was during the second phase of fieldwork, at the member checking visit (20.3.19) that I sensed Karam had benefitted from being part of the project. Karam had suffered significant amount of bereavement in his young life (Chapter 2). He found acknowledging his father's death difficult and his mother, Yara, was concerned about the impact of this on his emotional development. I noticed a subtle change when Karam and I were looking through the PowerPoint of his story. When he came to this picture,

(Karam 16.7.18)

and saw I had written that he had drawn a picture of himself driving a car, Karam very quietly but clearly told me that it was a picture of his dad driving a car. When I told him that I could change it, he initially agreed but seemed to become embarrassed telling me that he was "only joking" (Fieldnotes: 20.3.19). I did change the text, which subsequently read, "*Karam drew a picture of his dad driving a car because this is*

important to him.” Although this was a subtle change for Karam, the fact that he was able to talk to me about his dad, suggested he was beginning to process his grief differently which I interpreted as a positive sign.

6.5 Process and Design

Freire (1970) suggests that structures which are used in education can perpetuate oppressive systems which disempower learners. He puts forth a pedagogical construction which aims to challenge the "banking" system of learning and re-distributes power, by educators promoting and enabling their students to have their voices heard and recognised. As an educator these ideas resonated with me and caused me to think more deeply about the structures I employed when designing this research. Using Freire's (1970) reasoning, it seemed to me, that the research structures employed, like the pedagogical approaches he describes, had the potential to either oppress or amplify the voices of the research participants.

6.5.1 Qualitative paradigm

Using a qualitative approach as opposed to a quantitative seemed most appropriate given the small number of participants and the hope to capture the children's experiences. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the "*painful history*" of qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:2) and suggest the roots of this paradigm were founded in white colonialism. They describe how qualitative research was used to represent "*the dark-skinned Other to the white world*" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:1) and was used as an instrument of power to control and oppress, "*the foreign, deviant, or troublesome Other.*" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:2). Whilst this history is extremely uncomfortable, it is important to acknowledge this dissonance between the foundations of the qualitative research paradigm and the current aims of my research, for this study to be truly ethical and power sensitive. The qualitative research paradigm has evolved, and present-day researchers are becoming more aware of the issues of the impact of white colonialism. Lira et al (2019) advocate reflecting on their own positionalities prior to conducting a research project in order "*to intentionally decolonize their work through questioning their epistemological stances*" (Lira et al 2019:467). Unlike Lira et al (2019) I have not been able to engage in a lengthy letter writing discussion, however, I also recognise the impact of white colonialism within the

research process both historically and in present day. Attempts to re-mediate the effects include: the examination of my own positionality, which is discussed further in this chapter, the inclusion of Said's work on Orientalism (1978) as part of the theoretical frame (4.4.3), the discourse analysis of the literature (3.4), the use of a research reflective journal to promote reflexivity and the ongoing acknowledgement of power in this project, with the intention to remain alert to these concerns.

6.5.2 Methodology and Methods

Therefore, the choice of methodology and methods employed became a strongly ethical issue, as opposed to a personal or professional preference. Throughout the process of developing the methodological approach, key decisions were taken regarding the methods and researcher positioning. This next section outlines those decisions and reports on other emerging ethical issues. The first decision was to adopt a primarily visual approach within the research project and in the subsequent presentation of this thesis, which included using graphic elicitation (Cook et al 2018), photographic representations (Clark and Moss, 2011) and working with a graphic artist to produce visual vignettes (Lippiatt 2019).

Several reasons informed the decision to use a visual approach. Gaywood et al (2020:154) describe the ethical considerations of using graphic elicitation (Cooke et al 2018) with children who have faced significant challenge, building on the work of Theron et al (2011) who outline how drawing was used as a research tool with survivor children from the Rwandan genocide and Quaglia et al (2015) who provide a clear framework to understand and analyse children's drawings. In similar studies, Liamputtong and Fernandes (2015), Maagerø and Sunde (2016), and Wahle et al (2017) all demonstrate how young children can give voice to their experiences by answering questions through drawing. These researchers offer credible findings through the analysis of art-based data. The decision to work with a graphic artist to represent the children's stories was also intentional. The literature review (Chapter 3) highlighted the importance of stories and imagination in other studies involving refugee children (Strekalova-Hughes and Wang 2019; Prior and Niez 2013). So, when attempting to answer the research question: *How do very young refugee children experience ECEC?* it seemed obvious to use both drawing and visual representations to curate the children's stories of their experiences. Using this approach addressed

the need for accessibility and immediacy which transcends culture, language, or age. However, before the final decision was made about using a visual methodology, I wanted to ensure that for the children this was culturally sensitive. During an early meeting with a Syrian research colleague,

> **"***I raised my concern about how drawing was perceived in the Islamic culture, explaining the use of using visual multi-modal methods for the study. She talked about how negative depictions of the Prophet had been used as a racist attack and that all Muslims would find this offensive, in the same way Catholics might find derogatory images of the Virgin Mary, but generally there was no issues with drawing."* (Reflective Journal:13.6.17)

Adopting a visual methodology also enabled me to continue to use a similar approach to Tobin (2016) but replace the videoing of children with a multi-modal set of methods which were able to capture their stories whilst being sensitive to the children's situation.

Including the graphic images of the children within the presentation of this thesis was also a purposeful decision, which again links to the ethical ontology of the study. The literature review highlighted two hidden narratives where *there is a tendency to essentialise the refugee experience with little emphasis on individuals* and that *children are less important than adults*. By including the artist's impressions, the aim was to intentionally disrupt those narratives and create an alternative which offers personhood, dignity, and voice to the child participants, whilst maintaining their ethical right to privacy and anonymity.

In addition, the inclusion of numerous conceptual models within this thesis has also been intentional. It builds on the adage that, '*A picture is worth a thousand words*' which suggests that pictorial representations can communicate with the viewer potentially more simply but at equal depth. This study aims to add new knowledge to existing understanding but also ensure that any new thinking is comprehensive and therefore useful and transferable. Representing processes, ideas, findings, and concepts through a diagrammatic convention is a methodological decision which ensures accessibility and ease of future application, consistent with the praxeological

approach ensuring research is rooted in praxis (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012).

6.5.2.1 Member checking

Member checking was put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as one of the methods to increase trustworthiness in qualitative research, to match the quantitative research requirements of proving the *validity* of research findings. The trustworthiness of this research project will be discussed more fully in the Methodology chapter; however, it is important to note that in this study, the process of member checking has also been infused with ethics, which is why it has been included in this chapter. Birt et al (2016) suggest that member checking may take several forms, however, put simply, member checking involves returning to research participants and checking with them that the *data* collected is representative of them. For those research participants who are often underrepresented, like the refugee children in this study, this process becomes hugely important as an ethical process. It potentially provides a real opportunity for participants to have their voices heard thus remediating some of the power balances. Birt et al (2016) also point out that of all the processes involved in qualitative research, member checking is generally given the least ethical attention citing their research with cancer patients where little thought appears to be given to the impact and method of the member checking process. They also suggest that there should be a congruence "*with the study's epistemological stance*" (Birt et al 2016:1806). Including Vygotsky's social learning theory in the theoretical frame foregrounds a view of knowledge which is co-constructed, so for this study, the member checking was guided by the principles that all the research participants should be offered the opportunity to revise, check and feedback regarding their experiences, as co-constructors of knowledge in the project. Again, this is important from an ethical perspective as the refugee children were intentionally positioned as active participants whose views were sought and respected. In their work with a community-based organisation in South Africa, Naidu and Prose (2018) describe member checking as *"accountability practices."* They say that member checking practices,

> "*are guided by the ethical principles of respect for persons and autonomy (which) can create the conditions in which each procedure promotes and enhances the other."* (Naidu and Prose, 2018: 11)

Taking a similar view, I developed a second layer of field work which was essentially a member checking phase. I was keen to ensure that my research participants did not "*feel caught in a culture of silence"* (Pascal and Bertram, 2012:488) so used member checking as a means to enable feedback from the children, their parents and siblings and the staff teams who had taught and cared for them. The aim was to build in a mechanism which offered an ethical check and balance to re-calibrate the power differentials.

There were a few ethical issues which arose from the member checking phase. Responses to the PowerPoint stories was broadly positive. Karam wanted me to label the name of his class instead of calling it "Reception class" and the head teacher at Croft's Lane Infants remarked that the school uniform was not the right colour. I explained in both cases that I needed to ensure that Karam should remain anonymous, so it was probably better to not change the details. Both agreed and accepted this.

Amira and Karam's mothers', Rahima and Yara, asked whether the final feedback of the findings of the research could be presented just to the mothers as they had taken part in the drawing interviews and had met with me most often. I was unsure about this, because of the original verbal contract was made with Ahmed and Hassan's fathers. Nevertheless, it was true that they had shown the most commitment to the project and given my decision to being responsive and respectful of the research participants with an eye on power redistribution in the research process, I agreed. Unfortunately, Fatima, Hassan's mother, could not be present at this final presentation of the findings with the mothers. Both Birt et al (2016) and Naidu and Prose (2018) talk about accessibility of the data for research participants, so congruent with the visual nature of the whole project, I created a strongly visual PowerPoint, using open-sourced images from Google images, which were visually and culturally easily accessible. Mina, the interpreter attended, and when she had to leave for another assignment, Zahra, Ahmed's mother, continued to translate.

6.5.2.2 The ethical issue of emotion

In the introductory chapter, the issue of emotion was mentioned as an ongoing theme within this study. At times the presence of strong emotions raised ethical dilemmas in the field. One example was during a home visit when Yara, Karam's mother, was

asked the question: *"Does your child ever talk about school when he is not there?"* To answer this question, Yara started to talk of her concerns about Karam. Although I shared with her that his teacher said Karam was doing very well in school, was popular and at times was outperforming some of his English peers, Yara seemed to want to use the interview visit as an opportunity to ask my professional opinion and unburden herself of feelings that were troubling her. Yara shared that Karam was often very quick to cry at home. She said that she had noticed that when a child cries, English people tend to comfort them. Yara told me that amongst her Syrian friends there were people who laughed at Karam and would tell him that he is a man, and that men don't cry. Yara shared that it made her want to withdraw from them as she wanted Karam to have a childhood without hearing things like this. She had tried to tell them not to say these things, but they did not seem to listen to her. As we talked, I shared with her my understanding that it is important for children to be able to cry and express their sadness. The emotional atmosphere was highly charged and Yara, Mina and I all cried together. (Fieldnotes 7.8.18)

Whilst crying *with* a mother who was facing huge challenges with her children and was herself trying to process the traumatic death of her husband and her own displacement, felt natural and innately human, I was concerned about the crossing of professional boundaries and wondered whether my behaviour had been unethical. I checked with my supervisory team and was reminded of the concept of being an "*attached*" researcher (Formosinho and Formosinho 2012: 602) which is an essential element in the praxeological research methodology, and therefore concluded that although the incident was unorthodox, it represented once more the complex nature of researching with refugee children and families, and the importance of adopting a methodology which incorporated the human responses of the researcher.

6.6 Culture and Language

The parents in this study are primarily literate in Arabic therefore in order to ensure they were giving informed consent for their children and themselves to participate, all the letters explaining the project were translated into Arabic. The local authority approved translation service was used for this. I was advised by a fellow academic who was Syrian, to have the translated letters checked by a third party who was a native Arab speaker, to ensure that they made sense in Arabic. She told me a story of

a research project that she had been involved in, in Sweden, where the letters were not checked, and the nuanced mistranslation had not been detected and the result was highly amusing to all the participants. Therefore, I asked a Syrian actor, who I had met at an arts festival, to check the letters, he was also a refugee. Before meeting the Syrian families, a suitable dress code was adopted and maintained throughout the fieldwork. Care was taken to ensure clothes worn were modest, culturally sensitive, and respectful to reduce any possible offence for the research participants. All the mothers wore hijab when out in public or in male company.

6.6.1 Finding a cultural guide.

Strekalova-Hughes (2017) suggests that teachers working with refugee children often lack intercultural sensitivity, unwittingly can be blind to the complex lived experiences of the children and need to develop culturally responsive teaching practices. Marmo (2013) discusses the ethical implications of cultural differences specifically when researching with refugees. She highlights the challenges of a researcher "*belonging to an ethnically or socially privileged group*" (2013:95). As a teacher and practitioner researcher, who sits comfortably within the dominant culture and holds a level of influence within the local authority where it was acknowledged there was little experience working with people from refugee backgrounds, it seemed important to take on board both of these concerns when starting out on my research journey. Marmo (2013) cites Jiang et al (2006:5) who suggest "*that one person on the research team has a degree of experience and understanding with broader cultural complexities of the research subject*" (Marmo, 2013:96), to balance any lack of cultural understanding, knowledge or intercultural sensitivity. However, as a lone researcher, the prospect of achieving this was unlikely. Instead, being committed to the ethical principle of offering respect by being culturally most appropriate, I decided I needed to find a person who could act as a cultural guide, explaining cultural and religious differences, as they occurred. Initially I hoped to find someone from within the Syrian community, but when this was unsuccessful the search widened to find someone who could advise on the Islamic faith and Middle Eastern culture in general. The intention was to first find an advisor but also to establish a way to recruit participants to take part in the research. The snowballing method (Vogt, 1999) was used to locate someone to help. For participant recruitment, there are potential issues with using this

method due to the risk of participant bias (Beauchemin and González-Ferrer, 2011). However, it is often used in qualitative studies where the participants are deemed to belong to, "*unattainable populations*" (Naderifar et al 2017: 2) or a "*rare population*" (Spreen, 1992: 37). The principle of using bonds and links to identify possible cultural guides to help support a research project concerned with very young refugee children, seemed a logical step, with the ethical need to work with a cultural guide being the prime motivation. It also sat comfortably with the praxeological element of the methodology of "*attached*" research (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012: 602). The process of finding a cultural guide and the hope of a means to recruit the research participants was long and often frustrating. Figure 43 outlines in detail the ten attempts made.

Figure 43. Record of snowballing attempts to find a cultural guide

Record of snowballing attempts to find a cultural guide

	Contact	Date	Type of contact	Nature of contact	Response
Attempt 1	OF (Leader in the Syrian community in Bristol)	*22.2.16*	*Conversation*	*Resettling Syrian Refugees conference. OF was presenting*	*Support offered and email given*
		13.2.17	email	DG request support	*Positive response. Offered time and support. 14.2.17*
		16.2.17	email	DG asked for a date to meet up on 27.2.17	*No response*
		23.2.17	email	DG asked again to meet up.	*No response*
Attempt 2	K (Member of Syrian community in Bristol)	*15.3.17*	Telephone call	Spoke with a friend of my brother who volunteers with local refugee charity who also knows my son. She had been one of my lecturers from when I was an undergrad.	L agreed to contact K
		20.3.17	email	L says she has spoken to K	K to give L the name of a Syrian woman who teaches at UWE
		27.3.17	email	L is still waiting to be given any contact details	L advised me to contact another local charity, ABC, working with refugees
		27.4.17	email	DG emailed L asking for an update	Suggested I contact Syrian academic already working at a nearby university.
Attempt 3	ABC charity	*27.4.17*	email	DG asked for any support	No response
Attempt 4	Advice about Islamic culture and drawing	*27.4.17*	conversation	DG asked colleague, J, who is married to an Islamic woman, E, if she would be able to assist. J thought his father-in-law would be able to help	J to talk with father-in-law
		6.5.17	conversation	J has spoken with E. She has advised that there is a need to find an influential member of the community.	J to arrange a meeting with the Imam in study city J to talk to contacts in his hometown.
				Met with E as an initial contact. Explained research.	E did not feel able and was unable to find anyone to assist.
Attempt 5	To find a person to translate into Arabic information and permission letter for Syrian families	*29.4.17*	conversation	A friend suggested one of her friend's son D who is about to graduate having studied Arabic as a possible translator	My friend to speak to D's parents
		2.5.17	text	D's father made contact to say he was too busy at the moment	
		3.5.17	text	D's father asked for DG to send the letter for D to look at.	
		6.5.17	email	DG sent letter for D to potentially translate	No response.
Attempt 6		*2.5.17*	conversation	Another friend P, suggested one of his friends W, who has a PhD in Arabic and worked in Arabic speaking countries	P messaged W to ask
		3.5.17	text	W has agreed to look at the letter to translate	
		6.5.17	email	DG email W the letter for potential translation	W felt he would be unable to help.
Attempt 7		*18.5.17*	presentation	20-minute presentation of my research to the local authority team	Issues with gatekeeping noted.
				to ask for support to contact Imam or find a cultural guide.	
Attempt 8		*13.6.17*	meeting	Coffee with Syrian academic working on a medical longitudinal study for nearby university	Agreed to only one meeting but introduced me to the leader of Welcoming Refugees
Attempt 9		*17.6.17*	email	Introductions made and contact promised	
		19.6.17	email	Email sent to arrange a meeting	No response
Attempt 10		*24.11.17*	Chance meeting	Prompted by a colleague to ask to present my research to a bi-annual gathering of the refugee families. Met Mina, the interpreter	Mina offers her support for the project and becomes the cultural guide for the next three years.

When I began to prepare for the fieldwork phase of this project, I initially thought I would try to recruit an Arabic speaker, possibly a student, to assist as an interpreter, but was advised very early on by a colleague in the local authority and one of my supervisors, to only employ a bona fide interpreter, from an approved company. (Research Journal 21.4.18). I eventually met Mina, who was already employed by the local authority as an interpreter. She very quickly became an important figure, acting as an interpreter, a broker, and a cultural guide. Mina arranged the home visits and accompanied me, interpreting for the drawing tasks with the children and the mothers. The children were never offered interpreters in their ECEC settings, so I attended the ECEC settings alone, as all the children were used to operating in fully English-speaking environments and were competent in understanding, even if they were more reluctant to speak. Interpreters were employed on rare occasions if a more formal parental meeting was needed. All the participating ECEC settings spoke about the significant financial resources needed to engage an interpreter.

Halilovich (2013) describes interpreters as "*invisible actors*" (Halilovich 2013:134) within refugee research. Working closely with Mina, made me realise the potential powerlessness of her position as an agency interpreter and also within the research project. Given the ethical nature of this research which was underpinned by my personal beliefs and values regarding respect, dignity and honour of all, it seemed important to ensure that Mina was not rendered invisible in this piece, so I made the ethical decision to include her voice in the polyvocal element of the hybrid methodology (5.4.2). Mina's story adds another layer to understanding the post migration refugee experience and will be referred to again in the findings chapter (Chapter 7).

Other ethical issues presented themselves about the use of an interpreter throughout the fieldwork, all of which needed careful navigation, keeping in mind my ethical commitment to a more balanced distribution of power. From the outset, Ahmed's mother, Zahra, did not want me to use an interpreter at all, choosing to liaise with me either at Dog Lane nursery when we met, or through text and on the phone. She interpreted for Ahmed, during his drawing tasks at home. I found the sessions without an interpreter more challenging but felt it necessary to honour Zahra's wishes. Both Fatima and Omar, Hassan's parents and Amira's parents, Adeel and Rahima were

happy to welcome me into their homes accompanied by Mina. However, Yara, asked to use a different person to interpret. This person was her friend and did not seem to be employed by an agency. Following Yara's lead, I made contact and booked her for one visit, but Yara often forgot the times and dates, so when the visit was cancelled, it became more difficult to engage her again to act as interpreter, as she had children and family commitments. Due to these and other practical issues, Yara then agreed for Mina to interpret for her.

Due to the complexity of the ethics surrounding interpretation, I developed the following ethical principles to help me navigate the issues in order to ensure equity of power remained central in the everyday exchanges involved in researching with refugees.

Figure 44. Foundational ethical principles developed

1. The project is strongly relational, and the participants have power to determine the way they engage in the research.
2. I will take my lead from the participants and respect their choices (ongoing assent/consent)
3. Where possible I will use the bona fide interpretation service
4. Mina would be paid for the time it took for her to arrange the home visits, as well as appointment and interpretation time.
5. I would pay her for any cancellations of visits.

6.6.2 The influence of world politics.

The framing of the children's contexts using Bronfenbrenner's eco systems model (1979) locates them firmly within a world stage, with their chronosystem being described as 'The War in Syria' (2.6). Refugee-ism, refugee status and experience are highly political with global events having a continuing effect on the everyday lives of the children in the study. What I was unprepared for was the ongoing influence of world politics as a feature within the research process. The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration's code of ethics describes "*politicised research contexts*" (IASFM 2018, 14). During the search for a cultural guide, one incident crystallised this and led me to question the legitimacy of my role as a researcher and made me keenly aware of the complexity of the research field. Ethically, the incident acted as a springboard forcing me to consider more carefully my own positionality, which is discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

During the fourth attempt to secure an Islamic cultural guide I met with a colleague's wife, who is Iranian, and casually mentioned my own Jewish heritage.

> "*For the first time since I began this inquiry, I had the briefest of insight into why my grandmother wanted to disassociate my dad from his name and cultural identity. Etti's response to what I said was remarkable. She could not understand why my children would want to wear the Star of David or go to Israel, at all. I made it clear that I wasn't in agreement with the Israeli policy to settle on the West Bank, but her disgust was palpable, and it made me want to justify my children's right to identify with their forefather's religion. I tried to explain that being Jewish is not completely tied up with Israeli policy, and I agreed with her that Netenyahu's policies were often questionable, however it left me feeling cold. She advised me NOT to share my cultural heritage with the Syrian families, and I am guessing that her belief is that there is too much enmity between Muslims and Jews. This encounter left me feeling disturbed*. "
>
> (Research journal: 12.5.17)

It had never crossed my mind that my heritage and by association perceived links with Israel would be an issue when undertaking the research project. Later that year at a festival, I met and spoke at length with a Syrian man who was Muslim and a refugee,

about this dilemma. He told me that Syrians had a long history of living peaceably alongside both Jewish and Christian people. He felt that the incident I explained to him may be related to the nationality of the woman, who was Iranian, rather than a religious issue, as Iran had experienced long standing difficult relations with Israel. The information from both the Iranian woman and the Syrian man was invaluable. When finally, the opportunity to meet with the Syrian community to recruit participants occurred, the first slide on my PowerPoint presentation was a picture of my grandparents. On hearing that my grandparents had been refugees, one of the fathers asked, through the interpreter, "Which country were they from?" When I told them Austria, a sympathetic murmur spread across the room, and suddenly they were really listening to me. This sympathetic approach from the participants continued. Throughout my interface with the participant mothers, there were many discussions about the similarities between Jewish and Islamic peoples which resulted in Karam's mother telling me that we were cousins.

6.7 Positionality

I first became aware of the issue of positionality when I was trying to recruit the cultural guide to assist me in this study. I encountered gatekeeping behaviour during attempt three, seven and nine in Figure 41 and then again when trying to gain access to the parent participants. Lewin (1947) first introduced the concept of gatekeepers in his discussions about group dynamics. Dockett and Perry (2010) discuss the level of gatekeepers a researcher often needs to negotiate to gain access and then assent from children taking part in a piece of research, which suggests a level of normality of finding gatekeepers when researching with young children. Kay (2019) says that gatekeepers, "*serve an important role in testing the applications of the principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence within the proposed research*" (Kay 2019:37) and describes them as "*guardians of research*" (Kay 2019), specifically of research carried out with children and young people who she describes as "*vulnerable*" (Kay 2019).

Discussions with a Syrian academic, (13.6.17) helped me understand that the sentiment and desire to protect the refugee families from further harm is laudable, given their already challenging life experiences, but when I was confronted with these gatekeeping behaviours, there increasingly seemed to me issues of power and positionality, being enacted. The presence and behaviours of gatekeepers alerted me

to a narrative of vulnerability, in regard to the refugee families, which was confirmed in the literature review (Chapter 3). It also highlighted other ethical nuances which had not been visible before.

The incidents of gatekeeping were not solely confined to my work as a researcher but were also noted in my practitioner role. There were several cases where services were refused for refugee children and their parents, by support workers, because of concern about adding too much pressure to the families. This was unusual and appeared to be linked to the family's refugee status. The demographic of the gatekeepers, in my study, was almost solely white, female English professionals or charity workers. From my observations it seemed that each of the gatekeepers were unwittingly occupying a 'motherlike' or 'saviour protector' role in their protection of the families which pushed them into a position of grateful recipient. Echoes of this were seen during the feedback session with the early educators at Dog Lane Nursery when one member of staff asked if the family were "*grateful*" for all they had done for Ahmed. The theoretical frame offered further clarity, with Said's (1978) work on Orientalism suggesting an infantilising of the refugees by the Occident host nation, reducing and positioning the families in a childlike status, assuming their need of protection. Observing this positional dynamic made me consider my own positionality even more carefully.

6.7.1 Being a practitioner researcher

One of the major themes in this study is the issue of power. To ensure a positive ethical approach it was necessary to consider my own position, as a practitioner researcher, regarding power. McAreavey and Das (2013) discuss the potential power and powerlessness experienced by researchers when negotiating access with gatekeepers of minority or marginalised communities, in terms of their insider outsider positionality. I have always been keenly aware of the ongoing position of power and influence which working for the local authority as the only peripatetic Children Centre teacher has entitled me. It is likely that my role and status afforded me greater access and opportunity to interact with and recruit research participants than if I was an outsider researcher. Therefore, to remain vigilant to the ethical challenges, I documented my ongoing concerns using a reflective research diary. Having pre-established relationships with many early education settings, managers, and practitioners as well as a good reputation with parents and professionals alike, was a

clear advantage, alongside an early endorsement from the then Chief Executive. However, there was a concern that potential participants could feel obliged to take part in the research with an element of coercion, either as a favour to me or feeling there was little choice to refuse.

The Syrian academic I met with, could also see a conflict of interest for me as a practitioner researcher and the potential for the Syrian families to feel coerced into taking part in the research. She advised me to make it clear to the families that they were entitled to refuse to be part of this study and it would not affect their status of benefits from the local authority. She also told me to clarify that the research project was not concerned with having their children taken away from them, by the authorities. She explained that Syrian families are very aware of the differences in culture and that in England it is considered unacceptable to use corporate punishment on your child. She suggested that families are often frightened by the idea that social services can remove their children, so may be reluctant to become involved with me, given my status and job role within the local authority.

Due to these concerns about possible participants feeling obliged to take part in the research, I initially took the decision to not overtly use any of my inherent power as a practitioner to help with access to the field. However, when attempts to recruit a cultural guide (Figure 43) proved challenging, it seemed a more pragmatic approach was needed, or the research project would not come into being. Following discussions with my supervisory team, (supervision notes: 15.12.17) and after much personal dissonance, it was decided to extend the snowballing-type model used to find a cultural guide and use my contacts to assist in gaining access to the participants to recruit them. An opportunity was presented to attend a bi-annual meeting with all the Syrian refugee families in the local authority and a decision was made to secure an invitation. Having presented the research proposal to the families and recruited four participant children, it transpired that two of the children, Ahmed and Amira were attending ECEC settings which were well known to me. Dog Lane Nursery was one of the local authority nurseries where I was leading, and St Swithin's preschool where I already had a pre-established relationship as an advisory teacher. The research was formally presented to both managers, and it was made clear their option to not take part or withdraw at any time. They quickly agreed to join the project. Karam and

Hassan were attending Croft's End Nursery and Infant school. At the time, although a maintained school, Croft's End had a reputation amongst early education colleagues of being unwilling to engage with outside professionals, unknown to them. I did not have an established relationship with the head or any of the staff, however, the chair of governors had previously been the Children and Young People Service lead, and at one time, my line manager, who had fully supported my pursuit of a doctorate. In line with the decision to utilise my contacts to gain access to the field, I contacted her, and she facilitated a meeting with the head teacher. Following the same presentation of the research, the head teacher allowed me access to the children in both his settings and the staff team. Eventually both he and his Special Needs co-ordinator acted as expert witnesses agreeing to take part in a practice discussion, following the withdrawal of two of his staff from the project.

During the field work, the ethical dilemma of being a practitioner researcher continued, when visiting the children in their ECEC settings. As a practitioner, one aspect of the role of the Children Centre teacher involves detailed observation of children in their ECEC, who seem to be struggling with their social and emotional development or appear to have mental health needs. As a result, my skills to notice are well tuned. Visiting the study children caused another significant conflict of interest because I noticed '*unmet needs*' which in my professional practitioner role I could and would address (Gaywood et al; 2020: 157). In response to this conflict of interest, I decided to adopt an advocate researcher role (Block et al, 2013) and created a set of guiding ethical principles to assist the decision-making process about what and how to feed back. (Gaywood et al, 2020:157)

Figure 45. Parameters for feedback to settings

- I would only feedback with the parental consent
- There would only be ONE thing fed back to the setting.
- The feedback would take the form of verbal feedback (to ensure it was informal)
- I would not make judgements about pedagogy or teaching styles

- The feedback would be addressed to senior staff who would be able to act on it
- The motive for giving feedback was to improve the children's outcomes
- Once I had spoken to the setting manager/leader I would leave any future action taken in their hands

Adopting an advocate positionality as a researcher, is generally considered to introduce high possibility of researcher bias and therefore undermine the trustworthiness of the findings, in qualitative research (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). However, in the field of Forced Migration Studies, a different view has emerged. In the Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice, the Refugee Studies Centre state that,

> *"Most researchers in forced migration would maintain that their paramount obligation is to their research participants and that when there is conflict, the interests and rights of those studied should come first"* (Refugee Studies Centre 2007: 164).

For me personally, it felt ethically congruent with the attached nature of the study and enabled me to ensure that the research should offer benefit for the participants. Hendy's (2020) discussion of the challenges of being a practitioner researcher were particularly helpful in helping me navigate the complexities I faced. Working as a police officer practitioner researcher, he describes "*switching on and switching off*" (Hendy 2020:70) and talks about the need to move from being a practitioner to being a researcher by consciously switching off his police practitioner senses and switching on his researcher concerns and focus. Given these observations, once the research and fieldwork has been completed, it could be expected that the ethical requirements for the researcher could be 'switched off' and would cease, but in my experience as a practitioner researcher, it has not been that simple as the study undertaken with the children, their parents and the staff within the ECECs is overtly relational and my professional work as the Children Centre teacher continued. Recently, when asked by staff at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school to become professionally involved with Hassan's younger brother, further ethical dilemmas presented themselves. My

experience and knowledge about very young refugee children were recognised, Hassan's parents were comfortable with me and keen for me to be part of the team who were supporting the family. However, during my visit to his younger brother, the Special Needs co-ordinator, in agreement with the headteacher, asked if I could re-visit Hassan. At that time, he was in Year One and was struggling to fully access the curriculum. Hassan was showing signs of traumatised behaviour, which was leading the school to feel they were unable to accommodate his needs. The senior leaders had both taken part in my research as experienced witnesses and knew my work. So, although their request was outside of my current remit of working with children 0-5, it was agreed by my manager that I could become involved, because of my history with the family and positive interactions with the school. During the subsequent visit, Hassan obviously recognised me, and we had a smiling interchange. I made the observations required, wrote up my assessment and discussed it with the head teacher. There followed some difficult interchanges with external agencies who although they knew me, did not appreciate my involvement and who were troubled by the school's position regarding Hassan's placement. It also transpired that some of the staff felt that Hassan had not exhibited some of the more extreme behaviours during the observation I made, because he knew me and "*was trying to impress me*," This situation presented me with huge inner conflict. Whilst professionally I felt that for Hassan it would be better for him to stay in a place which he knew and was known, and I understood, as a researcher, the challenge of a transition for him as part of his refugee experience. Equally as a teacher, I could also understand the rationale of the headteacher and SENCO whom I know to be inclusive caring individuals. In addition, it was Hassan's father, Omar, who at the initial participant recruitment meeting, had asked me to, "*Please help my son*" (Reflective Journal 24.11.17). This plea was the original verbal ethical contract made with Omar which formed the basis of him allowing Hassan to be involved in the research. It provided the bedrock to many subsequent ethical decisions. I was torn between my ethical commitment to Hassan, loyalty to my teaching colleagues and the boundaries of positive multi-agency working. There was also the nuanced obligation I felt to the headteacher at the school, because of his support of the research project. Navigating the intricacies of these relationships continues to be an ongoing ethical challenge and requires more than switching on and switching off my practitioner researcher positionality.

6.7.2 My identity and positionality as a researcher

When thinking about my positionality more deeply, I found that researching with refugees caused me a further ethical dilemma. There were times when I wondered how appropriate it was for me to conduct the research and I asked myself often whether I was being a voyeur into other people's lives (Reflective journal 1.7.17). I found it difficult to locate my positionality given my background and lived experiences. Dwyer and Buckle's (2009) work was helpful as they documented their experiences as being both insider and outsider researchers. They suggested that the existing notion of being an insider or an outsider researcher, did not fully capture the intricacies of the researcher's experience. This resonated with my own experience. They described the "*space between*" the insider-outsider dichotomy where the, "*hyphen acts as a third space, a space between, a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction*" (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: 60). This helped to crystalise my thinking about my identity and positionality as a researcher. I developed a model which demonstrated my positionality within this third space (Bhabha, 1994).

Figure 46. Diagram to show my positionality: Residing in the hyphen

Granddaughter of displaced people

Cultural similarities

Mother of large family

Advisory teacher for children who have faced significant challenge

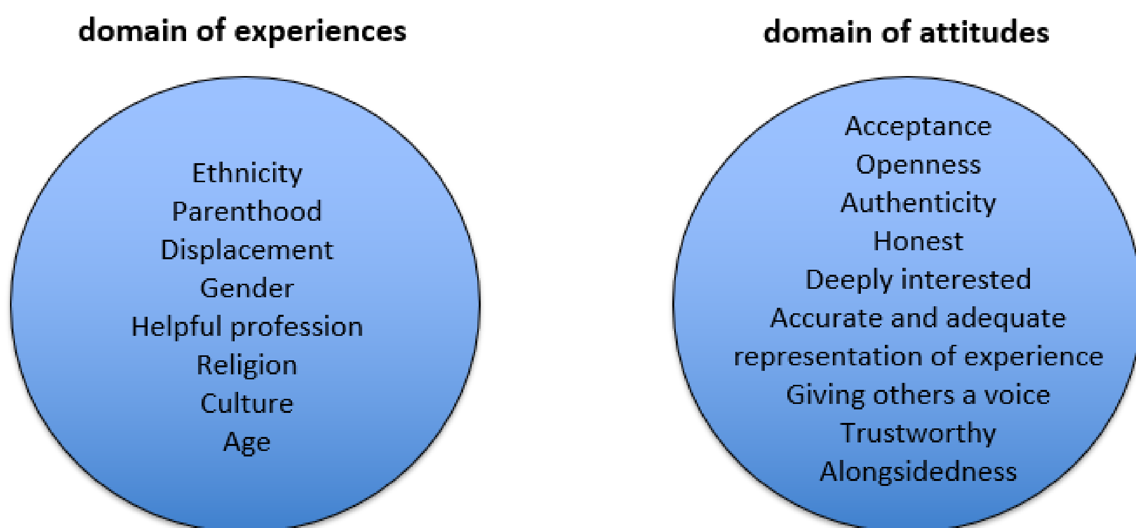
Through this model, I was able to foreground some of the experiences I shared with the participants and recognise how my professional identity was also helpful to the refugee parents. Gaywood et al (2020) noted that these characteristics, "*helped to form trust and develop understanding*" (Gaywood et al, 2020:158) and supported the development of my relationship with the parent participants. However, the need to locate my positionality further remained a challenge.

Building on the work of Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012), Moser (2008) and Pound (2003) I developed another model which could support me with this. It seemed to me that by

focussing positionality, using the "*insider – outsider*" categorisations, or the hyphenated "*third space*" (Dwyer and Buckle 2009, 60) was limiting. I found that,

> "*a researcher can locate themselves within a domain of experience which is either shared or not shared by the research participants. Or they can locate themselves within a domain of attitude which determines their ethical approach to all involved with the study*" (Gaywood et al 2020, 158).

Figure 47. Possible positional domains in the field



(Gaywood et al 2020)

Through this model I was able to firmly locate my positionality within the domain of attitudes, and by adopting the approach set out in the domain, I could authentically engage ethically and in a power sensitive way with all the research participants for the duration of the study. This conceptual model has significant transferability and could be used by future researchers when trying to locate their positionality but also offers other professionals an attitudinal mode from which operate, which is power sensitive and ethically robust.

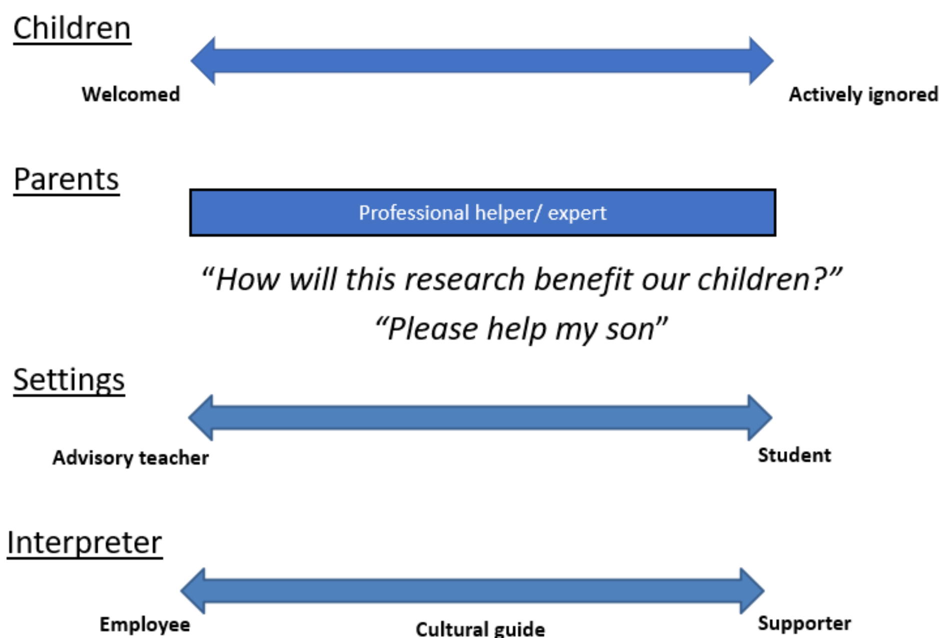
The final positional conundrum I encountered was that of my ethical response when considering the dynamism of relationships in the field. It was important to notice the often-subtle power shifts in the relationships, remaining alert to the potential of uneven

power distribution. McAreavey and Das suggest that, "*skills, wisdom, and expertise are required*" (McAreavey and Das, 2013:114) when considering these and

"*Ryan (2015) acknowledges the fluid nature of relationships within research and refers to 'the dynamic rhythms of our multi-positionalities*'" (Gaywood et al 2020, 159).

To document and chart these dynamic relationships, I developed conceptual models using Lyndon's (2018) Axioms of Positionality. What these demonstrate is that although I may have fixed my own positionality, this could be subject to change, depending on how the participants chose to relate to me. My experiences suggested that these were a sliding and dynamic scale, which could alter according to the situation and the choices, "*responses, attitudes and beliefs*" (Gaywood et al 2020, 159) of the participants.

Figure 48. Axioms of Positionality



(Lyndon and Gaywood 2018)

The children's responses to me could vary between a warm welcome to actively ignoring me. The settings chose to relate to me either as an advisory teacher, or a student, whilst Mina the interpreter moved along the axis, and at times was my employee and at others a keen supporter of the research. She maintained her role as cultural guide throughout. The parents of the children did not waiver in their

interactions with me. From the start, at the initial recruitment meeting, they made it clear that they were engaging with this research for their children's benefit, and they wanted my professional expertise to help their children. They located me as a More Knowledgeable Other (Vygostsky, 1978) irrespective of my own preferred positionality. Ethically, I felt that this needed to be respected as their choice and this influenced my decision to adopt an advocate researcher role.

6.8 Summary

The ethics involved in this study have been complex and at times all consuming. It has been necessary to pay significant attention to not only the obvious ethical challenges, but also to the more subtle interchanges. I have had to respond dynamically to situations, make decisions, form principles, and develop new models in order to ensure that my approach was power sensitive. All of the new ethical knowledge generated through this study is practical, workable and easily transferable. It could be used in other research with minoritised or marginalised groups or in other people centred spheres, where issues of power are at play.

Chapter 7: Research findings

No man is an island

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were,
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

John Donne (1624)

7.1 Introduction

Leavy (2020) writes about the role that poetry can play in research. She says that *"poems open a space to represent data in ways that, for some researchers, are attentive to multiple meanings, identity work, and amplifying subjugated perspectives*." (Leavy, 2020: 85/6). Given the complexity of the refugee children's experiences, the layers of meaning, their often-powerless status and invisibility it seems appropriate to use a poem as a way of framing the findings chapter. Leavy (2020) is very clear that, "*poetry is a form that itself brings attention to silence (or as a poet might say to space)"* (Leavy 2020: 102). Utilising a poem in this way will also resonate with the experiences of the children in this research who spent time living in a silent space, in their ECEC settings. Although not widely researched, there is a suggestion that very young children are comfortable with poetry which goes beyond the rhyming verse generally associated with the early years. Pramling (2009) wrote about a

Swedish project where children aged 2-8, were introduced and encouraged to generate emergent free-form poetry. He suggests that if,

> "*poetry is a response to attempts at putting into words experience and phenomena that somehow appear to transcend the boundaries of one's knowledge/vocabulary, then it would seem that the child's 'natural inclination' towards the poetic.*" (Pramling 2009:388).

To include poetry in the presentation of findings is therefore congruent with the theoretical and ethical aspect of this study. I have chosen to use an old English poem, which on the surface, may appear an unusual choice given the subject matter of the research. However, Donne himself was not unfamiliar with living in the margins of society and within his poem, "*No Man is an Island*" (Donne, 1624) has managed to capture something of the idea that human beings are connected to one another by their humanity. This idea has been developed over the subsequent four centuries and took hold during the Enlightenment where thinkers were involved in, "*discussions of the prospects of humanity"* (Giddens and Sutton, 2021: 8). It was these discussions which led to the evolution of the concept of globalisation. Giddens and Sutton (2021) helpfully trace the history of this theory, which they describe as,

> "*The various processes through which geographically dispersed human populations are brought into closer and more immediate contact with one another, creating a single community of fate or a global society"* (Giddens and Sutton, 2021:8).

Although Giddens and Sutton (2021) suggest that globalisation has linked people to one another, as global citizens, globalisation as a theory occupies a contested space with other academics positing that,

> "*Contemporary globalisation exacerbates differences among peoples. It emphasises the importance of protecting borders, as much as it promotes international or cross-border flows of labour, goods, services, information and capital"* (Dayal, 2019: 3).

However, through a collection of essays, Luczak et al (2019) re-think these notions, putting forward ideas of new cosmopolitanisms, which attempts to capture some of the complexity of being a member of a global society, alongside the need to recognise difference from both a racial, ethnic, and cultural perspective. Dayal (2019) points out that cosmopolitanism is not only concerned with the broader global level, but it, "*gives humane testimony to the everyday, even unremarkable, lived experience of people"* (Dayal, 2019:4). He goes further and suggests that through investigating and entering the *'intimate worlds available to minority groups*" there is opportunity for "*cosmopolitical justice*" and that this is best expressed, "*through shared feeling, common aspiration to true equity, a sympathetic connection that is larger than self-interest but one that returns to inter-esse (inter-being)*" (Dayal 2019:5).

The presentation of the research findings is an attempt to foreground the small and private worlds of the children in this study, whilst maintaining a grasp on the wider ideas of global proportions. There is a need to remain attentive to issues of essentialisation which can be commonplace for refugees. Viewing Donne's work through a new cosmopolitanism lens assists in holding the two ideas of recognition of individual identity alongside the shared experiences of a wider humanity. Donne's poem frames these ideas well as it uses the metaphor of the connection of land to land which represents the interconnected nature of human beings. He asserts that all people are connected to each other and if one person is impacted by something, then all are affected. However, it is important to note that in using Donne's poem I am aware of Spivak's (1985) notion of 'worlding' (Chapter 3) which has been used to, "*cover up…practices of colonizing*" (Koyama and Kasper, 2022:4). My theoretical lens has been useful to critique those colonizing practices of power, domination, and silencing of voice (Fonkem 2020), particularly when choosing to use Donne's poem as a frame for the presentation of the findings.

This study began as a personal response to the refugee crisis of 2015 and was written up following the vote of the citizens of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (2016) Subsequently, the world experienced the COVID -19 pandemic (2020-21). These were unprecedented times and the sentiments

offered by Donne remind us of our interconnectivity. The poem is also congruent with the ethical, methodological, and theoretical stance of this study. Notions, theories, and ethics about relationships have already been woven through the previous chapters. They can be found within the design, the literature review and then the findings. Equally, his reference to a universal human experience emerges implicitly through the policy driver section (Chapter 2) where feelings of compassion and empathy influenced a humanitarian response to refugees. Additionally, discussions about vulnerability highlighted the universality of being vulnerable (Virokannas et al, 2020). Donne declares, "No man is an island" yet the findings suggest that for all the refugee children, in their ECEC settings, experienced times when they were isolated and alone, to varying degrees.

7.2 Chapter structure

The findings are centred around each child's experiences in their ECEC. Although their individual stories are significant, in order to avoid repetition and being overly descriptive, a summary of the visual vignettes have not been included in this chapter but are found in Appendix 19. A copy of Amira's visual vignette is also included in Appendix 13. What these stories demonstrate is that each child's experience is unique and personal to them. The summaries are important because they keep the presence of the children central. However, in this chapter, firstly, **an analysis of the children's artefacts** is presented. Next the thematic findings are considered. These build on Donne's poem and are presented in two main parts: **Islands** and **Bridges**. **The islands** being that which seem to separate and isolate the children and **the bridges** describe those things which offer connection. The islands section is divided into five segments which include: **conflicted feelings and separated experiences; parental complex relationships with the settings; the way we do things; ways of thinking about refugees and its impact, and the unseen challenges faced by the children.** The second section about the bridges which enabled connectivity is also made up of five parts: **the importance of friends; linguistic competence; inner strength; professional relationships as a bridge** and **the use of visual methods.**

As the findings are presented, the intention is to use "*thick description*" advocated by Geertz (1973) with illustrative anecdotes from the field work and where appropriate share some of the collated artefacts of participant drawings, photos and the images created by the graphic artist to represent the children's experiences. This chapter uses information from the wider ecology of the children thus making use of contextual findings offered by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as introduced in Chapter 2.

7.3 Analysis of the children's artefacts

Kellett's (2010) work suggests that children can be researchers into their own lives and those of their peers. Although Kellett primarily focussed on children over the age of 9, her work resonates with this part of my study. She developed ways of training children in research methods, methodology, data collection and analysis. However, in this piece of research the children were far younger, so it did not seem appropriate to their age group, but they did take on the role of researchers in that they produced artefacts which offered a view of their lives. The polyvocal methodology (Tobin, 2016) takes into account other voices within the research, yet this study is primarily concerned with the lived experiences of four young Syrian refugees. Although complex to capture and represent, their voice is a vital component (Section 1.7.2). Kellett (2010) comments that "*this style of child-led research generates valuable knowledge about children's lived experiences otherwise inaccessible to adults*" (Kellett, 2010: 202). Therefore, each child participant's artefacts have been listed in Figure 50, analysed with themes being identified then links made to the wider study and the theoretical frame. The theoretical frame was helpful as it provided insight into the children's identity formation and their positioning in terms of belonging to Out-groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). It was also useful in understanding the children's social relationships with their peers and how they positioned themselves as learners (Vygotsky, 1978). The analysis of children's artefacts alone also demonstrated that Said's work on Orientalism (1978) was harder to apply, because his work is more concerned with how the Occident (European) positions those from the Orient. However, the children's artefacts suggested that they held a sense

of conflicted feelings about their ECEC settings which could be explained a number of ways. Setting the children's lives in a wider context (Chapter 2) using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, provided wider narratives about refugees which undoubtedly impacted the children's lived experiences. Using Said's (1978) work has enabled a deeper, less obvious, analysis of the children's artefacts which proffers that they were impacted by the more negative conceptualisations about them, because of their country of origin or their refugee status.

Figure 49. Analysis of children's artefacts

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">AMIRA</th></tr>
<tr><th>Artefact</th><th>Description</th><th>Emerging themes</th><th>Analysis</th><th>Links to the wider study</th><th>Relation to the theoretical frame</th></tr>
<tr><td>Photo 1</td><td>The rug children sit on to listen to stories and read books</td><td rowspan="14">BOOKS AND STORIES

SNACK TIME

HER FRIEND, LAMAI

CARS</td><td rowspan="14">Amira was very engaged in the photograph activity, and she took a high number of photos.
She showed her love of stories and books through the first two photos.
Photos 4 and 5 demonstrate the importance Amira places on snack time and eating together.
There are 5 photos depicting different cars both real and the push along ones. When asked about this, Amira was unable to talk about them. Neither her parents nor her keyperson could indicate that this was a theme in her play, although her mother mentioned that Amira spent time pushing her younger brother on his car at home.
Three of Amira’s photos depict her friend Lamai, suggesting her importance to Amira.
Stories and books, eating or snack time and her friend Lamai all feature in Amira’s drawing activity, which was completed at home, suggesting the ongoing significance for her.</td><td rowspan="14">The importance of stories and imagination:
(Strekalova-Hughes and Wang 2019; Prior and Niez 2013)

Pedagogy of welcome:
The welcome I received from Adeel and Rahima (Amira’s parents) which always included sharing of food.

The importance of relationships:
(Samara et al, 2019; Ager and Strang, 2010; Block, 2017; Kristjansdottir and Skaptadottir, 2019)</td><td rowspan="14">Tajfel and Turner (1979)
Social identity theory
Stories are important for children and particularly for refugee children as they enable them to begin to establish a sense of self and identity.

Amira makes a special friend with another child who is positioned within the Out-group.

Vygotsky (1978)
Social learning theory
Eating and sharing food is a social activity which involves the transmission of culture and helps children form bonds.

Making relationships is an important aspect of children’s learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Different angle of the story rug</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Two children and an adult at the snack table with the milk jug</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>2 empty chairs, snack table and an empty plate and cup</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>Washing up bowl which the children use to wash up their snack plate and cup. Including plates and cups washed up.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>A push along car and the legs of Lamai who is riding it.</td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td>Close up of the steering wheel of a different push along car, without rider</td></tr>
<tr><td>8</td><td>2 ‘real’ cars taken through the fence</td></tr>
<tr><td>9</td><td>Her friend Lamai holding a toy camera</td></tr>
<tr><td>10</td><td>Broad perspective of outside capturing lines of parked cars beyond the fence, and a small group of children sitting on push along cars with an adult</td></tr>
<tr><td>11</td><td>Her friend Lamai with another child</td></tr>
<tr><td>12</td><td>Close up of a parked car window through the fence</td></tr>
<tr><td>13</td><td>Cone on the grass</td></tr>
<tr><td>Drawing</td><td>Amira and her friend Lamai. Snack table with cheese on it. 3 books. One mark for toys. Outline which includes door, garden, toilets</td></tr>
</table>

KARAM					
Artefact	**Description**	**Emerging themes**	**Analysis**	**Links to the wider study**	**Relation to the theoretical frame**
Photo 1-20	Karam staged and took photos of all the adults and children in his class.	**FRIENDS AND PEOPLE** **CAR AND HIS DAD** **CONFLICTED FEELINGS**	Like Amira, Karam enjoyed the photo activity taking photos of every child and adult in his class, often staging them by telling people where to sit or stand. Relationships in his class were obviously important to him. Karam located himself firmly in school and drew two pictures of himself there. The first one he labelled, and he was smiling, the second he was sitting at a table. His face had no mouth, so was expressionless, which may suggest that there were times when he felt not fully happy. This was reflected in one observation of Karam and also his mother reported this too. Karam drew a car and then a picture of his dad driving a car. The picture of his father was significant as he had died before Karam arrived in the UK. The significance of cars was unclear at the time.	**The importance of relationships:** (see Amira's links) **Journeying and Movement** (Pastoor, 2015; Lazarri et al 2020; Willson, 2019; Boyle et al, 2018; Hanna,2020)	**Tajfel and Turner (1979)** **Social identity theory** Karam's ability to draw his father and link it to his love of cars suggests that he was beginning to feel comfortable with the loss of his father. It suggests that Karam's identity was emerging, and he was able to engage with the pain of his loss. **Vygotsky (1978)** **Social learning theory** Karam clearly saw himself as a learner and valued the relationships he had in school.
Drawing 1	A picture of himself smiling and his name as the title				
2	A car				
3	Sitting at a desk in school with eyes only, no mouth to depict his feelings				
4	Karam's dad driving a car with a big smile				

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">AHMED</th></tr>
<tr><th>Artefact</th><th>Description</th><th>Emerging themes</th><th>Analysis</th><th>Links to wider study</th><th>Relation to the theoretical frame</th></tr>
<tr><td>Photo 1</td><td>A duplo wall</td><td rowspan="8">HAVING A FRIEND

BEING OUTSIDE

CONFLICTED FEELINGS

CAR</td><td rowspan="8">Ahmed took part in the photo activity reluctantly and refused to do it with me, so he went with a member of staff who he was close too. Of the 5 photos that Ahmed took 2 included his friend Mariam and 2 were outside. The observations of Ahmed in his ECEC setting and the field notes clearly documented the development of his relationship with Mariam and how important she became to him, both at home and at Dog Lane Nursery. Ahmed's mother Zahra confirmed that Ahmed loved to play outside. His drawings very clearly indicated his conflicted feelings about nursery. He also drew a car which was like both Amira and Karam.</td><td rowspan="8">The importance of relationships:
(see Amira's links)

Journeying and Movement:
(see Karam's links)</td><td rowspan="8">Tajfel and Turner (1979)
Social identity theory
Like Amira, Ahmed made a friend with someone who was also positioned within an Out-group (a fellow refugee).

Vygotsky (1978)
Social learning theory
It is unclear why Ahmed had such conflicted feelings about his time at the ECEC setting, but he was very slow to make social bonds with other children which may be because of his deafness.

Said (1978)
Orientalism
Ahmed took pictures of the outside, yet he rarely went outside because he could not tolerate suncream. The staff were unable to adapt their practices to incorporate different cultural practices, which resulted in a difficult experience for Ahmed.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>His friend Mariam playing a dice matching game</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>The bookshelf</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Large wooden slide outside</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>His friend, Mariam digging and another child playing outside near a tree</td></tr>
<tr><td>Drawing 1</td><td>Large face with mouth open, looking like it is screaming</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Same large face with a smiling mouth</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>A car</td></tr>
</table>

HASSAN					
Artefact	**Description**	**Emerging themes**	**Analysis**	**Links to the wider study**	**Relation to the theoretical frame**
Photo 1	Close up of a flower in a pot	**BEING OUTDOORS**	Hassan's photographs are clearly indicative of his love of everything to do with nature. He took photos of displays which showed insects and flowers. He also took pictures of flowers within the role play area. Hassan was unable to go outside during the photo activity, so he stacked boxes on top of a table then climbed onto it, stretching up to take a photograph out of a high window of the trees outside. Hassan's drawing reflected the same strong theme. His mother's drawing activity and the researcher observations both corroborated Hassan's love of the outdoors.	**Bronfenbrenner (1979) socioecological system:** Hassan's family were Bedouin farmers who had lived in the country on a large family farm. Hassan and his siblings would have been used to being outdoors predominately. Hassan has undoubtedly been influenced by his family's socioecological system.	**Tajfel and Turner (1979) Social identity theory** Hassan's identity was clearly linked to his family identity and his love of the outdoors which dominated the artefacts he produced. **Vygotsky (1978) Social learning theory** No other children or adults are represented within his photos or the drawing, which suggests relationships with peers are not yet important to him, or not firmly established.
2	Children's work on the wall: printing of mini beasts and children's ladybirds				
3	A printed photo of hydrangeas and lilies which were part of a display				
4	As above but of daisies				
5	Photo taken through a window of a large tree and fields beyond the outside area				
6	A rose from the 'flower shop'				
7	Children's artwork of a spider				
Drawing 1	Trees with birds in them				

In their Mosaic approach, Clark and Moss (2011) used 7 activities which provided the pieces of a mosaic and were used to represent the child's experiences. These included: Observation, Child conferencing, Cameras, Tours Mapping, Role play, Parents perspectives and Practitioner perspectives. Using a polyvocal methodology has drawn from slightly different sources. These include child drawings, child photos, parent drawing interviews, keyperson interviews, researcher observations, field notes and reflective journal. Figure 50 uses a similar format used by Clark and Moss (2011) to demonstrate how the themes identified from the children's artefacts have resonated across the other polyvocal methods.

Figure 50. Polyvocal themes from children's artefacts

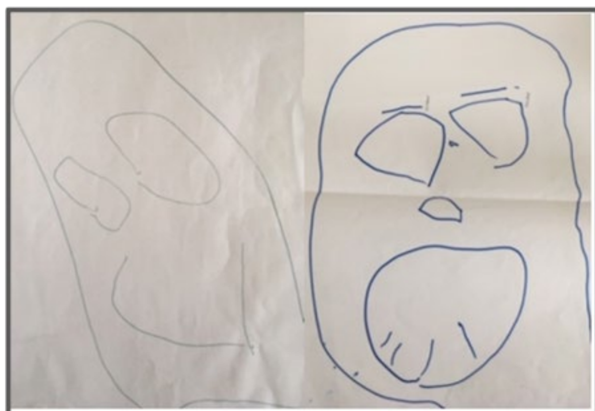
Polyvocal aspects of multimodal data collection (*based on Clark and Moss 2011: Mosaic Approach*)							
Themes from children's artefacts	**Child drawings**	**Child photos**	**Parent's drawing interviews**	**Keyperson interviews**	**Researcher observations**	**Field notes**	**Reflective journal**
BOOKS AND STORIES	*	*			*		*
SNACK TIME/EATING TOGETHER	*	*		*		*	
RELATIONSHIPS	*	*		*	*	*	*
CARS	*	*				*	*
BEING OUTDOORS	*	*	*	*	*		
CONFLICTED FEELINGS	*		*	*	*		

Following the analysis of the children's artefacts and the curation of the children's stories, I sifted the data using a grounded theoretical approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) which enabled me to identify some emerging themes. After the second layer of field work, I re-evaluated the themes drawing on a wider data set which included: all the sources mentioned in Figure 50 and the literature review. The themes are presented below and offer a more in depth look at the children's experiences.

7.4. The islands

Although I have presented this section in five separate parts, the findings tend to overlap and are interconnected, primarily telling a story of the children and their families experiences of being isolated. In geographical terms, these islands are an archipelago, a group or chain of islands forming a cluster which often have similar geopolitical boundaries.

7.4.1 Conflicted feelings and separated experiences



(Ahmed drawing activity, 7.3.18)

These two drawings were made by Ahmed when I asked him if he could draw himself at nursery. Although the photographs of his drawings are faint, they seem to encapsulate two distinct feelings: on one hand he drew a happy face and then a more troubled face. This confliction of feelings about their ECEC setting is a theme which runs through the findings and is pertinent for the children and their parents. Whilst all the children in the study appeared to actively choose to keep their worlds separate, it was my relationship with Amira that seemed to manifest this tension most vividly. Amira found managing my visits to her home and then my presence at St Swithin's

challenging. It was as if I was creating a link or bridge between her two contexts that caused her difficulty. When I visited her at home, she was open, and wanted to get involved in the activities I brought, although initially she lacked confidence and asked for extra support. However, when I arrived at St Swithin's her reaction was quite different.

> *Amira showed a very brief flicker of recognition of me, but it became clear that she did not want to acknowledge me. At first it was quite hard to start the observation as she was in the dark tent and then kept moving around the room to places I couldn't quite see. Eventually she seemed to forget that I was there or was more able to tolerate my presence.* (Fieldnotes: 26.2.18)

Ahmed also had similar moments of ambivalence to my presence at Dog Lane Children Centre nursery. Having visited him at home, initially Ahmed would wave and smile to greet me, when I went to see him in nursery. When I went to see him to do the camera activity, Ahmed actively chose to ignore me. I asked him if he wanted to take pictures with me, and he said he did not – however, he was prepared to complete the activity with a member of staff. I have attempted to capture this complexity in my relationship with the children through the Axioms of Positionality (Chapter 6) and it is not clear what triggered this ambivalence, but in discussion with the parents and staff, it seemed to cause both Ahmed and Amira difficulty that I was appearing in both their home and their places of education. This was the first indication that the children preferred to keep their home and their ECEC setting experiences separate.

All the keypersons interviewed noticed that none of the children voluntarily spoke or shared about their families or their home unless asked direct questions. In addition, during the fieldwork, all the families observed Ramadan, however this was never mentioned by the children, their parents, or the early education professionals. When I asked Rahima, Amira's mother, about this, she appeared shocked and could not see the need for the staff to know, as the children were not expected to fast. It seemed that this approach to separating her life continued for Amira when she went to school. During the visit when I was sharing Amira's PowerPoint story (22.2.19) Adeel and Rahima told me that although Amira appeared shy, they sometimes watched her at school when she was playing and that she was completely normal, but she became shy and reserved when she became aware of them.

The separating of their lives manifested slightly differently in the case of Karam and Hassan. Both Karam and Hassan were consistently warm with me both at home and within their ECEC settings. However, Yara, Karam's mother noticed how different her son was at school from how he was at home. She said that at home he was more tearful and appeared more vulnerable (Chapter 2). In contrast, the school reported that Karam was very much a typical member of the class who had friends and was achieving well. His keyperson noted how typical his behaviour was,

> *"Because even when he has little blips, fidgeting, messing about on the carpet, fiddling with Velcro, talking to the person next to him, got the blu tac in his pocket, lots of toys bringing in from home - they are all doing that. He's part of it. They are all bringing in things from home and so's he, which is fantastic. And we are saying, "Don't bring anything in from home" and they still do, so he's just part of everything else the other children are doing in the class as well*." (Keyperson interview, 10.5.18)

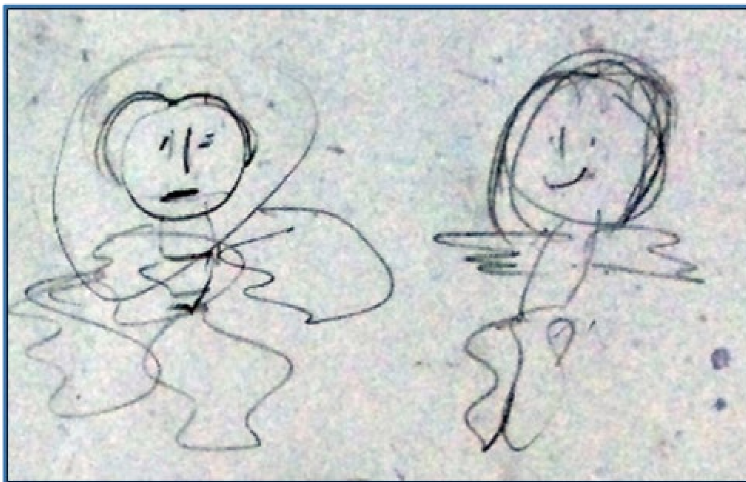
This need to demarcate two spaces presented slightly differently for Hassan. Hassan's speech and language were delayed both in Arabic and in English, but he could speak and understand both languages. However, he chose to stop speaking the minute he crossed the threshold of Croft's End Nursery School, which caused his parents, Fatima and Omar, considerable concern and his difficult feelings about Croft End Nursery continued throughout the fieldwork.

When I shared this finding with the Outsiders group (Chapter 5) both recognised this strategy as one they had employed. My colleague who had been brought up within the British care system wrote,

> "*I understand this strategy and is one I would use myself. I was happy to be open about being fostered but did not want my actual biological parents encroaching on my world without my invite as the emotions were too complex to manage."* (11.11.19 Outsiders peer group feedback to results).

7.4.2 Parental complex relationships with the settings

Several studies have examined refugee parents' experiences of Early Childhood Education (De Gioia, 2015; Mitchell and Ouko, 2011; Tadesse, 2014; Whitmarsh, 2011). All conclude that relationships with education professionals are important, but ECEC settings are often hard to access (Lamb, 2020, Lazarri et al, 2020, Aguiar et al, 2020) which makes building these relationships more difficult. Also, when writing about a translaguaging pedagogy Toker and Baytas (2022) acknowledge both the, "educational and structural barriers that limit refugee parents' involvement in schools" (Toker and Baytas, 2022: 158). The second 'island' which emerged from the findings was that there was a complex relationship between the parents and the early education professionals who worked in the ECEC (Norheim and Moser 2020),



(Rahima drawing interview, 29.6.18)

Rahima, Amira's mum, drew the picture above as a response to the question, *how do you experience your child's nursery?* The picture seems to exemplify her experience of some of the staff at St. Swithin's pre-school. She represented herself as the person on the left, who is always in a rush walking everywhere with her young children, taking them, and collecting them from both school and pre-school. The staff member on the right is smiling, but Rahima described the smile as "a yellow smile." Mina, the interpreter explained the "*phrase "yellow smile" in Arabic, which is a smile that is not from the heart, but with the mouth only*." (Parent drawing interview field notes, 29.6.18)

Rahima felt that the staff were not loving towards Amira, and that this was in direct contrast to her older son's school staff. However, she shared that Amira was very happy at St Swithin's. She told me, laughingly, that she keeps waiting for Amira to complain about the staff, but she never does. Rahima recognised that Amira had different feelings about St Swithin's because Amira always spoke warmly about her time there.

Omar, Hassan's father, also had conflicted feelings about Croft's End Nursery school. He was always very clear that he wanted his children to have an education because he had not and "*he did not want them to be like him."* (Parent drawing interview fieldnotes, 14.5.18) Omar understood the value of learning but when he and Fatima were talking about how they experience Croft's End Nursery, Omar said,

> *"that he always felt like a complete idiot, very dumb because he was surrounded by very educated people. He said that he understood the people were very kind to him, but he still felt very stupid."* (Parent drawing interview fieldnotes, 14.5.18)

Zahra really appreciated the time for herself when Ahmed went to nursery and drew a picture of herself resting (Parent drawing interview, 14.3.18) however, she recognised that Ahmed had mixed feelings going to nursery. Zahra also noticed that when Ahmed came home from Dog Lane and she, *"describes his behaviour as "unusual" She says that Ahmed is very tired. He can cry and will get unusually angry"* (Parent drawing interview fieldnotes, 14.3.18)

This complexity of relationship the parents felt with the early education professionals was also commented on by one of the Outsiders' group. As a black British mother of mixed ethnic children whose father was Spanish, she noticed that with educational professionals the onus was always on her as a parent to make her children's needs known, describing how she had to specifically ask for Spanish books and resources for her daughters. She also reflected that there were few teachers of colour so when a white teacher is seen as the authority figure there is a self-perpetuating power imbalance. (31.10.19 Outsiders group feedback to results)

Tobin (2016) discusses this conflicted relationship noting how difficult it is for migrant parents to develop relationships with early educators,

> "*For parents who have recently migrated to a new country, enrolling their child in an early childhood program is the paradigmatic moment where cultural values of their home and adopted culture come into contact and, often, conflict*" (Tobin, 2016:9)

He asserts that parents "*find themselves needing to make trade-offs in decisions about the best child education and care options for their children" (*Tobin, 2020:13) and suggests that there is an imbalance of power between the early educators and the children with parents lacking experience in the interchanges, feeling afraid of provoking "*negative reactions*" and "*a tendency to show deference to teachers and to the host society",* as well as the obvious language barrier and other factors including "*social isolation and economic stresses*" which cause parents to struggle to attend meetings (Tobin, 2020:18).

7.4.3 The way we do things

The disconnect already described seemed to extend beyond the difficult, inhibited and often conflicted feelings of the children's parents towards the ECEC settings. As themes emerged within the findings, there appeared a more subtle interplay which was informed by accepted practice norms which did not or could not translate effectively. These were often hidden from the actors of the piece but nevertheless, had a detrimental, isolating impact for the children and their families. I have described this section, "the way we do things" in an attempt to capture the unconsciousness of the practitioners and the taken-for-granted practice norms within the study. These seemed to be present beyond the confines of the children's ECEC settings and could be found within staff attitudes in another school and the local authority team assigned to support the Syrian families.

When Zahra, Ahmed's mum, talked about what he liked to do she mentioned that he loved being outside. I knew from my interactions with Ahmed and the staff that he rarely went outside. It was during the second phase of the fieldwork that the disconnect became clear. The staff mentioned that Ahmed,

> "*would not have sun cream applied. This had meant that he had not been allowed to go outside, and subsequently rarely went outside. They shared that Dad had said that he was not concerned about Ahmed having no sun cream on*

outside, but this had not been taken into account." (Fieldnotes of practitioner responses to child's story, 8.4.19).

The practice culture of applying sun cream to children before they go outside, was considered unquestionably correct amongst the practitioners. They had asked Ahmed's father, who was a hospital doctor, about this and he had told them that he was not worried that Ahmed would be outside without sun cream on. It was likely that he felt the British sun was not particularly hot and in his opinion Ahmed, did not need sun cream applied. For him, it was not a big issue. However, the staff did not appear to have considered the wider picture. They had not reflected about the weather in Syria, their own practice or cultural norms or the professional status of Ahmed's father. They had not pursued the issue, and subsequently Ahmed had not gone outside in the summer term, unbeknown to his mother.

Staff at St Swithin's preschool were equally surprised by some of the feedback from Rahima, Amira's mother. When they saw Rahima's drawing of the yellow smile, staff were shocked, However, as the conversation developed,

> "*One member of staff wondered whether Rahima had picked up difficult vibes from the staff because she was often late picking Amira up. She said that when parents are late there is a general "pissed off" feeling from the staff*." (Fieldnotes of practitioner responses to child's story, 11.3.19).

There was a general agreement that British born people would have understood the vibe and very likely changed their behaviour to elicit a more positive response. Rahima, however, did not understand this or the cultural expectation to be exactly on time. Her experience of the staff was that they were cold and somehow false.

During the meeting I went on to share with the staff team at St Swithin's that Rahima felt that it had been important to her that Amira had been loved by the staff and that she "*attributed Amira's shyness now in school, to not being properly loved at nursery"* (Fieldnotes of practitioner responses to child's story, 11.3.19). Again, this provoked significant discussion amongst the staff who were shocked but also questioned what Rahima's expectation of them had been. One practitioner,

"talked about being "loving" with the children and said that staff felt constrained because of safeguarding concerns about touch. She said that there was a feeling that touch could be misconstrued so that staff feel the need to keep a professional distance with the children" (Fieldnotes of practitioner responses to child's story, 11.3.19).

Again, this practice cultural norm, seemed to create a disconnect between the adults. Interestingly, during her interview, Amira's keyperson noted that Amira was not overly keen to engage with physical touch with staff,

"She wouldn't voluntarily come to an adult to seek reassurance or to come and perhaps have a cuddle like some children just come up to you wanting that cuddle and things" (Keyperson interview, 23.3.18).

This also suggests that cuddles and physical comfort *were* considered the norm within the setting, but for some reason staff felt constrained to offer this as did Amira herself, or that Rahima was alluding to a different quality of care, which the staff had not quite perceived or understood.

Elfer et al (2012) work on the attached relationship between the keyperson and the child, has become an accepted norm with early education practice in England (Department for Education 2021a). Noddings (2003) also introduced the notion of care with her work on developing an ethics of care which Page (2018) further developed with her principles of professional love noting the problematic nature of this within ECEC settings. She points out,

"*There is a significant gap in the English early years system about the places of love, care and intimacy and such terms are often shrouded in language such as building a 'positive relationship' as opposed to a 'loving' one. In fact, the words 'loving' and 'secure' have been sequestered completely from recent iterations of early years policy in England (DfE 2012, 2014, 2017) which indicates that love does not exist in the public lives of children outside of the private sphere of home and family; if it does it is somehow taboo*" (Page, 2018:134)

This resonates clearly with my findings. For Rahima, the most important thing for Amira was that she was loved. Both Rahima and Adeel noticed a difference between the staff at St Swithin's and the staff at Amira's older brother's school, where he attended the unit for deaf children which was attached to a mainstream primary school. Adeel told me about an incident involving his son, Bilal, which illustrates the importance he and Rahima placed on their children being loved.

> "*Rahima said that Bilal is very loved in school. Adeel told me about an incident when Bilal went to school. A very beautiful girl (Adeel described her as the most beautiful girl he had ever seen) came over to Bilal, took his bag and put it on her back, then held his hand and walked off with him. Adeel said that it was very moving.*" (Sharing vignette, 22.2.19)

This feeling of wanting their children to be loved is universal amongst parents. In her introduction about transitions, O'Connor (2013) mentions the same issue quoting one mother saying, "*The thing is . . . you just want to know will they love them as much as we do*" (O'Connor 2013, xi) and Page (2018) mentions that Finland already has an established pedagogy of love within their early years system (Page 2018: 134). However, for Rahima there was a clear disconnect between her expectations and Amira's experience.

This disconnect between the experiences of the children; the expectations of the family and the educational practices was also present for Hassan. When I shared Hassan's visual story with him and his family (19.3.19) there was a general discussion with Hassan's three older siblings about feeling scared in school and they all agreed that Hassan, like them, had been very scared when he was at nursery. They told me about a time when Hassan had been hurt by another child, and they had all asked to go down to his play area to be with him. However, during the interview with his keyperson (19.4.18) I had asked whether Hassan had the opportunity to play with his siblings as they were in the same school and she had remarked, "*They don't play like that. But when they pick up, he's not fazed, they don't show emotion* (Interview with keyperson 19.4.18). The keyperson appeared to show little awareness of the strong connections between the siblings or the sense of family loyalty which had promoted the older children's requests to support their brother, which for Syrian families is an important family value.

However, this was not necessarily consistent across all staff. The Special Educational Needs co-ordinator (SENCO) at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school, was of mixed ethnicity, British/ Egyptian and she seemed to have a heightened awareness of this issue. She highlighted this "the way we do things" attitude which she observed amongst staff in a neighbouring junior school. She described the transition into the junior school as being difficult for Hassan's older brother. The junior school was affiliated to the local Anglican church. The SENCO described a particular Team Around the Child transition meeting,

> ***"****Omar (Hassan's father) had been very clear that he did not want his son going to the church. He had been drawing a cross with his fingers to try to indicate his meaning. The SENCO shared that one of the teachers (from the junior school) had come across as having a "this is what we do in this school" sort of attitude – which she (the SENCO) was concerned about.* (Notes from expert interview, 28.6.19)

This attitude was pervasive and one I encountered early on amongst colleagues. There was a particular concern about the position of women. My reflection on Othering highlights the issue,

> "*When I first began to talk about doing this study I noticed it again, all be it subtler. This time it seemed to be linked with an exoticisation of the families and blended with strong self-congratulatory altruistic sentiments. It seemed to be played out as "We in Britain believe the right things about women" and "They do not" so I was told how decisions were taken about enabling the refugee women to have access to money*" (Reflective Journal, 1.7.17)

Again, there was an unquestioned norm that assumed "the way we do it" was correct. My theoretical frame which incorporates Said's (1978) work on Orientalism, Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory and Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory, is helpful to try to understand this more fully. The professionals who seemed to adhere to this belief positioned themselves within the In-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) assuming the rightness of their approach, therefore assigning the refugee children and families to the Out-group. The unquestioned notion that their ways of working were "correct" interpreted from an Orientalist (Said, 1978) perspective, could be seen as the

staff assuming the privilege of Occidental positionality with other cultural ways seen as more childlike, so slightly inferior, and somehow incorrect.

As with many of the findings, the *way we do it* approach, was not completely isolating for the children and their families but offered moments of significant connection, specifically for two of the children's mothers. Both Zahra and Yara mentioned that they had noticed professionals in England had a slightly different attitude to children than they had previously experienced. Yara perceived a somewhat gentler approach whilst Zahra felt that very young children's lives were taken more seriously. They recognised the positive impact for Karam and Ahmed and inferred that they preferred it, to the more traditional Syrian approach.

7.4.4 Ways of thinking about refugees and its impact

The fourth finding which tended to have an isolating factor for the children and their families, was the way refugees were conceptualised. When discussing the representation of refugee and migrant children in literature, Savsar (2020) suggested that children are continually attempting to navigate, "*a world of negative connotations that alienate, marginalize and discriminate,"* and that "*young migrants narrate the feeling of not being wanted, or being excluded from certain hierarchies of society"* (Savsar, 2020: 122). She suggests that having to do this has a significant impact on children's identities and sense of self. This was highlighted in the literature review (Chapter 3). There is a strong narrative of trauma surrounding refugees and the hidden narrative of the host country adopting the role of saviour (Brade and Holmes, 2017). These narratives seemed dominant in the local authority, and I found that I was not immune to its affects. In my reflective journal, I wrote about a professional visit to meet and begin work with a refugee child and his family, who were not study participants. The experiences of both the child and his mother were horrific prior to their arriving in England and there was much contention between colleagues about who should be involved, and what support offered. The lead professional was acting as a gate keeper which was frustrating many. My reflections illuminate my own prejudices and the subtlety of casting refugees as "vulnerable" people – as opposed to people of self-rescue (Kyriakides et al, 2018).

> *"When I met Nabil, he did display some traumatised behaviour, but what I wasn't ready for was his robustness and his appearance. He was large and stocky. When he saw me, he came across and shoulder barged me. He is clever, engaging and his English is pretty good. When his mum turned up, I spoke with her through her phone and Google translate. She was absolutely delightful. I suppose it was possibly my buy in to the traumatised narrative that I expected to see a wilting violet when I met her. She was lovely, large, and seemed full of life. Worrying how my own stereotypes can unconsciously inform my opinions and understanding of refugee situations"* (Reflective journal, 28.2.19)

This reflection highlights an undercurrent in my own thinking and although it is unclear how widespread similar views were amongst professionals and the general public, the participant families seemed to sense it and understood the negative impact for them and their children. Rahima, Amira's mother, was the most vocal of the parents about her distaste about the implications of being labelled a "refugee" and she was clear that she wanted to protect Amira from it too. (Chapter 6).

This negative connotation associated with the term refugee was also confirmed when I shared the synthesised results of the study with my relative, Eduard who had been a child refugee. He described how he was treated as if he was a second-class citizen by some family members who were already living in Britain. He commented, "*We did feel refugees*" and suggested that his sisters struggled with an inferiority complex for most of their lives as a result (Family member interview, 29.8.2020).

The idea that the host country tends to occupy the role of saviour, was starkly illuminated during the practitioner group viewing of Ahmed's PowerPoint story and the subsequent discussion about whether his parents were 'grateful' (Chapter 6). Within this study, it would be hard to make a definitive case of the impact of professionals adhering to the dominant negative narrative about refugees, however, what the results suggest is that generally, there was a lower expectation held about the refugee children's capacities to achieve.

Hassan's teacher seemed to hold the lowest expectations of all the early educators, and it was not clear whether this was because of her attitude to refugees, to Hassan

himself or because she was in the early stages of her career. She seemed incredulous of the methods I was using and expressed doubt about whether Hassan would be able to take part meaningfully in the study.

> *"After I had explained the drawing methodology and explained that I was going to ask Hassan at home to draw himself in nursery, The teacher looked at me and said: "You know how old he is?" I replied "Yes" She said, "Well they just scribble at this age"* (Fieldnotes, 22.3.18)

When I shared this finding with the Outsider's group, my academic colleague, who had been raised in care, expressed disappointment but not surprise (11.11.19 Outsiders group feedback to results). She drew my attention to Merton's work (1948) about self-fulfilling prophecy which is one way to consider the impact of staff's low expectations on the children.

Zhang and Luo (2016) also noted a similar issue in their findings, regarding how urban teachers conceptualised rural migrant children. They found that migrant families were often characterised by teachers as not caring as much about their children's education, but there was little understanding of parents' need to generate income for survival (Zhang and Luo, 2016: 226). They note, "*most teachers seemed to have accepted the fact that migrant children tended to be low-performers and, therefore, had low expectations for them*" (Zhang and Luo, 2016: 226).

However, this finding was not universal in my study. Karam's teacher, who was the Foundation Stage Lead at Croft's End Nursery and Infant school, seemed to take a different view with a fuller understanding about his attainment and the reasons for it. She shared that in some respects Karam was outperforming his British born peers, but she attributed this to his mother's expectation of him and the support he was offered at home by Yara. When I asked about other refugee children she had taught, Karam's teacher remarked,

> *"I think it depends on the family background, definitely. I think parents want the very best for their children. I just think some of the families are better equipped to take on board what they need to do to be able to help them, in their school journey."* (Keyperson interview, 3.5.18)

Interestingly, having low expectations of the children was not just confined to early education professionals. Some of the parents and the children's siblings expressed surprise during the sharing of the vignette stories and were impressed to see that the children had been able to draw and take photos of what was important to them in their ECEC setting and were proud of their strengths which were documented in the visual stories. All the early education staff were amazed that the children appeared to be developing comparative to their English peers, given the often-difficult life circumstances they had encountered.

When reviewing this section of findings, it seems clear that some of the wider narratives about refugees, illuminated through the literature review (Chapter 3) were in operation and formed part of the children's everyday lived experiences. The parents felt the subtle positioning of the host country as saviour and found it uncomfortable. However, the theoretical frame offers a further way to consider some of the more subtle interactions and particularly the lower expectations of some of the professionals. Gazing through Said's (1978) lens, the lower expectations could be seen as Orientalism in operation with the children being cast as more child-like and less able than their peers. To further illustrate this point, I recorded an uncomfortable meeting in my reflective journal. I had been invited to share my research proposal with colleagues,

> "*I went on to tell them about how I was hoping to make contact with the Imam. There was a sort of laughter and a quiet comment that inferred that if he was involved, the families would feel pressured to take part. There was also a very quick assertion that some of the families were not practicing their Islamic faith and I remembered how a colleague had previously told me that one family had chosen to not practice because they did not hold with the Islamic view of women. The sense that I felt from this encounter was that the respondents were holding unspoken views and values about Islam: firstly, that the Imam was too powerful and exerted too much influence over the families; that Islam was oppressive for women, and I detected an element of glee that one of the families had made their decision, as it was a "triumph" for British values*." (Research journal, 23.5.17)

Although this interaction could legitimately be viewed solely in terms of Islamophobia, postcolonialism is also relevant here. Fernando (2021) quotes the work of Ahmed (1999) who describes "*postcolonial encounters*" (Fernando, 2021:46). This is where there are power-infused encounters between "*the West and the rest*" where, in this case, Western values are attributed with unquestioned rightness, closely linked to the original mindset of European colonialist. When considering how the refugee community were being conceptualised, I tend to align myself to the findings of Kyriakides et al (2018) who examined the experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada. They found that, "*according to orientalist scripts of refuge, refugees are not agents capable of self-rescue; they are in need of rescue"* (Kyriakides et al, 2018: 65).

This script or conceptualisation of refugees referred to by Kyriakides et al (2018) is clearly found throughout my study and echoed within the findings. There was evidence of an ongoing subtle discourse which supposed that Western culture and values were superior. Using Bronfenbrenner (1979) to frame the children's context's (Chapter 2) has been particularly useful. It seems that they their everyday lived experiences within their family (micro system), their ECEC setting (meso system) and my professional observations and reflections working for the local authority (exo-system) were reflective of wider issues found within the wider macro-system. Sajjad's' (2018) discussion about the labelling of refugee and asylum seekers within the political system is clearly echoed by the children's parents who felt it. Issues of power have threaded through the study so when Sajjad (2018) raises concerns about the "*relationships of power*" which can influence how people are treated (Sajjad, 2018: 45) and suggests that some of the labelling around victimhood and security, is reflective of Orientalist ideas about non-Europeans, there is a strong echo.

However, there is a complexity regarding this labelling which Kirmayer (2013) recognises when he describes,

> "*the paradox of vulnerability is that even as it defines the category of refugee and legitimates their claims for asylum, it consigns them to the disempowered position of passive recipient of gifts bestowed by the wealthy and powerful other"* (Kirmayer, 2013: vii)

It seems then, that how refugees are conceptualised is important and can have potentially far-reaching consequences. On reading the synthesised findings, my colleague commented, *“As a parent you trust the teacher to assess your child’s ability, but you expect the teacher has made the same judgements about your child that you see,”* (Outsiders group feedback to results, 31.10.19)

She alluded to the negative bias she herself had obviously experienced from her children’s teachers. During the discussion following the presentation of Amira’s story to the staff at St Swithin’s, the manager openly reflected about her own practice. She noted that,

> *“Often, it is easier to forget that “refugees” had another life and other jobs in their country…… she commented that Amira’s story made her think that possibly they underestimate what a child can do and that maybe as a setting they could have done more to understand Amira’s culture.”* (Fieldnotes: Practitioner discussion after viewing vignette: 11.3.19)

This reflection is hopeful and demonstrates the honesty and openness of some early years practitioners to examine their own practice. However, she came to this because of being part of this study. Without this illumination, it is likely her practice would be static and the subtle narratives around refugees which echo from the wider world would have remain unseen and embedded in early education. The intention is to discuss this further in the following chapter, when considering the implication for practice.

7.4.5 Further unseen challenges

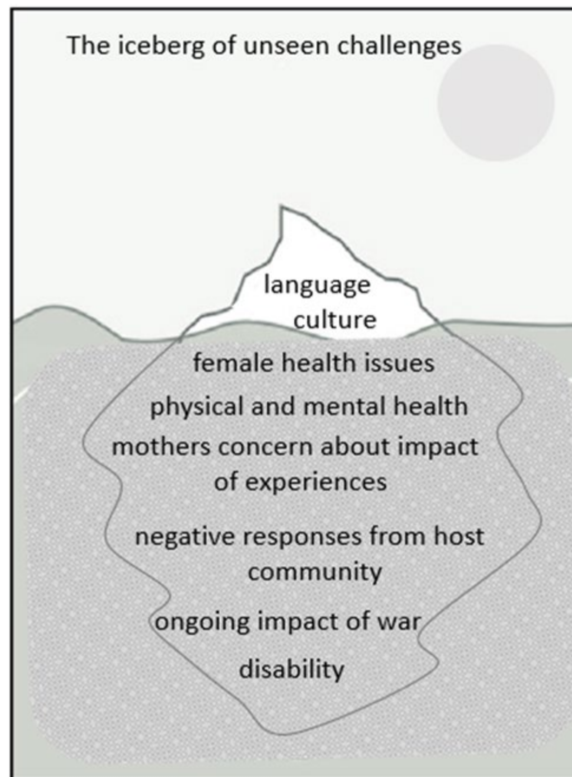
In their research with migrant parents in Finland, Turtiainen and Hiitola (2019) highlight their invisible experiences and Hanna (2020) also draws attention to the unseen barriers faced by migrant children in England. The previous section discussed unseen attitudes to the refugee children and this fifth *island* is connected to the previous one, in that there is also an unseen or hidden element to its topography. I have entitled this section: ‘further unseen challenges’ because the findings suggest that in the children’s everyday experiences there is a professional underestimation or unknowing of the wide-ranging challenges faced by them and families.

This section continues to draw on findings located within the children's wider contextual ecology (Brofenbrenner, 1979). The children faced challenges within their own families (micro system) relating to aspects of health and disability. In their exo system, within the local authority, there was a variety of responses from host communities and within the chrono system the children's families were managing the ongoing impact of the war in Syria.

The concept of life experiences impacting children's learning and outcomes is well established in early education. Felitti et al's (1998) study about obesity led to the description of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) which are now considered to impact children's long-term outcomes. Equally the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published a list of contextual situations which they considered would make children vulnerable to underachievement (Ofsted, 2015: 6).

In their findings Zhang and Luo (2016) suggest that rural migrant children in China often face "*invisible walls*" (Zhang and Luo, 2016: 229) and within this study the same could be said for the refugee children. However, as my findings are being presented as islands, I have chosen to present the *island* in this section slightly differently from the others. It is depicted as an iceberg, building on Freud's model of the human mind (1915). He suggests that in the same way the bulk of an iceberg is hidden beneath the surface of the sea, much mental functioning is hidden from view. The invisibility referred to by Zhang and Luo (2016) is echoed in the iceberg image. My findings suggest that the children encountered significant challenges which were often unseen or invisible to the early educators and professionals, many of whom expected the challenges experienced by the children to be primarily language and cultural differences.

Figure 51. The iceberg of unseen challenges



Adapted by Gaywood 2020

There is a dominant narrative which was illuminated through the literature review which positions host countries as saviours (3.4.3). It is likely that the saviour narrative inadvertently feeds into this finding because by positioning the host country in this way, it places emphasis on pre and peri-migration experiences being most challenging, whereas the post migration experience is assumed to be totally positive. However, both Hart (2009) and Measham et al (2014) suggest that *"stresses experienced by young refugees during their exile and after their migration were more predictive of psychological problems than traumatic experiences before*" (Measham et al, 2014: 208/9)

By failing to understand the post migration challenges faced by the refugee children and their families, professionals unwittingly simplified and reduced the lived experiences to those they could recognise, understand, and relate to. The unseen

challenges faced by the children were varied. I have categorised them into four groups. The first is entitled health issues which includes both physical, mental health and challenges surrounding disability. The second documents the mothers' concerns about their children, next is the varying responses from the local community and finally the ongoing impact of the war in Syria.

7.4.5.1 Health issues

One of the requirements for the families to be eligible for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme was that the children might have had health needs, and this applied to both Amira's family and Ahmed's. Ahmed and Amira's older brother, Bilal were profoundly deaf, with Ahmed having cochlear implants shortly after his arrival. These were the obvious "seen" challenges, but all the children experienced health challenges within their family, with most having to manage the ill health of a parent or sibling. Omar, Hassan's father, spoke openly about his mental health needs and the impact it has had on his ability to remain in work. Yara, Karam's mother, had an ongoing health condition which required hospital treatment and Ahmed's mum, Zahra developed significant chest and breathing difficulties as a result of the family's poor accommodation, which meant she had to cease her voluntary involvement at a local historical site and relinquish the hope of being able to continue to practice as an archaeologist. Karam's sister and Hassan's eldest brother were both receiving support for their mental health, resulting from traumatic events. Whilst Amira's family were coming to terms with Bilal's hearing disability and finding ways to communicate with him. Rahima, Amira's mum, often expressed regret about his condition and blamed herself for it, because of her experiences in labour with him. In addition, the mothers had further personal issues to contend with, these included unwanted pregnancies, miscarriage, abortions, and rumours of an unapproved new marriage.

7.4.5.2 The mothers concern about the impact of the children's experiences

Alongside this, each mother expressed serious concern about their children's development and learning to me. As already mentioned in Chapter 6, they were keen to access my expertise as an advisory teacher for children with social, emotional, and mental health needs. All the children had periods of difficulty during their time in early education. These difficulties ranged from times of silence to demonstrations of anger,

all of which led to the children's isolation. Yara related stories about Karam when he was exhibiting extreme anger and would hit other children during his time at his former nursery (Drawing interview: 7.8.18). She recognised that this was likely because of the trauma he experienced. Hassan also had moments of having "unkind hands" (Keyperson interview: 19.4.18) and I experienced first-hand, behaviour which was due to possible trauma during his drawing activity at home (27.4.18).

The children's mothers were naturally very concerned. Yara wanted to know if all the trauma Karam had experienced would stop him from achieving well in school (Parent drawing interview, 7.8.18) whilst Fatima told me that she was very worried about Hassan, sharing how afraid he was at night and how he needed to sleep with her (Child drawing activity, 27.4.18). Zahra discussed with me Ahmed's toileting issues because he was only able to feel safe enough to use the toilet in his own home (Parent drawing interview, 14.3.18). Both Rahima and Adeel spoke about Amira being so loving towards her brothers at home, that she would give them anything they wanted. They were concerned that if she acted like this at St Swithin's the other children would take advantage of her (Child drawing activity, 2.5.18).

All the parents expressed anxiety about their children which is not uncommon in parents of young children. However, the issues raised by the study parents seemed to have a slightly different quality from my usual professional experience, as they appeared directly related to the children's experiences as refugees possibly resulting from the children having been very afraid, traumatised, or needing to develop a level of passivity which their parents felt was unusual. When these concerns were originally raised with me, none of them had been shared with the staff at the ECEC settings, which meant the parents were having to manage them alone and the early educators were unaware. As a result, I developed a protocol to share these concerns on the mother's behalf or encourage them to do so (Chapter 6).

7.4.5.3 Varying responses from the host community

In their work investigating the European migrant camps, Davies and Isakjee (2019) comment that not only is there a colonial legacy, but colonization continues to manifest within the current experience of refugees today and they link this to refugees' experiences of racism. Isakjee (2020) describes both liberal violence which includes,

"*direct violence, cultural violence and violence of inaction*" (Isakjee, 2020: 1758), again rooted in colonial attitudes. What is clear within these finding is that the children and their families had to negotiate a variety of responses to them from the host community. Three out of the four families reported Islamophobic occurrences. Yara and her mother believed that these were due to their wearing of the hijab (Sharing the child's story, 20.3.19) and there were lively discussions about this which included Mina the interpreter, a practicing Muslim, who did not wear the hijab, Rahima who was obliged to wear it by Adeel, her husband, but did not want to and Yara whose husband had preferred that she did not, but now as a widow chose to. The racist incidents had prompted Ahmed and Karam's families to move from a more rural neighbouring authority hoping to be less of a target. However, although this open racism was extremely difficult, there were other community dynamics in operation. In my reflective journal I recorded the incident involving professionals' attitudes to Hassan's family experiencing exclusion from the Syrian community which also highlighted negative responses from the host community in relation to housing issues (2.4).

An incident occurred during one visit to Croft's End Infant school, when I was observing Karam, which illuminated another response to his difference. A lot of excitement was generated among the children when they noticed the presence of a spider. The reaction of the teaching assistant, who lived in the local community, prompted me to write this subsequent reflection,

> *During the last observation of Karam, there was some really interesting dynamics with the TA in his class. She was obviously very aware of my presence and seemed to be "acting up" for me. It was kind of like she was performing a comedy routine, sort of inviting me into a layer of interaction which was adult only, above the children's heads. It is hard to describe. There was an incident with a spider, and she seemed to be hamming up her fear of spiders for my benefit. I wasn't too sure what to make of it. She was playing alongside Karam and his friend and there were a few interactions between the boys in Arabic and she seemed to make a big deal of this - saying "Excuse me" as if they were talking strangely, and that it was funny. She kept trying to catch my eye throughout. I stoutly ignored her and kept writing.* (Reflective journal, 17.5.18)

Karam's teacher saw the interaction and came over to apologise assuring me that she was going to address the issue later, inferring that this was an issue with having staff from the locality. Interestingly during the interaction, Karam looked sharply at the teaching assistant and told her, *"He doesn't like spiders"* and then told her, *"I like spiders - I like Mr Skinny Legs"* (Child observation, 14.5.18). This incident touches on an issue raised by Smidt (2016). When discussing the experiences of bilingual children she notes, "*Some bilingual children are made to feel embarrassed or ashamed of having more than one language*" (Smidt, 2016: 16). Karam's response suggested he understood the power dynamic but was not going to be affected by it. The school had a very robust policy around the value of encouraging first languages but in that moment, the teaching assistant appeared to bring her personal "*Western perspective*" (Safford and Drury, 2013: 70). She possibly viewed the Arabic interchange as unusual and felt the need to draw my attention to it. Her attempts at comedic body language suggested she felt it was acceptable to laugh at Karam and his friend's normal everyday language. However, Drury (2013) suggests that the "*processes of language learning and social/cultural interaction are closely linked*" (Drury, 2013: 382). If this is true and that there is a specific link between language and culture, then this incident illuminates far more about the responses from the local community because the school staff member was effectively mocking and laughing at Karam's cultural background. Said (1978) would suggest this was classic Occident behaviour towards a non-European where their difference is made fun of because on an underpinning belief that European norms are superior.

Adeel, Amira's father experiences differed, and he preferred to only speak positively about how he was treated however he did note that at work he chose to take on an English name, because he said it was easier for his colleagues. When I mentioned that my grandfather had also changed his name for a similar reason, Adeel told me strongly that, "*he wasn't changing his name, only using a name which people would find easier to pronounce*." (Fieldnotes, 19.1.18) suggesting that this change was more sensitive than I had realised. This was a concession that Adeel obviously felt able and willing to make, but it was clear that, unlike my grandfather, he would not make this change permanent, preferring, quite reasonably to retain his Syrian identity. When I shared my findings with my relative Eduard, he like Adeel, maintained that he had not experienced overt racism as a child. He felt that it was because he went to a Jewish

school which was multi-lingual. Eduard told me that he did not meet any non-Jewish children until much later in secondary school, because even when he was evacuated, the Jewish children were kept together and educated together. However, he did tell me of one of our relatives who as a married couple pretended that they were Italians rather than be known as Jewish, which he laughingly told me backfired when Italy first joined the war as Germany's ally. However, Eduard remembered smaller incidents and attitudes which made him feel inferior to others, which could be described as micro-aggressions or micro-invalidations (Essien, 2019); for example, when a cousin was given a whole piece of Wriggleys chewing gum whilst he and his sisters had to share a piece (Review of findings interview, 29.8.20).

The varying responses of the host community paints a picture of people who were unsure how to respond. As I noted in the context chapter, the local authority had little experience with refugee resettlement. They voluntarily signed up to be part of the SVPR scheme and there was a strong supportive element amongst the more affluent citizens, but this finding suggests a disconnect between the wider local authority narrative and members of the communities where the refugee children actually live. A similar disconnect was also documented in Germany, where the Wilkommenkulture was proudly foregrounded by those in power. Yet for people who were themselves struggling to access good accommodation, the presence of refugees became a source of irritation (Liebe et al, 2018). As outlined in Chapter 3, there are a number of possible explanations for the host community responses to the children and their families (Piotrowski et al, 2019; Baum, 2016) but all seem to hinge on attitudes rooted in the strong emotions of fear, anxiety but also feelings of "psychological entitlement" (Piotrowski et al, 2019: 723). As already mentioned in Chapter 1 this study is laced with strong and often conflicting emotions which range from host communities which are passionate about welcoming refugees to incidents of racism. In her in-depth investigation into the colonial legacies which continue to impact asylum and refugee debates Mayblin 2017) suggests that, *"the refugee -is the embodiment of the darker side of modernity and of the global fallout from colonialism*" (Mayblin, 2017:3).

Considering the responses of the host community to the children and their families in light of this, and glancing through the theoretical lens, it is possible to see aspects of

Orientalism (Said, 1978) in operation, alongside Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) which prefers to position the children as the unknown Other.

7.4.5.4 The ongoing impact of the war in Syria

In addition to all the challenges already described, the children experienced ongoing grief and loss within their families, which was often as a direct consequence of the war in Syria. Yara and her mother, spoke of their fear for Yara's brother who was still in Syria and had been conscripted into the army. Whilst Karam himself struggled to accept and process his own father's death. During her interview, his keyperson related how Karam had adamantly made a Father's Day card, alongside the other children, insisting that his father was alive. Both Omar, Hassan's father and Ahmed's father struggled with the loss of employment. Omar shared that although he had secured a job, he had got embroiled in an altercation, because of his poor mental health, so had been let go. Initially Ahmed's father had been trying to study to pass the English examination so that he could continue to practice as a doctor. Mina, the interpreter later told me that he had abandoned this and was working as an unqualified interpreter for one of the charities who were supporting the refugee community. During the presentation of the findings to the mothers (December 2019) there was a general discussion and agreement with the challenges I had identified which the children were managing, but which were also less visible to the professionals. Zahra was very clear and wanted me to take note that, "*remember we had to leave our homes".*

These elements of the refugee experience also appeared to be underestimated. An example of this was clearly demonstrated during a casual conversation with a colleague,

> "*She said that the refugees were rich compared to the average British family as they had no debt. Their housing was sorted and paid for, they were on benefits, they didn't need to run a car, so they should be able to afford a nursery place. I actually found this attitude quite befuddling. I could not believe that she was actually saying this and seemed to have completely missed the point that the families had been forced to leave their homes because their lives were under threat*." (Reflective journal, 13.3.19)

The challenges of re-building a whole new life were very real to the families and each was affected to differing degrees. For Rahima, Amira's mother, there was a strong resonance with the findings relating to unseen challenges, particularly the negative responses from the community. However, her husband Adeel, had a very different experience to the others.

> *"He said that at work his boss treated him better than the other English people because three people had recently been sacked because they have been cheating the boss and taking money. Adeel said that the boss recognises that he is honest and hardworking so allows him to bring home the van*. (Phase two fieldwork, sharing child's story, 22.2.19)

During the visit when I shared Amira's story with her and the family tensions surrounding the Syrian war erupted in an argument between Adeel and Rahima.. When I showed the final slide in Amira's story, a very heated and passionate argument broke out between her parents. I had no idea what this was about until Mina, the interpreter, enlightened me. The artist had used flags to denote that Amira spoke three languages, and the flag she had used to represent Syria was linked to the rebel forces who were fighting President Assad. Adeel was adamant that the flag was correct, whilst Rahima argued the opposite. It seemed then that the impact of the war in their home country, although thousands of miles away physically, was still very present in their everyday lives.

However, for the early years practitioners and professionals who worked with the children, the war was distant, and it seemed hard for them to appreciate the ongoing impact for the children. During the reflective discussions which followed the presentations of the children's stories, a number of the early years practitioners mentioned that at times it was hard to remember that the children and their families were refugees who had lived different other lives. Whilst the head teacher of Croft's End summed it up by saying that in school Karam seemed such a normal boy who got involved physically with some other boys, was sometimes naughty but was a warm and happy character. He noted that it was hard to remember he was a refugee who had lost his dad and was feeling worried about his mum being ill. (Experienced witness interview, 28.6.19)

This unknowing was not necessarily universal for each child. The team at Dog Lane Nursery clearly recognised the challenges faced by Ahmed, but they tended to couch it in terms of his physical challenges, *"There was a strong feeling that Ahmed had a lot stacked against him with his hearing loss, his eyesight."* (Practitioner reflective discussion, 8.4.19). It was Ahmed's keyperson who seemed to be much more aware of the multi-layered challenges he faced. When asked how Ahmed experiences nursery she answered,

> *"Obviously in the beginning he was very upset and didn't have a nice experience in nursery because of change……all of his background, you know - a refugee, having hearing loss, eyesight problems, English as an additional language etc etc etc……moved house, moved nursery setting so understandably he was upset while he was here. So that went on for a while."* (Keyperson interview, 4.4.18)

7.4.6 Summary of the island section

These findings make for uncomfortable reading, and they offer a picture of the children's lives which is complex and multi-layered. There are nuances within their experiences and although there is some commonality each child has their own individual story. The findings suggest that there is a far longer almost unseen impact for children who have sought refuge in a new country. There are the losses of home and loved ones together with tensions related to the ongoing conflict both personal and political. Eduard, my relative now almost 90, alongside his memories of Kristallnacht (November 1938, Vienna), told of the loss of status for many refugees and how his father encouraged him and his sisters to learn a trade, so that it could not be taken from them. He mentioned experiences of not being allowed to go within 50 miles of the coast, having to register regularly at a police station as an alien and his loss of schooling both in Austria and then in England. The refugee children who participated in this study also had to manage living with similar tensions. There was often significant ill health in their families, which Pakenham and Cox (2014) suggest places the children at great risk of developing mental health difficulties in later life. Whilst the varying responses from the host citizens added a further layer of experience feeding into feelings of being different, less acceptable, and somehow the Other. As an older refugee child noted in Uptin et al's (2013) Australian study, *"It felt like I was a*

black dot on a white paper" (Uptin et al, 2013:129). The national narrative surrounding refugees also brought its challenges to the children in their ECECs, as well as some staff having low intercultural sensitivity. What is clear is that in the same way, there is an intersectional element to the children having a reduction in their power as mentioned in the introduction (Figure 1) it seems that there are also "intersecting patterns" (Crenshaw, 2017) to be considered which thinking about the life challenges experienced by the refugee children. All the experiences of the children which have been mentioned and presented as islands, in a sense intersect and together create an often-subtle social exclusion (Zhang and Luo, 2016).

7.5. Bridges

This second section of the findings chapter offers more hope by using the metaphor of bridges, building on the work of Ager and Strang (2008) which describe the importance of social bridges for refugee resettlement and Block (2017) who suggests that interpersonal connectedness and social networks are all strategies associated with positive outcomes for refugees. In their work which examines the language abilities of refugee children resettled in Canada, MacLeod et al (2020) also suggest that opportunities need to be made to enable the children to, "*build linguistic and conceptual bridges between their lives at home and at school*" (MacLeod et al 2020: 1333). So, having outlined the findings which appeared to act as isolating factors for the children and their families, this section intends to present five significant findings which seemed to act as bridges for the children, enabling them to begin to connect and form relationships with their peers. Interestingly these bridges are all rooted in the children's abilities and strengths, drawing from their 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al 1992), which is not only in keeping with the methodological and ethical approach of the study but also takes into account Rogoff et al's (2017) advice that,

> "*Focusing on strengths will also provide paths for better assisting underserved populations in settings that are usually organized based on middle-class practices, like schools, parenting classes, and family interventions. Furthermore, their strengths can serve as models for others*." (Rogoff et al, 2017: 876)

7.5.1 The importance of friends

(Lippiatt 2019)

In their recent research with children following the COVID-19 pandemic, Pascal and Bertram (2021) note that children were keen to re-engage with their friends, after significant times of being separate (Pascal and Bertram, 2021: 32). Friendship was obviously important to them and the same is true for the refugee children in this study. As already stated in the children's individual stories Karam, Ahmed and Amira all made friends during the fieldwork phase.

Karam had two particular friends, Mark and Rafi. Karam supported Rafi during lessons encouraging him to take part, but also enjoyed playing surreptitious games, in the midst, like tussling to have their hand up higher than each other when seeking to answer a question (Fieldnotes: 31.3.18). Karam's friendship with Rafi seemed very authentic as I saw him not only joking around with him but also getting irritated by him (Fieldnotes: 19.4.18) which suggested all the hallmarks of a healthy relationship. Karam was the only child who had managed to forge a friendship with a host child, Mark, and this seemed to be based on their mutual interest in construction play. Karam managed these two relationships well and often the three boys would play together in a group, with Karam acting as the linguistic lynch pin. People and relationships were obviously important to Karam as when I asked him to take photos of what was important to him, he took photos of each of the children and the staff in his class, giving a clear indication of how highly he valued those around him.

Amira indicated a similar feeling when during a home visit I asked her to draw herself at nursery and she immediately drew herself alongside her friend Lamai (2.5.18). Then

when given a camera at nursery and also asked to take photos of what was important to her, Amira took multiple pictures of Lamai in the garden.

The artist representation above is of Ahmed driving with Mariam which was one of the many role play games they developed together. The relationship developed towards the end of the fieldwork phase but unfortunately did not continue much beyond their time at Dog Lane because the children and their families had to move out of the flats where they had been neighbours due to the poor housing conditions. Mariam's family was larger than Ahmed's, so they were re-housed further away which meant regular contact between the children was lost. However, their brief friendship enabled them both to access rich mutually beneficial interactions and set up role play games which reflected their own lives and experiences.

Hassan's experiences were slightly different, and during the fieldwork he seemed to have little interaction with the other children, other than a brief hit out and a grin shared with one boy in his class. When I was latterly involved with Hassan, in my professional capacity, the staff assured me that he had begun to make bonds with other children, but I never witnessed any interactions which were similar to Karam, Amira or Ahmed.

Zhang and Luo (2016) describe the friend making patterns of the rural migrant children in their study. They found that the migrant children tended to make friends with other migrant children and their friendships were often determined where the children lived and academic performance. Migrant children usually lived nearer to each other within poorer neighbourhoods and were often grouped together in school, as their attainment was generally lower than their non-migrant peers. They also found that for non-migrant children, their friendships were often based around a shared interest which was sparked as a result of attending extra-curricular activities. Migrant children were not able to join these because their parents were unable to afford them, so were excluded from this arena of friend making.

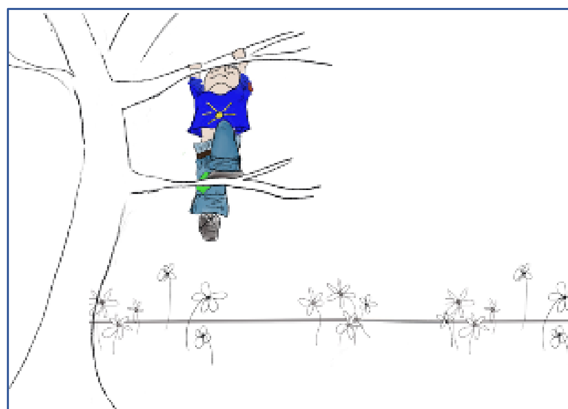
The literature review highlighted the importance of making a friend for refugee children (Chapter 3) however what is interesting about this finding and is borne out by Zhang and Luo (2016) is that refugee children seem to make friendships with other children who have similar life experiences. For example, Ahmed found Mariam, who was also a refugee and lived in his vicinity, Amira's friend Lamai, also spoke English as a second

language and for Karam, although naturally sociable, his keyperson remarked on the positive benefit of his relationship with Rafi.

> *"I think that his experience of reception is actually being enhanced with…. we had another little boy who speaks the same language as him who joined fairly recently. So although he was settling in and you know, making friends with other reception children, I think the common language with the other little boy has really brought him out of himself*. (Keyperson interview, 10.5.18)

Hassan seemed to remain alone, but his initial overtures of friendship were directed towards a boy who was not only openly *different* but also was experiencing social emotional and behavioural challenges. It seemed then, that rather than choose to spend time with "a More Knowledgeable Other" (Vygotsky, 1978) from the host community, to effectively show them the ropes, the children instead seemed to gravitate towards other children who were also members of an "Out-group" (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). It might be that this provided a much-needed antidote to the situation outlined by Seker and Aslan (2015) who acknowledged that older refugee students encounter, "*problems like alienation, discrimination or otherization in their relationships at school and in class."* (Seker and Aslan, 2015: 88/9)

7.5.2 Inner strength



(Lippiatt, 2019)

There are many ways to view and conceptualise the inner strength of children. MacLeod et al (2020) suggest that when refugee children become competent in the

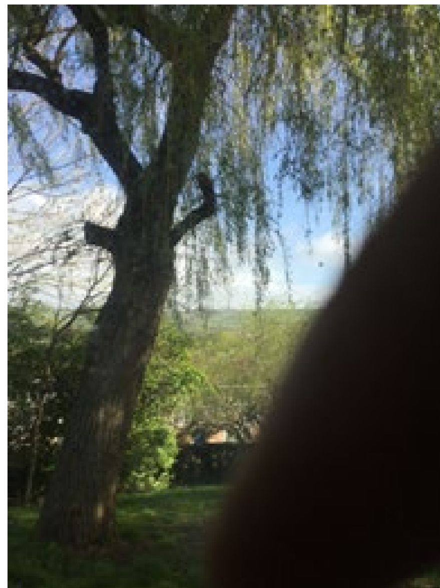
host country's language it is a "*key factor in positive adaptation and resilience development*" (MacLeod et al, 2020: 1331). However, in this study I have steered away from notions of adaption and resilience because they are heavily contested, although I recognise the point MacLeod et al (2020) are making. Ortega and Oxford (2023) examined refugees' funds of knowledge and suggested that although all children bring a wealth of home knowledge to their learning, refugee children tend to have larger funds of knowledge to draw from. This is due to their "*wide-ranging experiences in multiple places and their encounters with many kinds of people events and challenges"* (Ortega and Oxford, 2023:4). When considering the academic success and resilience of older unaccompanied immigrant children, Pena et al (2018) describe a "*high internal locus of control*" (2018:169). The findings suggest that all the children demonstrate considerable strength amid the huge challenges already outlined. I have located my ideas about inner strength in the midst of the definitions above and interestingly, the children were often admired for this strength by the staff who cared for them.

By the time Ahmed left Dog Lane to go to school, he had built a reputation for only doing what he chose. There were issues with him saying sorry, going to the toilet and having sun cream applied. However,

> "*A number of the staff expressed admiration for Ahmed. They felt he was very brave. One practitioner said that he was "brave enough to say no" They expressed admiration for his spirit and stubbornness* "(Fieldnotes: Practitioner discussion after viewing vignette, 8.4.19)

Amira equally had a reputation for high levels of self-control. Her keyperson noted that, "*If she was upset, she would do it very quietly and you'd have to notice her. She's not a big noisy crier like some children are. It's very restrained, very controlled*" (Keyperson interview, 23.3.18). During the fieldwork I also noticed this controlled restraint in operation with her peers. Amira was engaged in a tabletop activity, alongside three other girls. With very little speech, using only gestures and looks, Amira was able to prevent a number of boys from joining the group whilst negotiating firmly with the small group of girls to gather the equipment she wished to use in her own game (Fieldnotes, 7.3.18). Her ability to set unspoken boundaries was impressive.

Equally impressive was the significant resilience and can-do attitude I observed in Hassan when climbing on a massive wooden structure outside. (Fieldnotes, 22.3.18). He went higher than any of the other children and on the numerous times he slipped, or had to jump off, Hassan quickly went back onto the climbing frame, fearlessly climbing again to the top. Also worthy of note was the determination involved in his refusal to speak whilst at his ECEC setting which must have taken considerable strength of will to accomplish and sustain for such a long time. When I gave Hassan the camera and asked him what was important to him at nursery, he put a box onto a table, climbed up onto it then stood on tip toes with the camera pointing out of the high window and took this photo.



(Hassan's photograph, 26.4.18)

Hassan clearly wanted to communicate to me the importance for him of the outdoors, and because he was not able to access the outside, at that time, he used his considerable inner strength and resolve to show me.

Karam's strength seemed to manifest itself in his keenness to do well in school, often remaining at a task beyond the allotted time, so that he could finish it. (Fieldnotes, 19.4.18). He was particularly pleased with the representation of his achievements and commitment by the graphic artist.

(Lippiatt 2019)

Through these clear demonstrations of strength, will and determination, unknowingly, the children were re-defining themselves as "*persons of self-rescue"* where each demonstration of their inner strength became "*actions of resilience*" which challenged the "*Orientalist scripts of refuge"* (Kyriakides et al, 2018: 75).

Ryu and Tuvilla (2018) spent time listening to the stories of adolescent refugees from Myanmar. They too found that the dominant narrative positioned refugees as, *"tragic victims, nuisances, or potential invaders and criminals in host countries across the world*" (Ryu and Tuvilla, 2018: 540) and various interventions were made available for the young people to support their mental health and their language skills. However, they noted, like Stravaklova-Hughes and Wang (2019) that storytelling about themselves was vital in the young people's identity formation. The young refugee people in their study also experienced isolation and marginalisation at school but began to challenge the narrative about themselves, making friends with other Chins, who were also experiencing marginalisation. They would,

> "*position themselves as individuals who have valuable knowledge and experiences to share with peers and the public who do not have similar experiences and do not know about other parts of the world*" (Ryu and Tuvilla, 2018: 546).

What the older refugee children did in Ryu and Tuvilla's study (2018) was not only re-define themselves within the accepted script about refugees but also demonstrated their undiminished strong inner selves. Through this finding Karam, Hassan, Amira,

and Ahmed, although much younger, show a similar quality. By capturing their experiences and presenting to the children as their own stories, this study played an important part in supporting their identity formation.

7.5.3 Children's language competence

The literature review (Chapter 3) outlined some of the issues concerning bilingualism, multilingualism, and pedagogies of translanguaging. The challenge children face in learning a second language was made clear (Smidt 2016) and the often-inadequate provision in classrooms was highlighted (Safford and Drury 2013). Academics also outlined classroom practices which could support children in becoming bilingual or multilingual (Drury, 2013; Toker and Baytas, 2022; Mammou et al, 2022). Whilst MacLeod et al (2020) concluded that the three young Syrian refugee boys in their study language development was slow, their parents struggled to meet their children's educational needs and the teacher found it difficult to engage with the families. However, in spite of all these potential challenges the bridge described in this section is concerned with the children's language competency which at times was breath taking. Each child had their own experiences of language acquisition, as has been outlined briefly in each child's individual stories (2.3). This finding is inextricably linked to the previous two findings in the bridges section: making friends and inner strength. The children's ability to master a new language, was a clear indication of their inner strength and resilience but it also provided them with a social bridge, supporting connection to other children. Looking at the mediational role of school for unaccompanied refugee children, Pastoor (2015) suggests that there are three transitional processes the children go through: socialisation, integration, and rehabilitation (Pastoor, 2015: 247). He suggests it is within the integration process that children acquire the linguistic, cultural, and social skills of "*an unfamiliar society"* (Pastoor, 2015: 247). The inference is that to truly integrate, it is important to become competent in the host country's language.

By the end of the second phase of the fieldwork, when I gave the children their completed books, they were all fully sufficient in speaking and understanding both Arabic and English. Their proficiency, despite their difficult circumstances, was a testament to their ability to unconsciously reframe the refugee narrative. At three years old Ahmed first began to hear, thanks to his cochlear implants. During the fieldwork

year, he was speaking and understanding two languages. Within the same timeframe Amira grew in confidence and was also fluent in two languages. In addition, she led the way within her family by learning to sign with her older brother, Bilal, and was the first to be able to interpret for him with their parents. Karam's casual daily interchangeable fluency was remarkable. Even Hasan when I went to visit him to give him his book, clearly understood and could speak both languages, although he remained reluctant.

For the parents within this study, there also seemed to be an onus placed on English language learning. Providing English language classes for the children's parents was a responsibility of the local authority as part of the terms of the Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme (Home Office, 2017) so throughout the study, all the participant parents were attending. In addition, befrienders were offered to the families and Fatima spoke about a volunteer who came to her house to help her learn English (Parent drawing interview, 14.5.18). Whilst the parents received formalised support there was only minimal structured support for the children to learn English. Croft's End Nursery and Infant school had developed a policy for children who were learning English as a second language, including refugees, with a local specialist organisation. (Expert witness interview, 28.6.19). Karam's keyperson told me about the provision made for him,

> **"***We have a meeting beforehand to put things in place to meet the needs, language needs, other needs. He's got a language plan, but he's accessing language through everything we do for reception children, English speaking reception children. We are not doing anything in addition, if you like, because some of our English-speaking reception children, language skills aren't very high"* (Keyperson interview, 3.5.18)

Ahmed also had more formal support, but this was provided by the cochlear implant team with a specialist teacher of the deaf leading the offer. Ahmed was given the same support that would have been offered to any child with cochlear implants and there seemed little acknowledgement that Ahmed was learning two languages at the same time, whilst getting used to hearing. Hassan had been referred to speech and language because of his reluctance to talk, and again there seemed little acknowledgement of his bi-lingual learning. Amira had no extra support, and at the

start of the fieldwork, was noticeably occupying the "*silent period*" (Bligh, 2011; Drury 2013).

The feeling that a lack of English language competency was a barrier to communication between host and refugees was widespread. Fatima, Hassan's mother, spoke of difficulty trying to communicate with staff at Croft's End Nursery (Parent drawing interview, 14.5.18) whilst the staff at St Swithin's also talked about the language being a barrier which made communication difficult with Amira's parents (Practitioner response to child's story, 11.3.19). Colleagues voiced similar concerns. The impact of language learning challenges should not be underestimated for the children. Eduard, my relative, shared with me the story of his first day in school following his arrival in England. He knew the English for please and thank you, and his uncle told him that he had paid for Eduard to have milk. Eduard still remembers his confusion when he was asked if he would like hot or cold milk. He understood the word milk, as it was similar to the Austrian word, but he kept saying please whilst the teacher and the children became more and more exasperated with him. (Fieldnotes, 29.8.20)

The leaders of Croft's End Nursery and Infant school and St Swithin's spoke about the barriers to providing support for the children and expressed frustration with how difficult it was to access extra support for refugee children. The issues were almost solely revolving around lack of funding. The manager of St Swithin's described how they had tried to use Google translate to communicate more effectively with Amira's parents, as funding for a translator was not available. Whilst the SENCO at Croft's End talked about the lack of mental health support for Hassan and the challenges of the language barrier.

Even so, the view that language was a barrier was contested by Rahima, when thinking about her strained relationship with staff at St Swithins. I asked if she had experienced a language barrier and Rahima told me that she understood most of what was being said (Parent interview, 29.6.18). She suggested that at Bilal's school the atmosphere was different, and staff told her stories about his day, alluding to the idea that the barrier being more than just a linguistic exchange. This notion is supported by Vygotsky's view that language acquisition cannot be separated from its social context (Vygotsky,1978)

7.5.4 Professional relationships as a bridge

Writing about their experiences of a project in Sweden which aimed to support migrants to be able to access to health and social care services, Abrahamsson et al (2009) describe 'bridge- builders' who were specifically recruited to support migrant families, "*to act as a go-between, and to advocate on behalf of another individual or group"* (Abrahamsson et al, 2009: 86). Drury (2013) highlights the critical role played by the bilingual teaching assistant in supporting the child in her study. Drury (2013) describes her as, "*a mediator of language and culture"* (Drury, 2013: 389). She goes on to further explain the importance of bilingual staff suggesting that they are able to, "*bridge the gap between experiences in the home and those within the nursery*" (Drury 2013: 390). In this section I consider how two professional relationships in my study acted as a bridge for the children. Firstly, Mina provided a significant bridge within the study as she managed to connect me to the families of the children and the families to the people who ran the vital services for refugees in the local authority. In their Canadian study, Yohani et al (2019) talk about interpreters being "*cultural brokers*" (Yohani et al 2019) concluding that they are important. Mina acted not only as my cultural broker but my passport through the gatekeepers to be accepted by the Syrian families. The specifics of her role is documented in Chapter 5 and she was an important attachment figure for the families as she provided a bridge of welcome for them, being able to occupy space in both the Islamic and English cultural worlds, in a similar way the bridge-builders in Sweden (Abrahamsson et al 2009) and the bilingual teaching assistant highlighted by Drury (2013).

The second professional relationship which seemed to act as a bridge was less obvious to me but became visible through discussions with my supervisors. In Chapter 6 I have documented the nature of my relationships with the different participants, to ensure I remained sensitive to the power dynamics in operation. However, my role as researcher, alongside my position within the local authority, enabled me to act as a bridge for both the children and their parents. I had to spend time wrestling with the challenges of positioning myself as an advocate researcher and formulate principles to frame this, (Figure 40) but once these were resolved I was able to highlight the needs of the children to the early years' practitioners. For Ahmed, the observations I made of him, indicated that he needed more support to make friends with peers. In

Hassan's case, I alerted the senior managers at Crofts End, of his traumatised presentation and that Hassan's social, emotional and mental health needs required further attention. In addition, it was through my observations of Ahmed that his parents took him to see an optician who prescribed glasses, because I noticed a turn in his eye. I remained engaged with Hassan's family for several years, supporting the school as Hassan moved out of early years and then offering advice to support his younger brother. Omar and Fatima seemed to trust me, beyond the research project.

Equally, I gave voice to the concerns of the mothers about their children and spoke on their behalf, with permission, to open a dialogue with the children's key people. I conveyed Zahra's concerns about Ahmed being unable to use the toilet and Yara's concerns about Karam often being very sad at home. Later on, through Amira's story, I was able to communicate to the staff at St Swithin's her significant concern about them not living Amira, and the incident with the "yellow smile."

I shared the stories of the children's lived experiences with the practitioners who looked after them. I set up the meetings as reflective practice sessions and engaged *with* the staff to think together about what they meant and what could be learnt from them. I created a safe space to have the often-difficult conversations which are necessary for deep professional growth.

As a researcher, I brought with me transferable skills which served me well in the research project. Strekalova-Hughes (2017) discusses the importance of culturally responsive teaching and that, "*intercultural sensitivity is a fundamental predisposition of culturally responsive teaching*," (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017:3). It is hard to determine whether I was a bridge for the children and families because of my intercultural sensitivity. What is clear is that I was able to identify cultural similarities between their Islamic Syrian culture and my own. When I first met Mina, she reminded me of my aunties, because of the way she dressed and the way she expressed herself. I recognised similar values around food, welcome and family when I visited the children at home. My knowledge of living in Zambia also assisted me in being able to recognise these similarities, which enabled me to be sensitive to how I presented myself. I ensured that I was dressed in a modest way and was intentionally respectful when speaking to the men in the household. I have worked for years in senior leadership roles, so have developed the high levels of emotional literacy needed to lead effective

teams and throughout my career have worked with children and their families who faced significant challenge, often positioned in Out-groups.

7.5.5 The use of visual methods

The rationale for using a visual approach within the methodology is clearly set out in the introduction to this chapter and Chapter 5, pointing to an accessibility and immediacy which transcends culture, language, or age. It is also congruent with ideas about postcolonialism which Leavy (2020) situates alongside "*postmodern theory……feminist postmodernism and feminist poststructuralism"* (Leavy 2020: 86) suggesting that all these theories, "*challenged traditional ways of knowing"* (Leavy 2020: 86). In her exposition about the relationship between postcolonialism and refugee literature Gallien (2018) suggests that one of the major roles of postcolonialism is to challenge disturb traditional power dynamics. The aim of using visual methods was to elicit the children's and their parent's experiences, in a different, more power-sensitive way, primarily to answer the first research question: *How do very young refugee children experience ECEC?* However, the process of drawing their responses to my questions, and taking photographs appeared to act as a bridge for the children and their parents. It was as if by creating a visual representation of their experiences, they gave voice to them. Yara, Karam's mother, was very worried about his unresolved grief about his dad. Karam either pretended his father was still alive or refused to talk about him. When Karam drew the picture below, he told me that this was him at school. However, during the member checking process, when I shared the PowerPoint of his own story, when Karam saw this picture, he whispered to me that this was a picture of his dad, driving a car. Yara was delighted. She felt that this was significant, that Karam has chosen to represent his father through his drawing and talk to me about it.

Karam drew a picture of his dad driving a car because this is important to him.

(Fieldnotes 20.3.19)

When I gave Amira her story book and she saw the picture of herself which depicted her speaking three languages, she was incredibly proud and was happy to accept my praise. In a way, the picture seemed to validate her achievements which she just accepted as her norm. However, this picture also facilitated a conversation between Rahima and I. Looking at the picture, Rahima was able to talk about her feelings of guilt, about Amira. She explained that she worried about Amira having to hold too much responsibility whilst so young. Rahima felt that having to speak three languages was a burden for Amira. I was able to explain the benefits of being multi-linguistic and talk through some of Rahima's worries with her. Interestingly, Rahima has gone on to train to be an interpreter for British Sign Language.

7.6 Summary

The bridges described in this section of the findings are really a testament to the children's strength, resilience, and abilities. They demonstrated clearly that they would not adhere to commonly held notions about refugees by making friends, showing inner strength, and learning language impressively, often overcoming huge barriers. However, as is clear throughout this study, the children's lives cannot be reduced or over simplified. At the time of writing, Hassan continues to access support for his ongoing mental health needs. This complexity was made clear during my final visit to Amira when I gave her the story book of her time at St Swithin's.

"Amira was so engaged and wanted to chat with me about her story. Rahima said that she felt guilty that she was expecting Amira to speak three languages, talking in Arabic, English and also in sign language. She said that she was worried that her children were very English and very much belonged. She really wanted them to be able to speak Arabic. That this was important to her. She felt that they were almost too much part of English society." (Fieldnotes, 31.10.19)

Having spent time with adolescent refugees, Ryu and Tuvilla (2018) conclude that, *"the participants' stories were rife with ambivalence, tensions and even contradictions"* (Ryu and Tuvilla, 2018: 554). The same could be said about the participants in this study. The children's experiences within their ECEC settings were complex. By locating the children firmly within a wider context using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eco system model tensions and contradictions also became apparent. Whilst there was a level of commonality between the children's experiences which I described by grouping the findings thematically, it was also true that each child, had their own experience which was unique. The complex theoretical frame has enabled me to interrogate the findings further, offering a picture which is infused with possible Occidental bias, subtle unconscious group allegiances and experiences of the children and families which are emotionally provoking. These findings stimulate further questions about power too. For although the children appear to have little power, (Figure 1) their tenacity and strength to not only survive but live on, live well and redefine themselves suggests a depth of personal power to be admired.

Chapter 8: Discussion of findings

8.1 Introduction

Through the findings, a subtle, complex, and multi-layered picture emerged of the children's lived experiences, with echoes reverberating across the first and second section of findings from the literature review. Both the literature review and the theoretical approach are important in this chapter, offering helpful frames to discuss the findings and think about their implications. The themes of power, emotion, intersectionality, movement, invisibility, relationships, and positionality which were introduced in the first chapter, continue to resonate within this one.

8.2 Chapter structure

The intention of this chapter is to first consider **the use of the theoretical frame,** thinking about the children's experiences in terms of the **impact of being a refugee**, then discussing two of the broader themes in this study**: invisibility** and **power and positionality**. The intention is to then **answer the research questions** in turn continuing to reflect on some of the study's broader themes. When answering the first research question, I will be thinking about **relationships.** Within the second research question there will be a further discussion about **being and playing alone,** then thinking about **journeying and movement.** The metaphor of **bridges and islands is revisited.** This chapter will also contain my major contribution to knowledge**: the Pedagogy of Welcome** which helps answer my third research question: *What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy?* Finally, I will consider how the findings relate to the theoretical lens in the section entitled: **The implication of the findings on the theoretical lens.**

8.3 The use of the theoretical frame

Each of the three theories which have made up the theoretical frame, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, Said's (1978) work on Orientalism and Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about learning through social interaction have provided helpful individual lenses to view the findings. Tajfel and Turner (1979) offer a way of seeing the interactions between the host and refugee children in ECEC, considering their membership of either In or Out groups. Their theory has been broad enough to also encompass similar interactions within the children's wider ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner 1979) and has enabled me to view the responses from the local communities where the children live, alongside the reactions of the professionals who were working with them. The lens of Orientalism (Said 1978) has been invaluable because it has illuminated the often-hidden values and attitudes of the staff who cared for the children. Using Said's (1978) work as a lens easily identified the Islamophobia and racism the children and their families experienced. However, it did far more than that because it brought into focus the subtle positioning of the children and their families, where they were not only conceptualised as 'lesser than' but the European (Occident) was positioned as superior, morally correct and a benevolent saviour. Said (1978) offered a unique perspective on the power dynamics in operation, not only in the children's ECEC, but throughout the research (Chapter 6). Finally, Vygotsky (1978) provided a bedrock of understanding which has been useful to examine the findings. His notions about the importance of social interaction in the learning process have driven my expectations of what I should be seeing as I collected data. Looking through this lens made me concerned about the children's initial isolation and drove the ideas described within the Pedagogy of Welcome. This lens clarified that the importance of making a friend was a significant finding, because for three of the children making a friend was a turning point. Through these social interactions they moved from being disconnected from the wider group to having a connection with one other child, and this improved their mood, the games they were able to play and increased their confidence. Updating their

findings concerned with children's funds of knowledge, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) described how Vygotsky's notion of 'perezhivanie' can be, "*translated as 'emotional experience' 'lived experience' or simply as 'experience'*" and go on to describe this as,

> "*a dynamic, fluid, and complex unit of analysis between personality characteristics and environmental characteristics. On the one hand, a child's previous experience determines what he or she brings to the situation. On the other, the social and cultural situation offers possibilities and constrictions"* (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014:33).

Considering this, Vygotsky not only offers a base line theory about how children learn but also validates the lived experiences of the children, which contributes to their funds of knowledge.

The strength of the theoretical frame is how these three theories overlap, offering a unique way of considering the findings. This intersection provided a sensitive tool which allowed me to look deeper to see the very subtle intricate interactions, positioning, and power dynamics within the complex lives of the children. The theoretical triad will be used throughout this chapter to both illuminate and inform the discussion.

8.3.1 The impact of being a refugee

My research is a small-scale study which is intricately layered. The intersectional element of the children's lives has meant that it is hard to decipher to what extent their lived experiences were due to them being refugees, Syrian, bilingual learners, or the many other challenges they faced. The theoretical frame has been helpful when considering whether the children's experiences were comparable to other children of their age and to what extent were they impacted by being a refugee because I recognise that this is potentially problematic. However, using Said's (1978) lens I have been able to open a discourse which could examine their lives more safely. Said (1978) suggests that the children may well have been cast as different, feeding into the Us/Them conceptualisation of refugees and their experiences essentialised or exoticized. However, during the fieldwork, I was keen to hear the views of the early

years' practitioners regarding how the study children compared to non-refugee children, specifically in relation to their experiences of second language acquisition, in part because of the huge emphasis placed on this skill by professionals.

During her interview, Ahmed's keyperson understood the challenges he faced and said that she felt that Ahmed was not developing typically but was struggling socially. She mentioned that the teacher of the deaf, *"sort of pulls a face and says she was expecting things to be a bit faster"* (Keyperson interview, 4.4.18).

Almost a year later, following Ahmed's story being shared with the practitioners (8.4.19) there was a wider reflective discussion about how typical Ahmed was. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory became useful in considering this element of the findings. The staff felt that there were similarities between his experiences and his friend Mariam, who was also a refugee. However, in direct contrast to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work, there was also a strong feeling that Ahmed was similar to a white British child who was a selective mute, with staff noticing that all three of the children responded best to a quieter calmer environment. Possibly due to their pre-held assumptions, practitioners shared their shock that when they completed the last summative assessments for the children, Ahmed had exceeded the white British child in his learning and development. This was also noted by Karam's keyperson (3.5.18) who said that he exceeded his white British peers in attainment. Staff at Dog Lane and Karam's keyperson at Croft's End Infants felt that for Ahmed and Karam, having a friend who spoke their own language was a positive for both boys, and grew their confidence and enabled them to demonstrate their language competence. This suggested that possibly initially the staff were very much focussed on the refugee children's difference, inadvertently positioning them within an Out group. Having spent time with them there was an acknowledgement of the children's learning strengths and the similarity to their White British peers.

Hassan's keyperson, an early career teacher, did not seem sure about how typical his linguistic experience was compared to other children. She mentioned that he was quiet but did not seem to fully understand the link between mental health needs and the emergence of selective mutism (Keyperson interview, 19.4.18).

Amira's experience was slightly different. Amira broke out of her solitary time at St Swithin's by making friends with Lamai, another child who also was learning English as a second language. During her interview, Amira's keyperson was very reflective about this and noticed that in the previous academic year Amira's early friendships were also beginning to form with children who were learning English as a second language. We discussed how the relationships formed if both children did not speak a common language. The keyperson noticed,

> "*it was non-verbal communication. It's almost like, if you take your children on a foreign holiday, and you'd put them on the beach, and there's another child from another country there, they play. Whereas, as adults you find that really tricky because you don't know the language. Children know through the language of play how to communicate*" (Keyperson interview, 23.3.18).

Her thoughts about children relating to other children on a beach and being able to communicate through a language of play resonated with me. However, as I reflected on this, I began to question what was being put forward as a working theory about how children who do not share a common language, form bonds. My findings suggest that the refugee children tended to make closer friends with non-host children. Considering the analogy of children playing together on a beach I wondered,

> "*Why are only the bilingual children able to communicate in the language of play? Why don't the English children seem to bridge this divide? If ALL children acted in this way, then surely there would be some of the English children who would have made friends with Amira. I am wondering whether this is an idealistic view of childhood which may need to be critiqued. Possibly, what Amira is experiencing is the "us" and "them" syndrome, the "insiders" and the "outsiders." She seems to have found a place where she can belong, and it is with the "others" those who also do not quite fit."* (Reflective journal, 23.3.18)

The intersectional element of the theoretical lens enabled me to make sense of this finding. Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about social interaction as the basis of learning, resonated with Amira's keyperson's notions of playing on a beach. She considered this would happen naturally. What was invisible was the host children's attitudes towards the refugee children which appeared to prevent them from making social

bonds with their peers. Said's (1978) work suggests the children were being cast as different in some way. However, although relegated to an Outgroup (Tajfel and Turner 1979) the refugee children managed to form their own In-group, comprising of other children who were positioned similarly. The membership of these newly formed groups or pairings, enabled the children to engage in the social interactions which are so important to Vygotsky (1978). Interestingly, the characteristics which had placed them firmly in the Outgroup, became the characteristics which bonded them to each other in their own newly formed In-groups – for example: being different, bilingualism or being a refugee.

8.3.2 Invisibility

Invisibility seems to have become a recurring theme within this study. The literature review highlighted the invisibility of very young refugee children with most research being conducted with older children, or with practitioners or parents. The findings suggested that practitioners were often unaware of the impact of a hidden curriculum on children and were equally unaware of the hidden challenges faced by the children in their everyday lives (Figure 47). The literature review worked in tandem with the theoretical frame to illuminate the often-hidden narrative about refugees, which again impacted how practitioners thought about the children. The findings illuminated a further dynamic which was in operation which were exemplified by Rahima's experiences of one staff member at St Swithin's. She received a subtle invisible non-verbal communication which made her feel uncomfortable. This is unlikely to be an isolated incident for in their study of rural migrant children's school experiences in China, Zhang and Luo (2016) also note similar attitudes amongst urban teachers. They too notice a subtlety of behaviour and attitude in operation which appears to accompany the social exclusion of the children. They point to a hidden curriculum which they describe as, "*the unspoken academic, social and cultural messages that are communicated to students through various indirect means*" (Zhang and Luo, 2016: 218). The intersection of two of the theories in the theoretical frame, provided a useful lens to not only illuminate the hidden curriculum, but examine this in light of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) and Said's (1978) work. Rahima's experience and the children described in Zhang and Luo's (2016) study can be explained as a subtle positioning issue infused with power and prejudice.

Notions expressed by the teachers in Zhang and Luo's (2016) research of the importance to treat all the children equally (Zhang and Luo, 2016: 225) resonated with my findings. When faced with the negative feedback from Rahima, a few members of staff at St Swithin's were surprised saying that they had treated Amira no differently to others (Fieldnotes of practitioner responses to child's story, 11.3.19). Zhang and Luo (2016) suggest that this attitude can perpetuate the inequality experienced by the children and families. In her investigation of the intercultural sensitivity of teachers in the United States, where there were a high proportion of refugee children, Strekalova-Hughes (2017) picks up a similar point and warns of the dangers of "*cultural-vacuum classrooms*" and "*culture-mute educational settings*" suggesting that they can perpetuate discrimination, bullying, poor attainment for refugee children and poor home-school relationships (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017: 3). She notes that refugee children come from a variety of backgrounds so cannot be seen as a specific homogenous group in terms of their education and learning.

The literature review (Chapter 3) clearly illuminated this issue (Lamb 2020; Wolf et al 2020; Peleman et al 2020; Lazzari et al 2020) highlighting how refugee children often face exclusion in ECEC through unseen practices. Tobin (2020) develops this further when he describes a similar tension. He describes how ECEC often have a "*stated belief in the importance of being culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs and wishes of parents*" but he notes there is less flexibility "*when it comes to questions of curriculum and pedagogy, most practitioners draw the line"* (Tobin, 2020:15). This also seems to confirm a deeply held belief that the "way we do it" is correct. Gazing at this through Said's (1978) Orientalist lens, suggests practitioners' inbuilt belief in their own rightness could arise from the Occident notion of unquestioned superiority.

Zhang and Luo (2016), Strekalova-Hughes (2017) and Tobin (2020) suggest the implication of this finding is serious for refugee children, in terms of their educational attainment. However, this study is aiming to consider the lived experiences of the participants and one of the members of the Outsider group brought to my attention the impact of this finding more clearly for her as a black parent of British/Spanish mixed ethnic children. She spoke of her own feelings of isolation resulting from unseen micro aggressions and micro invalidations (Essien, 2019). These were described as a "*disingenuous politeness*" and how "*conversations are closed down and teachers turn*

away" (Outsiders group feedback to results, 31.10.19). Essien (2019) also bears witness to the presence of these small almost imperceptible slights in her examination of micro-aggressions experienced by black American parents in ECECs. She illuminates the subtlety of the hidden slights, the pathologizing of black culture and the assumptions made by early educators. Essien (2019) also highlights the damage that can be rendered to the parents in her study. She suggests that these micro-aggressions are,

> "*often rendered unconsciously from the perpetrator of the microaggression to the recipient. Thus, the educators in this study were not necessarily intended to cause harm, however, the end results were that the messages rendered were harmful*." (Essien, 2019:18)

It seems then that allowing these to remain invisible is potentially very harmful for refugee children and their families, increasing feelings of isolation, perpetuating exclusion, and striking at the core of the children's identity.

8.3.3 Power and Positionality

In the introductory chapter, I set out clearly how I was going to conceptualise the four children involved in this study, purposefully adopting a strength-based view. I explained that although the children had experienced multiple intersectional life events which diminished their innate personal power, they often demonstrated significant strength. By using ideas centred around Moll et al's (1992) findings about funds of knowledge, the children can rightly be re-conceptualised as rich contributors to their ECEC settings (Cun, 2021; Ryu et al, 2019). However, there are criticisms of the use of funds of knowledge, particularly when involving refugees in research. In their investigation into structural barriers and processes which defund the funds of knowledge and identity of children from refugee backgrounds, Oikonomidoy and Karam (2022) suggest that original ideas about 'funds of knowledge' tended to focus on adults and the family, rather than children specifically, and that the theory, "*neglect(s) issues of power*" (Oikonomidoy and Karam, 2022: 634). It may be true that the refugee experience differs for children from marginalised groups because of the unique threat to life experienced by refugees, so issues of power need to be amplified, but it still remains that locating refugee children as bringers of unique knowledge and

experience (funds of knowledge) is a positive way to position them. However, my findings suggest that there is more to be seen and acknowledged within the children's lived experiences and the complex theoretical lens used in this study has enabled this to brought into clear focus. Whilst the children's funds of knowledge offer a rich and valid contribution, particularly from a cultural linguistic perspective, I posit that their power goes beyond these funds of knowledge and lies at the heart of their lived experiences of being a refugee. As very young "*persons of self-rescue*" (Kyriakides et al, 2018) they clearly demonstrated their capacity to build connections, establish themselves in the face of both open and hidden hostility, rise about negative conceptualisations and positioning, navigate significant personal challenges, and thrive in spite of it all.

The two major themes of this study: positionality and power, have resonated beyond the children and their lived experiences but can be located throughout the whole research process and design. My initial worries were concerned with my own position of both privilege and power. These led me to question whether I should be engaging in research with refugee children and their families. As a result of considering the insider/outsider perspective (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) I developed my own domains of positionality (Gaywood et al, 2020), which are one of my original contributions to the field. However, although this in some way assuaged concerns about my own exercise of power in the field, it did not answer other concerns about structural power within the research process. I was aware that historically qualitative research was tinged with colonialism which was uncomfortable. I began to see that the way a piece of research was constructed might not fully re-dress these issues but could go some way to alleviate them and re-distribute power. Therefore, I constructed the research design carefully, choosing underpinning theories with power differentials in mind. The theoretical triad I finally adopted also adds original knowledge, particularly for future researchers in the field. Including Said's (1978) work on Orientalism was purposeful and enabled me to continue to shine a light onto Occidental attitudes which were present during the research. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work on social groupings again highlighted the excluded - the Other, whilst Vygotsky provided the grounding of children learning through social interaction. By discarding the work of Bourdieu, I intentionally rejected notions of cultural capital which have been defined by dominant

voices in a European societal context, thus preferring to focus on those with less obvious power.

The literature review has been a vital element of this study, providing a secure foundation on which to build. It highlighted many power imbalances within the refugee narrative, which was magnified by the theoretical frame and demonstrated how often refugees are conceptualised as needing saving rather than persons of self-rescue (Kyriakides, 2018). The participant children experienced intersectional powerlessness (Figure 1) however I decided early on to ensure the focus was clearly on them (Figure 39) to try to remediate this potential powerless state. By attempting to capture the children's stories and foreground their voices, my aim was to re-position the children and give honour to their experiences. These were structural decisions that were made in response to concerns about power. This methodological finding also adds new knowledge to researching with marginalised people groups.

The ethics involved in this piece of research were necessarily complex and extended far beyond my application to the ethics board, which was why a whole chapter (Chapter 6) was dedicated to them. The ethical approach I adopted was intentional and again was used to address issues of my own exercise of power within the developing relationships with the research participants. I had to consider my responsibility to the children and their families ethically and navigate issues which arose from my practitioner researcher positionality, as well as my innate privilege as a member of the host country educated elite. My ethical findings also form part of my contribution to the field of knowledge. The ethics were dynamic, ever changing and needed careful considerate handling. The children and their families consented to be involved in this research. The verbal agreement was that the research should benefit their children, give voice to their experiences, and should support future practitioners to teach refugee children more effectively. I used these as my ethical steer. When issues arose during the field work, I created protocols based around these principles (Figure 40). The children's assent to take part in the research was an ongoing mainly nonverbal dialogue, which involved me being sensitive to their body language and other subtle cues.

I set up a clear system of member checking, which again was weighted towards the children and their parents, so I shared all the findings with them to ensure they were

comfortable. I also took any suggestions seriously, so when the mothers asked if I could feedback the findings to them as a group without the men, I agreed to ensure their voices were heard. There were a number of discordant incidents during the field work which I analysed to interrogate myself and my own assumptions. I engaged the services of Mina who was an interpreter of language and culture as well as the person who enabled me to gain access to the families. Acting on the advice of a Syrian academic, I chose to only capture the current lived experiences of the children and actively stayed away from asking about their journeys and previous experiences to afford them dignity but also to reduce the risk of a re-telling causing them further trauma. I was aware of a wider potential voyeuristic interest in their peri-migration stories and the inequity of power for the families feeling obliged to share.

Having spent time creating a structure which aimed to re-distribute power, and developing power sensitive responsive ethical approaches, the findings offered further information which adds to this theme. Very early on during the field work, the innate power exercised by the children emerged. They were clearly making decisions about their lives in their ECEC settings which I could not have foreseen. The challenges they faced were both seen and often unseen and yet they navigated their worlds by separating their home experiences from their time in early education. The children demonstrated that they were able to set boundaries and they all had opinions about what they liked about nursery. The children negotiated their linguistic challenges in slightly different ways, but one year on, were all fluently bilingual and none had been given any extra support to attain these skills, other than being immersed in an English-speaking setting. The support offered to Ahmed was the same support offered to any child with cochlear implants, and Hassan also received the equivalent support for any English-speaking child who was selectively mute.

The power relationships between the practitioners and the parents were complex, as the parents and children were often unwittingly positioned as “refugees” which was a label two of the mothers in particular, hated. It seemed that at times this positionality was impacted by wider narrative about refugees, possibly by a lack of experience, ignorance about power differentials and ideas about treating everyone the same. However, it is important to note that this was not a universal picture. Croft’s End, where Karam and Hassan attended, had more experience of working with children from

refugee backgrounds and their families. More senior staff had a fuller understanding of the children's wider context, but the spider incident (Fieldnotes 14.5.18) suggested that this knowledge and understanding had not filtered down fully to everyday practice. Bronfenbrenner (1979) was again a useful frame to consider how the wider societal narratives found in the macro systems of the children, impacted the children in the micro, and meso systems. The media presenting refugees as weak, vulnerable and in need of rescue appeared to impact directly how practitioners conceptualised the children. This in turn affected their expectations of what the children would be able to do and seemed to contribute to the complex relationship between themselves and the parents.

8.4 Answering the research questions

8.4.1 Question one: How do very young refugee children experience ECEC?

The literature review and the theoretical frame illuminated several hidden narratives which permeate through research. One of those was that the refugee experience tends to be essentialised which Marmo (2013) suggests is linked to the conceptualising of refugees as powerless victims (Marmo, 2013: 87). This was also raised by Said (1978) who suggested that there was a tendency of the Occident to make sweeping judgement about those from the Orient, conceptualising people as either exotic, dangerous or infantile rather than considering people as unique with their own individual stories. Equally, in order for In-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979) to become established, shared characteristics amongst members needed to be exaggerated, whilst Out-group members had to be seen en masse as different. The literature review also highlighted the importance of storytelling which Strekalova-Hughes and Wang (2019) describe as a "*culturally sustaining practice*" (Strekalova-Hughes and Wang, 2019: 11). Through the telling of the children's individual stories, I attempted to respond to the findings of the literature review, refuting the observations of both Said (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979) by presenting each child's experiences in a way that allows their individuality to be celebrated, rather than have their stories quashed and their experiences essentialised. I have tried to capture something of how the children experienced their ECEC, highlighting the strategies they used to cope and

giving an insight into each of their personalities. These stories offer brief pen portraits of the children's lived experiences. What is clear is that each of the children had different experiences. Not only were their personalities different, but their family circumstances which make up their microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) were also different. The literature review pointed to the important role of home and family to refugee children. A few researchers used the children's contexts to frame their studies (Prior and Niesz, 2013; Strekalova-Hughes and Wang, 2019; El Gemayei, 2019; Wihstutz, 2020). My findings suggest that each of the participant children found ways of managing their own significant personal challenges, and it was these individual circumstances which impacted their lived experiences of ECEC. Their lived experiences were also shaped by their key people, the staff at each setting and the nature of the setting themselves.

Ahmed's experiences at Dog Lane were largely shaped by his cochlear implants and recent introduction to sound. He was given support which although appropriate from a hearing perspective, did not consider his already isolated state. Following the first observation I made of Ahmed, when I noticed how alone he seemed, the manager at the setting and his keyperson decided to make immediate changes and began to plan to support Ahmed to connect with his peers. Their responsiveness to my observation, led to a significant change in Ahmed's experience because they chose to encourage him to begin to make relationships with his peers, and enable this by timetabling specific small group activities with a chosen group of quieter children. It was an unplanned reorganisation which enabled him to form a friend who lived in the same block of flats.

Karam was generally a popular member of the class, who was doing well both socially and in his learning. However, he experienced moments of difficult feelings most likely in relation to the traumatic death of his father and ongoing illness of Yara his mother. Karam's keyperson was aware of his situation and often asked me about Yara, raising concerns that she had stopped volunteering at the school, and rarely picked Karam up. Interestingly, because Karam was achieving well and had made friends, his emotional response to his mum's illness appeared to go unnoticed. This was confirmed by the head teacher who commented on it during the expert interview

(Fieldnotes, 28.6.19) giving weight to Jacobsen's (2014) assertion that much of refugees' suffering is invisible.

(Lippiatt, 2019)

Unlike the other three, Hassan struggled most to form bonds with the other children His family were noticeably different from the other refugee families as they were Bedouin farmers, lived more traditionally and neither of his parents had attended school themselves. Hassan appeared to embody much of the isolation and exclusion his parents experienced from within the both the Syrian and British community. Hassan's keyperson was also the least experienced practitioner in the study and was the only one who openly expressed disbelief about the methods I was employing as part of the study, believing that Hassan was too young to take part and would not understand what I was asking. This undoubtedly contributed to his lived experience in Croft's End Nursery class. Amira on the other hand, enjoyed her time at St Swithin's and although quiet at first, was able to command the respect of her peers through the strength of her nonverbal communication.

That each child had very different experiences is a seemingly simple finding, it challenges the often-common narrative about refugee experience which tends to essentialise experiences (Kadianaki and Andreouli, 2017; Hanson-Easey et al, 2014). The children's experiences were all different and were clearly impacted by their wider ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Examining this finding through the lens of the theoretical triad (Chapter 4), the children's unique experiences offer a challenge to those who view refugees solely in terms of an amorphous Outgroup (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

8.4.1.1 Relationships

Methodologically this study was situated within a frame which overtly values the relational aspect of research (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012) and is people-orientated recognising the many voices within each child's story (Tobin, 2016). All three of the theorists in the theoretical frame were also deeply concerned with relationships. Tajfel and Turner (1979) investigated how groups formed relationships and by exaggerating shared characteristics were able to form a group identity which then defined their group relationship to people they deemed to be different. By documenting the attitudes of the Occident, Said (1978) was making comment about the relationship between White European and all Others. He charted the power dynamics involved in a relationship dictated by one group's notion of their superiority. Using his theory about social learning and the role of the More Knowledgeable Other, Vygotsky (1978) was interested in the relational interactions between children and the effect on their learning. Therefore, the importance of the role of relationships within my study cannot be understated. The study is also located within the early childhood studies where the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Department for Education, 2021a) makes clear the importance of relationships for very young children pointing out that, "*children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships*" (Department for Education, 2021a:6). So, when considering how the children experienced their ECEC setting, there is clear agreement that relationships are important but what is unclear is what those positive relationships should look like and entail for Amira, Karam, Ahmed, Hassan and their families. The literature review first pointed to the importance of relationships both for refugee children and their parents (Strang and Ager, 2010; Lazzari, 2020; De Gioia, 2015; Mitchell and Ouko, 2011; Tadesse, 2014; Whitmarsh, 2011). The findings suggest that there is a strongly relational aspect to the children's experiences in ECEC which is reflected in both the island and bridge themes. The children and their parents had complex relationships with the settings. This is unsurprising as it is well documented that refugee parents face barriers to access ECEC (Lamb, 2020; Wolf et al, 2020) and other studies have suggested that ECEC

setting can unwittingly perpetuate exclusive practices which make it harder for refugee families to develop a sense of belonging (Peleman et al, 2020; Lazzari et al, 2020). Hassan's father understood the importance of education but felt stupid surrounded by educators whilst Rahima, Amira's mum, actively disliked staff at St Swithin's because she felt that they did not care about Amira, and she could not decode their nonverbal communication with her. Yara and Zahira were less vocal, but nonetheless felt unable to communicate their deep concerns about their children to staff, but instead used me and my professional expertise to discuss their children's learning and development.

The bridge section also highlights the importance for the children to make a friend. This is borne out within the literature review too. Strang and Ager (2010) and Block (2017) highlight the importance of developing relationships. However, it is Samara et al (2019) who suggest that for refugee children, relationships with other children provide protection from bullying (Samara et al, 2019: 301). For Amira, Karam and Ahmed making a reciprocal relationship with a peer, literally changed their lived experiences. Unfortunately for Hassan, this did not happen during the study.

There were other relationships which were important in the study as well. Mina, the interpreter, became a significant relational and cultural bridge for the families. Although her role was vital for them as she met them at the airport when they arrived and continued to accompany them during significant personal life events like the birth of younger children and ongoing health appointments, it was largely invisible. She would frequently attend the families, without payment, but was often treated poorly by the host professionals.

My relationships within the research were often complex and dynamic. For me Mina was an important ally within the research project and beyond. Her function in the research superseded her brief to interpret language, as she became my cultural guide, and she provided me access through the professional-host-gatekeepers to the families; using her relationship with them, to enable me to develop my own. I have tried to capture the multi-layered elements of all my relationships within the research using the Axioms of Positionality (Figure 49). Developing and maintaining these research relationships, took time, effort, patience, and high levels of emotional literacy (Goleman 1996). My ability to build these positive relationships is likely to have been borne out of 30 years' experience working predominantly with marginalised children

and families. and the intercultural sensitivity (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017) needed for this task may have developed because of my mixed heritage. Personally, I prefer Rylan's (2015) analogy which links the development of the researcher-participant relationship to the dynamics of performing a dance, which suggests the need to be sensitively aware of the participants and respond accordingly in order to maintain the flow of trust. This included giving time and deep thought to the various dissonance incidents which occurred during the research process. I managed to use them as a springboard to self-examination of my own attitudes, which ultimately helped to continue to build the relationships. Viewing this bridge through the theoretical triad, what is interesting is that the parents firmly positioned me as a More Knowledgeable Other. All the mothers discussed with me their concerns about all their children, so I was not only privy to the wider family narrative, but also asked for my advice. Rahima particularly asked me to extend my research to include Bilal, Amira's older brother who was deaf and her younger son. As I was getting to know her and Adeel, I shared with them about my large family and showed them pictures of my eldest son's wedding, understanding the importance of family celebrations within both our cultures, hoping there would be a resonance on which we could begin to build a relationship.

8.4.2 Question two: Do they share any commonality of experience?

Whilst each child had a unique experience which was bound up with their situation and context, there were also some significant commonalities.

8.4.2.1 Being and playing alone

Ukasoanya (2014), Uptin et al (2013) and Seker and Aslan (2015) all suggest that feeling and facing exclusion is commonplace for refugee children. This was borne out in the experiences of the three younger children: Hassan, Ahmed, and Amira who all experienced times of being and playing alone. Yara reported that this had also been Karam's experience at a previous ECEC setting when he was slightly younger. Part of this being and playing alone presented as times of silence, where the children spoke and interacted very little with their peers. Hassan's experience seemed to be the most enduring and Ahmed's appeared exacerbated by his deafness. The children's experience of being refugees and bilingual seem to intersect, possibly increasing their levels of exclusion. In her study which used a socio-cultural approach to documenting

the experiences of bi-lingual children in the early years, Bligh (2011) refers to a "silent period" which bi-lingual children often experience. She describes it as, "*a time of negotiation, discovery and conflicting tensions*" (Bligh, 2011: 1), suggesting that this might be a "norm" for bi-lingual young children.

It is difficult to attribute the children's time playing alone solely to being refugee or being bilingual, but Dominguez and Trawick-Smith's (2018) study, which investigates the play interactions of English-speaking children and children who are dual language learners, is helpful in considering my study children's experiences, particularly given the assumptions made by many professionals that the two greatest challenges for the children would be cultural and linguistic acquisition. Dominguez and Trawick-Smith (2018) conclude that for bilingual children, there is often an over dependence on teachers or adults for support, as was the case for Ahmed, and that dual language learners' play interactions were significantly limited compared to their English-speaking peers. In Sweden, Cekaite (2017) who also adopted a social frame to consider how two young girls acquired a second language. She suggests this dependence on adults is a "*necessary condition for language learning*" (Cekaite, 2017: 45). She too describes a "*silent period*," then a time when the children used basic language with the teacher to gain their attention (Cekaite, 2017: 49) enabling them to follow the routines within the classroom. Although these interactions developed, she concludes, "*the teachers were the significant social and learning partners*" (Cekaite, 2017: 59).

However, the children in this study faced a further challenge. In their study with migrant children new to the Flemish community in Belgium, Peleman et al (2020) suggest that teacher communicated significantly less with them than with host children. The interactions that were present, were of a much lower quality, where these minimal utterances "*were directive and disciplining in nature*" (Peleman et al, 2020:32). They also describe how the opportunities for the migrant children to speak were also significantly reduced by teacher usage of closed ended questions, large group teaching and teachers being overly concerned about routines, highlighting the negative impact for migrant children. This is of significant concern for refugee children generally. Cekaite (2017), for example, indicates that the teacher is a vital element for children who are learning English as a second language. Apart from Ahmed, who was

given extra funding from the local authority to have protected time with his keyperson, the other three children seemed to access their keyperson no more than their English-speaking peers which suggests that the adult's role as the More Knowledgeable Other was diminished.

Using the other parts of the theoretical triad to consider the children's experiences of being and playing alone, one of the most important things which supported the study children move out of this exclusion and connect with others, was making a friend. However, apart from Karam, the children generally only made friends with children who were also positioned in Out-groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Amira made friends with Lamai, who was also a bilingual child. Ahmed made friends with Mariam, who was a Syrian refugee too and the relationship Karam made with Rafi, a fellow Arabic speaker, was transformational for him. Although Hassan did not make a firm friend during the study, the only friendly interaction I witnessed was between him and a child who was black and like Hassan, was also experiencing significant social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. It seems then that the children were able to develop friendships which ended their isolation, primarily with others who had similar experiences as them, and by sharing an Out-group positionality, may well have been what enabled this dynamic.

Using Vygotsky's model of learning in a social context and the important role of the More Knowledgeable Other, the impact of this finding on the refugee children's learning is potentially significant as they were less able to utilise the knowledge of a host child and learn from them through social interactions. Amira's keyperson's assumption about children who naturally play together on a beach, when they find themselves thrown together on holiday (Fieldnotes, 23.3.18) does not ring true in light of this finding. All of the children in this study, did not naturally gravitate towards the host children, which using Vygotsky's theory (1978) could offer them access to More Knowledge. If Pelemen et al's (2020) findings are considered, the children were also less likely to access their keypersons in a meaningful way, which according to Cekaite (2017), would hamper their acquisition of English. Yet, the children all learned English and became fluent, and eventually they all made friends, ending their potential loneliness.

This finding could challenge assumptions about the impact and role of the More Knowledgeable Other. It begs the epistemological question: where does knowledge reside? Vygotsky's work supposes that knowledge lies with a person who is more established either in terms of age or experience and while this may be true, this notion suggests an underestimation of the funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) and resilience children themselves bring. For refugee children, in particular, it is helpful to consider this using the third part of the theoretical lens. Said's (1978) work on Orientalism, suggests that Occidental thinking would naturally position those from the Orient, as less knowing and in need of a More Knowledgeable Other. The position of More Knowledgeable Other, would unquestioningly be occupied by a person with more power. Vygotsky himself, who developed this thinking, was a male member of the white educated Western elite, a holder of significant societal power at that time. It could be argued he developed his thinking, from a position of unquestioned privilege. To apply his theories too rigorously and without critique, would not serve the children in this study, and other refugee children well. For as the literature review illuminated, even within academia very young refugee children already struggle with under representation which Bove and Sharmahd (2020) describe as the "*risk of invisibility*" (Bove and Sharmahd, 2020:3).

For most of the children in my study, the people who could have acted as their More Knowledgeable Other, their key people and host peers, were unavailable or inaccessible. The children chose a different route, aligning themselves to others who were similarly positioned and like the young people in Ryu and Tuvilla's (2018) study, defined themselves on their own terms. Their inner strength extended beyond the visible findings in which I saw Hassan climb higher, Karam achieve more, Ahmed and Amira assert their personalities and strength of will without apology. The children's inner strength enabled them to take hold of their innate social need to make friends and find those who they could relate to, to develop reciprocal relationships. Equally, they responded with determination to the linguistic challenges they faced, despite the obstacles, and became fluent bilingual speakers; in Amira's case adding British sign language to her skill set.

8.4.2.2 Journeying and Movement

When talking about all the refugee children she had taught, Karam's keyperson described how some parents seemed better equipped to support their child's "*school journey"* (Keyperson interview: 3.5.18). This notion of journeying seems to be a recurring theme. Three of the children expressed interest in cars. For Ahmed and Karam, it seemed that owning a car was aspirational but for Amira it was less clear because during the photography activity (5.4.5) she took photos of ride-on vehicles and photos of cars parked near St Swithin's. Her parents, Rahima and Adeel, wondered if she liked cars because she spent a lot of her time playing with her younger brother pushing him up and down the hallway in their flat, as he sat on a ride-on-car. When I presented my findings to the external group of early years professionals, (5.6.4) they were fascinated by the presence of this incidental finding about cars and one of the practitioners, a young man, suggested that cars might represent the ability to have freedom of travel for the children. (Fieldnotes, 29.1.20). Although it is unclear the significance of this finding, the children's collective interest in cars offers a further layer to the ideas about journeys and is helpful to think about their experiences, linking well with the bridges and islands. The idea of journeying potentially encapsulates the children's experiences of transitions.

Pastoor (2015) writes about the psychosocial transitions of unaccompanied refugees, and he cites Bridges (2009:4) who considers the psychological impact of change and transition suggesting that refugee children experience an internal transition which enables them to come to terms with external change. (Pastoor, 2015: 246). Another commonality within the children's lived experiences can be found in how they experienced transitions. They all seemed to struggle with the journeying from their home space to their ECEC setting, in one way or another, which was seen either externally or implied, internally. Ahmed and Hassan demonstrated significant reluctance externally to attend their ECEC settings. Hassan cried every day, holding Omar's hand tightly and Zahra found it hard at times to persuade Ahmed to leave their flat, which meant he had periods of absence.

The section in the findings, *Conflicted feelings and separate experiences* describes how the children seem to prefer to maintain a distance between their home life and their time in their ECEC setting. It is also evident that the children were able to adopt

different personas in the different places. For example, at St Swithin's Amira is known for being strong minded and fiercely independent, whilst at home her parents worry that she allowed her younger brother to dominate her, because she is soft hearted. Equally at home and in the wider Syrian community Karam had a reputation for crying often whereas at school he adopted a sociable cheerful persona. It is unclear why this happened, and it may be that the children have learned to act like a chameleon (Roer-Strier, 1998), altering their behaviour according to their surroundings. Or it might be that the transition, or journeying, between home and their settings was extremely complex, and the children were left largely unsupported so adopted different coping strategies. Ahmed and Hassan cried and tried to refuse to go, whereas Amira and Karam developed an alternative persona, hiding their softer more emotional sides, possibly in self-protection. It is well known within early years practice that times of transition for children need to be managed well and that "*negative experiences can produce lasting difficulties leading to under achievement"* Lazarri et al (2020) citing Dumcius et al (2014). Lazarri et al (2020) also suggest that current transition practices tend to favour children from more advantaged backgrounds (Lazarri et al 2020: 43). It is unsurprising that for the children in this study, the transition from home to their ECEC setting appears complex. Willson (2019) writes about the transitions of new academics acquiring their first jobs, and this is helpful to try to understand more fully the experiences of the four participants. She notes,

> *"A key aspect of experiencing a transition is the resolution or "redefinition" of self and situation. Using the term redefinition emphasises that what takes place is a reworking of the marking out of the boundaries of self and/or situation, highlighting that there is a significant modification of what currently exists to create something new."* (Willson, 2019: 842)

Willson (2019) also describes feelings of difference during transitions and the importance of using comparisons to be able to, "*create new understandings, perceptions and meanings as they situate themselves in space, time and relationships"* (Willson, 2019: 842). There appeared a reluctance from the children to communicate about their lives at home, and this seemed to extend to their parents. Although most of the keypersons would ask direct questions about the children's lives at home, to glean small amounts of information, generally there was little opportunity

for the children to redefine themselves, explore differences and make comparisons. During one of my introductory visits to St Swithin's pre-school after I mentioned that I would be using drawing methods within the research the manager shared,

> "*at nursery they have developed an approach that they call "Drawing therapy" She explained that if/when a child is finding it hard to settle, the staff get out a great big piece of paper and draw with the child - talking about and drawing the child's house, their family etc. Anecdotally, the staff have found that this works more to ease the children into feeling safe and secure than anything else*" (Fieldnotes, 8.2.18).

This seemed to me to be an important and supportive intervention, but it was not available for Amira, as a refugee, but was used primarily for children who were tearful about leaving their parents. The manager admitted that because Amira had not been tearful, it had not occurred to the setting to use this intervention to support her. It seemed that because she did not display any outward distress, Amira's reluctance to talk about her home had not been identified as a concern.

Writing about transitions into school for young children in Australia, Boyle et al (2018) acknowledge the importance and challenge of such times of change. They suggest that transition should be conceptualised in terms of continuity and thought needs to be given to "*ways to address coherence in children's experience and support for their negotiation*" (Boyle et al 2018: 423). The findings point to a lack of coherence within the children's transitions and very little support offered to support how the children negotiated this movement or journeying.

Closely linked to journeying is the theme of movement and dynamism, which echoes throughout the whole study. Hassan was most notable for his highly developed physical skills which enabled him to move more fluidly and with more confidence than his peers. Likewise, Karam's anxieties about his mother, alongside unresolved grief concerning his father's death, demonstrated themselves through his movements. He became more physically erratic, moving at speed around his classroom. Movement and journeying have in some way defined the children's lived experiences. They arrived in Britain and took onboard the title of refugee, because of forced movement. Their journeying continued as they navigated complex internal and external

transitions, needing to redefine themselves continually. Ideas about movement have also influenced other parts of this study. My ethical contribution to knowledge centres around the dynamism of ongoing relationships within the research process and attempting to respond in a power sensitive manner to new and emerging challenges. Natural Inclusion theory (Rayner, 2017) is based on the dynamic response of the natural world, to the new and the Other, which intentionally opens up space within which they can flourish, and I used this to develop my Pedagogy of Welcome. The field of study itself was not static but was subject to movement with the closure of Dog Lane nursery and the withdrawal of Karam and Hassan's key people from the research, because of post-Ofsted external pressures. Intermingled with this, is the ever-changing wider refugee narrative which is subject to governmental and public response to national and international events. As a result of this continual state of flux I adopted an emergent approach to the research design. I allowed the research questions to develop organically and took a pragmatic approach to the theoretical frame letting it grow and die naturally.

8.4.2.3 Bridges and Islands revisited

Using the metaphor of bridges and islands was a helpful way to present the research findings as it enabled me to examine a wider data set and consider the implications thematically. However, thinking about the children's response to the journeying element of their lived experiences, I wonder whether my use of the island and bridge imagery, has created an over simplistic way to explain the children's lived experiences which were much more complex. I used Donne's poem (1624) because it resonated with me personally and seemed to capture something felt in the nation at the time. The sentiment expressed was that human beings are all connected, which is a value that I hold dear, but delving into the children's lived experiences suggests that there may be another dynamic in operation. I assumed that being isolated, or being an island was not a good thing, but it is important to note that not everyone would agree with me. Drawing on an example from the macro system of the children, in June 2016, 51.89% of British citizens voted for Britain to leave the European Union, choosing an increased island-type existence which suggests that for many, they see benefits from living in a more separated way. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work which identified how social identity can be formed through membership to an In-group, also suggests that people

are drawn into groups that offer them feelings of belonging and it is by developing a group identity which links them to each other, they are actually creating a separation from others. This can also be equated to an 'island' like state. Far from being isolating, members of the In-group find something to connect them. Ironically, it is the act of creating this connection, results in non-In-group members to be so isolated and excluded. Willson's (2019) work describing the transitions of new academics, suggests that managing transition are difficult. This can only be amplified for the children in this study who seemed to find the journeying between home and ECEC was complex and difficult. It may be that for them to occupy an island, or remain separate, makes this re-definition process, easier. Ahmed's pattern of play with Mariam exemplifies this well. During their intricate role play games at Dog Lane nursery, they always spoke Arabic, but at home where the predominant language was Arabic, Ahmed, and Mariam, spoke English. In this way, it seems that Ahmed and Mariam chose to isolate themselves from those around them.

The binary nature of the island and bridge's themes has not been able to pick up this intricacy in the findings. What they suggest is that the children can and do occupy two opposing spaces at once. Ahmed's picture and then Yara's picture of Karam imply that for those two children, they could feel opposing emotions about the same thing. Equally, both Amira and Karam adopted different personas at home and at their ECEC settings, again pointing to their powerful ability to live well within their two worlds.

8.4.3 Question three: What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy?

Much can and has been learned from the actors in this research which informs pedagogy and in response to my third research question, I have developed a Pedagogy of Welcome, which will be discussed further in the next section. The intention is that this will impact future early education practice.

8.4.3.1 The Pedagogy of Welcome

One of my major contributions to knowledge lies in the application of my findings to practice. Two of the world's major religions permeate this study. Judaism, my own cultural heritage, and Islam, the religion of the children and their parents who participated. Early interactions with a potential cultural guide raised concerns about

the possible enmity I might be faced with when recruiting for the research and during the fieldwork, largely due to current unpopular Israeli policy towards Palestinians and their insistence of settling the West Bank. However, the reality was that I was welcomed into the participants homes and trusted enough by the children so that they felt able to share their feelings about their ECEC settings. I experienced a warm welcome which was punctuated by Syrian coffee, sweets, and fruit. Welcoming strangers is a fundamental value shared by both Judaism and Islam where there is an acknowledgement of the plight of the stranger, of the dispossessed and the unbelonging.

I was touched by the warmth I received, so began to think more deeply about hospitality and welcome. These reflections formed the basis of the development of a suitable pedagogy which could be supportive of refugee children which drew from my findings. By incorporating praxeology into the hybrid methodology, this study made a clear commitment that the findings would impact praxis. The research questions: *What can be learned from the actors in this research which can be used to inform pedagogy? What are the implications for future practice?* also indicated that this was an intended outcome for this study. In their article investigating the mental health needs of very young refugee children in Germany, Buchmuller et al (2020) note that pedagogy can be a protective factor for refugee children's mental health, with more consistency enabling children to regulate their behaviour more easily thus reducing levels of hyperactivity (Buchmuller et al, 2020: 30).

Formosinho (2020) suggested that pedagogy is concerned with values, ethics, democracy, quality of teaching and rights of children. She outlined how children's first context of learning is framed by these aspects and therefore is vital. With these factors in mind, it seemed important to consider how to use the findings of this study to develop a pedagogy which could be supportive for refugee children, who find themselves in a unique position which is infused with the unsought powerlessness of their situation. This is wholly in keeping with the methodological and ethical approach used throughout the study, bridging the divide between research and practice. It also makes this research applicable and increases transferability, recognising that, "*Pedagogy is located in action – lived day by day, week by week*" (Formosinho, 2020). To create this pedagogy, I first consulted with a group of early years practitioners,

unconnected to the research. They were working in the city centre of the research local authority and served an increasingly high population of migrant and refugee families. I shared my findings with them for their feedback (Appendix 20).

My reflections about welcome and hospitality fed the next stage of the development of this supportive pedagogy. When considering refugee children's identity and sense of belonging Gabi (2021) presents a "*pedagogy of hospitality*" (Gabi, 2021:137). She comments, "*Refugee children can be viewed as 'strangers' in a new country as they rely on the citizens of that country to welcome them and 'host' them so that they feel at home*" Gabi. 2021:138).

A pedagogy of hospitality was attractive and resonated with me, however Kyriakidou (2021) reflects further on the notion of hospitality and suggests that there are limitations with this concept. In her study which investigated how the Greek public engaged with the refugee crisis in 2018, and the role of the media (Kyriakidou, 2021: 137), she found that some refugee groups were considered more deserving of hospitality than others, which she describes as "*hierarchies of deservingness*" (Kyriakidou, 2021:139). Whilst Kyriakidou acknowledges that "*hospitality is a helpful metaphor for engaging with the stranger*" (Kyriakidou, 2021:146) she also points out that hospitality is dependent on empathy and the hierarchy of "*deservingness*" which suggests an uneven power dynamic between 'host' and 'guest' (Kyriakidou, 2021: 147). When considering a suitable pedagogy for educating already marginalised children, the suggestion of an unequal distribution of power embedded within the primary concept, was incongruent with this study. Having taken so much care to construct a research design, methodology and ethical approach which was power sensitive, it was important to remain consistent when considering praxis.

At the height of the displacement of Syrian peoples, I found myself moved by the German government response and sensed a resonance with their approach of Willkommenkultur which conceptualised a culture of welcoming the other. The concept of *Willkommenkultur* has personal resonance in that the policy can be seen in stark contrast to the policies adopted by the government of the Third Reich (1933-1945) which drove many from their homes, including my grandparents, in fear for their lives. It felt like a tangible reparation of the German governmental policies from the 1930s which caused the displacement of my relatives. Also, the spirit of *Willkommenkultur* is

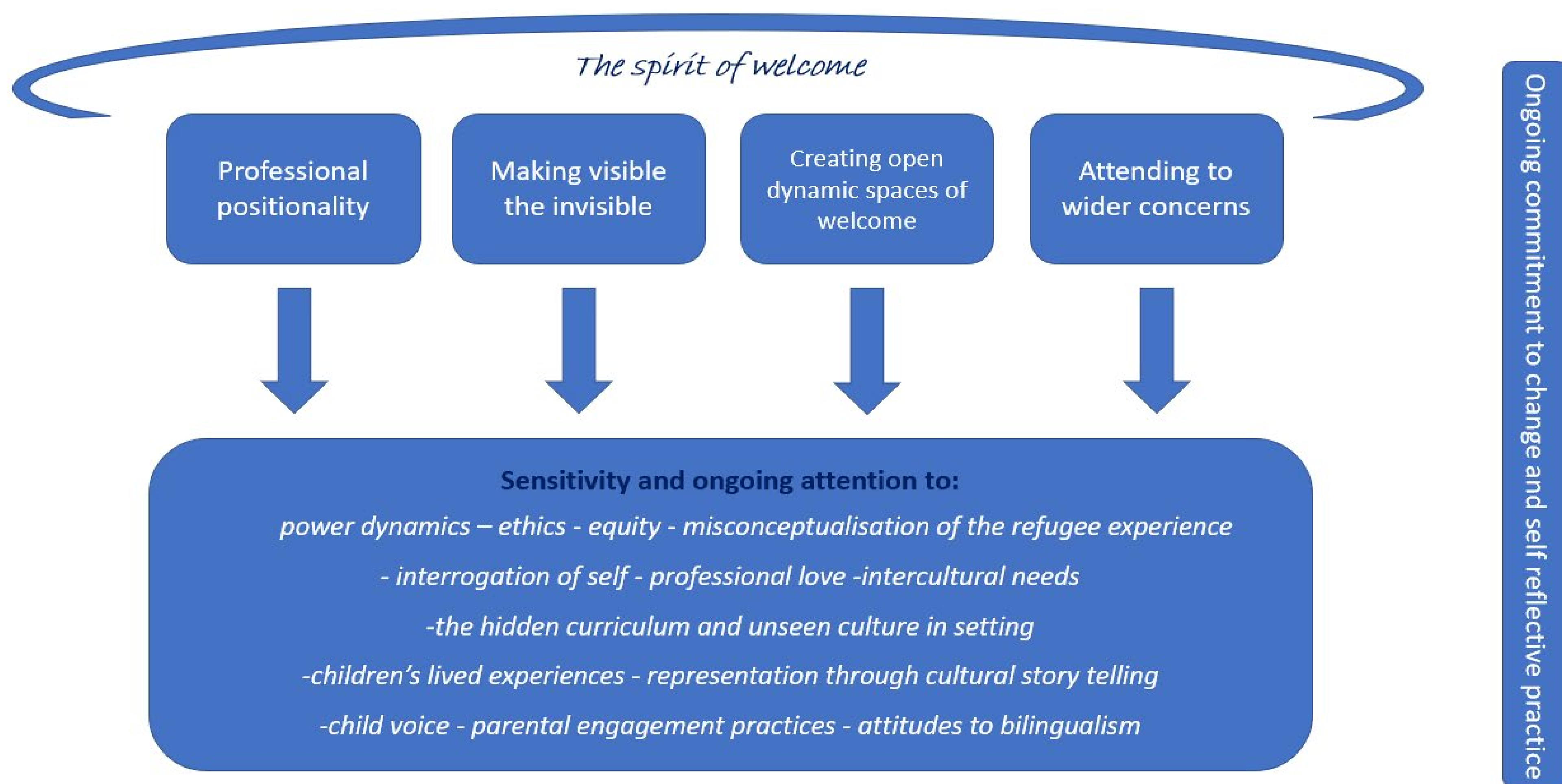
clearly evident in this study. It was demonstrated in the groundswell of goodwill and welcome towards refugees which led to the successful establishment of the charity *Welcoming Refugees*. I therefore decided to pursue the notion of welcome, as a basis of a pedagogical response. A helpful meeting with an academic colleague from natural sciences provided the vehicle to conceptualise this pedagogy. Through his lifelong study of fungi, Rayner (2017) has developed Natural Inclusion theory which documents an alternate response in nature to the presence of new growth. Natural Selection theory (Darwin, 1859) suggests that plants and animals respond by growing larger to dominate space, by depriving of the other of light and space, thus causing a newer species or less hardy plant to wither and die. Or there is the response which has been described as the *survival of the fittest* where the strongest or most dominant animal fights to win survival. Again, those who have less power or who are weaker do not survive. Through his observations of fungi, Rayner noticed that as a species they operate in a different way. He saw that they seemed to respond to new species or new growth by actively opening up a space and drawing the other fungi in, thus developing a naturally inclusive environment for the new coming fungi live and thrive.

When considering the difference between hospitality and welcome, Natural Inclusion theory has been helpful. Rayner was very clear that the space which the fungi opened was a dynamic space and that the fungi actively opened up a living space then creatively moved to draw new species in. (ref reflective journal). The role of active movement, or dynamism seemed to me to be help differentiate the difference between hospitality and welcome. When considering hospitality, the giver, although active and busy, remains in one place (static) and the "guest" is invited in to join what is already there. The space belongs to the host, who retains their status and privilege, and any movement is made by the guest. Whilst in welcome the host has the possibility to act in a naturally inclusive way actively and dynamically making space for the newcomer. The newcomer is afforded space of their own, which they can inhabit. Host and newcomer can both inhabit the space as equals who can flourish alongside each other.

Within the refugee experience it is easy to note Natural Selection theory in operation, with the refugees who manage to leave their homeland and find places of safety often being wealthy and strong. It is their resilience and survival drive which enables them to re-settle and build a new life away from everything familiar. Having uncovered an

alternative, less vicious natural process, which was more in keeping with my own values, I was keen to develop a Pedagogy of Welcome, which would and could create spaces which would not only allow the flourishing of the Other but hold the possibility of new transformational learning communities.

Figure 52. The Pedagogy of Welcome



8.4.3.2 The essential components of the Pedagogy of Welcome:

The components of the Pedagogy of Welcome are drawn from the findings, which were generated with the children, the literature review and also my own experiences of being a researcher. There are four central elements to the Pedagogy of Welcome: **professional positionality, making visible the invisible, creating open dynamic spaces of welcome,** and **attention to wider concerns**. It is important to note that to become a pedagogue who wishes to provide welcome requires significant commitment to change. During the research process, I had to address personal, professional, and structural issues when I became aware of power imbalances. Out of this necessity, the development of the ethics for the research was responsive, ongoing, and dynamic. In the same way, those pursuing a Pedagogy of Welcome need to invest in a similar process. Self-reflection and critical analysis form the basis of this approach.

8.4.3.2.1 Professional positionality

During the research I spent much time examining my own positionality as a researcher. This understanding of my positionality, and the critical examination of self, enabled me to engage in a more authentic way with the children and their families. For practitioners who wish to enact a Pedagogy of Welcome, it is important to follow the same process. Use of my positional domains (Figure 45) would provide a starting point. Alongside reflections about personal positionality, practitioners also need to consider how they position refugee children and their parents. A sensitivity to power dynamics within these positionings is also vital. As already mentioned, often practitioners' lack of knowledge about refugee experiences impacted their conceptualisation of the refugee children, which did little to reduce the children's isolation. Therefore, a frame would be helpful for practitioners to begin to engage with some of the wider notions surrounding refugee children. My theoretical triad which blends Orientalism (Said, 1978), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and Vygotsky (1978) would offer a helpful model for this. It is power sensitive and could support practitioners to begin to understand some of the issues around welcome, and the social interplays between host children and staff, refugee children and their families. During the field work, I found close observations of the children not only illuminated their isolation but clearly demonstrated their inner strength, thus unseating

the prevalent "traumatised victim" narrative. For practitioners who are interrogating their positionality, detailed observations of the children's social interactions could form the basis of self-reflection and team discussions. This would be part of an ongoing open dialogue with self, through a reflective diary, or as a community of practice where practitioners were encouraged to consider their own experiences of being an insider or an outsider, their attitudes (as outlined in the domain of attitudes Figure 47) and their personal opinions and narratives about refugees. Rahima's concerns about Amira not being loved also need to be responded to in the Pedagogy of Welcome. Practitioners would benefit from understanding the professional love outlined by Page (2018). Time should be given to reflect and consider the implications of this and develop loving practices as part of a welcoming pedagogy. According to Natural Inclusion Theory, the fungi *actively* draw new coming fungi into a space they have created. For Rahima, this welcome should be embodied by the practitioners' attitude to her children. The implication is that there is a need to develop a professional love (Page, 2018) which considers both the children's attachment needs and the concerns of their parents. By doing this, practitioners would act in a similar way to the fungi and dynamically enact a welcome for the children which was visible and palpable for their parents too.

The finding which suggested that I provided a bridge for the children and their parents is also relevant when considering professional positionality. Strekalova-Hughes' (2017) on intercultural sensitivity needs to be considered to guard against culturally vacuous classrooms. Open, safe spaces need to be offered to practitioners to consider their own culture and subsequently their intercultural sensitivity. Times of self-reflection will be vital in this process.

The final element to be included in this section about professional positionality is the importance for staff to understand that, "*Equity and inclusion require more than treating everyone the same. There is an important difference between equity and equality*" (Early Education, 2021).

What is clear from the findings is that the children were generally treated the same as any other child. So, for Ahmed, his input from the specialist cochlear implant team, was the same as any other child who had cochlear implants. Hassan accessed the specialist speech and language, the same as any other child who was selectively mute

and when faced with Rahima's feedback about Amira being unloved, the staff at St Swithin's protested that they treated her like all the other children.

8.4.3.2.2 Making visible, the invisible

As already discussed, invisibility has been a dominant theme in this study, therefore, as part of the Pedagogy of Welcome, it is important for these invisible aspects of the children's lived experiences to be made visible. In the introduction I described how this study was concerned with eliciting the children's voices. The methodology chapter outlined the methods I used to do this, and then compile each child's story. Foregrounding the children's experiences has been important. Capturing their voice and representing it using graphics, has been vital. However, this element of the Pedagogy of Welcome: making the invisible, visible goes beyond the representation of the children's stories and voice. My findings suggest that the issue of invisibility is more structurally endemic and laced with power imbalances. To enact a Pedagogy of Welcome in early education these issues of invisibility need to be understood and uncovered.

Through the examination of their own positionalities and by being introduced to the theoretical triad, practitioners can begin to understand some of the power dynamics in operation around the education of refugee children. In the findings chapter, the section *The way we do things* describes the power of the hidden curriculum and outlines the impact on refugee children. Therefore, as part of the Pedagogy of Welcome it is important that practitioners are able to spend time reflecting on this, uncovering and challenging some of the cultural accepted norms which are replicated unwittingly. The literature review illuminated the *us-them* narrative that so often exists for refugees and other marginalised groups. Practitioners would need to be made aware of this also as well as being encouraged to critically analyse some of the media representations of refugees. Also in the findings chapter I represented some of the unseen challenges faced by the refugee children by adapting Freud's iceberg theory (Figure 51). This would be a helpful model to be introduced to practitioners and would assist them in beginning to appreciate the often-unnoticed challenges refugee children face post migration. By beginning to engage with the children's lived experiences in this way, practitioners' understanding of the host country saviour narrative is more likely to be challenged and the hope is that there will be a decrease in essentialising refugees

experiences, reducing their lives to simple narratives or thinking of them as the exotic Other.

8.4.3.2.3 Creating open dynamic spaces

Natural Inclusion theory (Rayner 2017) describes how fungi actively open spaces for the Other. The Pedagogy of Welcome intends to replicate this by supporting practitioners to purposefully and intentionally develop practices which will draw refugee children into these newly created dynamic spaces. I presented my findings through the work of John Donne and his poem No Man is an island (Donne 1624) and found that there were elements of the children's experiences which acted as bridges that connected the children to their peers and those things which caused the children to be positioned as islands, experiencing isolation. This section of the Pedagogy of Welcome draws heavily on those findings. It is necessary for the Pedagogy of Welcome to address this issue and offer extra support to refugee and host children to bridge this divide. Practitioners should introduce overt ongoing mechanisms which will give time and space to help children develop friendships rather than leaving it to chance.

One of the other findings suggested that there was a significant divide between the children's' homes and the ECEC settings. The parents found the relationship often difficult to navigate and the children seemed to prefer to keep their two worlds separated. All the ECEC settings had processes in place to develop partnerships with their parents, which were standard Early Years practice. Croft's End had implemented additional measures, specifically for refugee families, to help capture their experiences and develop specific plans for the children's second language development. However, the tensions remained. So, again to bridge the gap and provide an active welcome, practitioners need to be willing to critically examine current parent partnership practices and consider ways to change, developing more intentional approaches which are tailored and differentiated according to the needs of individual families. One of the findings suggested that the mothers, particularly, felt constrained and unable to talk to the settings about their concerns about their children. Practitioners should consider the culture of their settings and ensure that staff promote open dialogue about the children, making sure they are open, warm and develop strongly trusting relationships with parents who are refugees.

In section 8.4.2.2, I describe the complex patterns of the children's journeying between their homes and their ECEC setting. St Swithin's had a 'drawing therapy' in place which they found helpful for other children who were struggling to manage this transition, but had not considered this for Amira, because her outward appearance, suggested that she was fine. To create a welcoming space, practitioners should consider and provide extra support for refugee children, even if their needs remain invisible. The findings suggested that the multi-modal research methods I used to capture the children's voices, acted as a bridge. Practitioners could build on these and develop them to enable children to express something of their difficult journeying, and through the expression, find a story for and of themselves.

In addition, Strekalova-Hughes and Wang (2019) highlight the importance of cultural story telling for refugee children and their families, and its role in supporting the children's identity formation. Therefore, as part of the Pedagogy of Welcome, space and time should be given to different types of storytelling where traditional tales and everyday stories from the children's backgrounds are invited and become part of a wider storytelling approach within the ECEC.

Most of the professional participants in the research articulated their concern about the children and their parents being unable to speak English. Due to the demographic of the study context, there was very little understanding about how children develop bilingualism. What the findings suggest is that all four of the children were extremely linguistically competent. By the time I gifted them their story books, they were all fluently bilingual. Amira was also able to communicate in British sign language with her brother Bilal. Whilst Ahmed had attained fluency even though he had been profoundly deaf and first heard sound at three when he had his cochlear implants. Hassan also managed to achieve fluency despite his significant mental health challenges which inhibited his speech. Therefore, as part of the Pedagogy of Welcome, staff need to reframe how they see bilingualism and focus on the children's attainment and strengths. In addition, practitioners should celebrate and promote all languages spoken by the children, encouraging home languages in the setting. Also helpful are visual supports, clear routines, developing a language rich environment and providing a slower paced provision. Practitioners also need to be made aware of Pelemen et al's (2020) uncomfortable findings, and take remedial action to ensure the

adult -child interactions, specifically with refugee children, remain rich, possibly using peer observations and a suitable adult engagement tool (Pascal and Bertram 2001)

8.4.3.2.4 Attention to wider concerns

For a Pedagogy of Welcome to be truly functional, it needs to consider wider issues which affect the children and their parents' ability to feel welcomed. My study benefitted hugely from the presence of Mina, the interpreter. Mina was an approved interpreter who was originally employed by my colleagues who were responsible for the roll out of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme across the local authority. It was never clear what the criteria was for her employment to work on behalf of the families, but most of her work was to interpret for health appointments or larger multi-agency meetings. The ECEC settings were expected to pay for translation and interpretation services themselves, using Early Years Pupil Premium budget or a one-off payment if the children were newly arrived. However, in practice the ECECs rarely engaged an interpreter and often had to try to communicate using non-verbal gestures or Google translate. Crofts End tended to use an interpreter more often, possibly because of the higher numbers of refugee children and also because of their status as a maintained nursery and infant school. However, for refugee children to be welcomed more effectively, there needs to be a policy change which enables and promotes the use of interpreters in ECEC settings. In my research, Mina, became more than an interpreter of language, she became a cultural guide. ECEC settings who want to deliver a Pedagogy of Welcome, should also be encouraged to engage with someone who can act as a cultural guide, to advise and support practitioners.

Although this study has been concerned with the lived experience of refugee children, the Pedagogy of Welcome is deeply transferable to other marginalised children. The principles I have outlined are universally applicable with any group of children and their families who find them occupying a space where they are conceptualised as the Other. To develop this pedagogy, I have used Natural Inclusion theory, which describes an ongoing living dynamic process. My Pedagogy of Welcome reflects this movement and dynamism. As practitioners engage with the processes outlined above, they will create their own version of welcome, for children who are often unwittingly marginalised. What I have set out is not a list of tasks to be completed, but rather an

approach which is deeply challenging but will be able to provide living spaces of welcome.

8.4.4 Question four: What are the implications for future practice?

As mentioned in the first section, through the presentation of the children's individual stories and the thematic findings, what is clear is that firstly each child and their family is unique and secondly that the human stories behind the term refugee, are complex. Future researchers need to be aware of this and the tendency for the refugee narrative to be reduced or universalised into a simplistic story of flight and safety. Whilst stories of this nature may satisfy a binary view of the world, which separates characters into goodies and baddies, they are not only untrue but are reductionist and at worse patronising. They disallow full recognition of the personal pain of loss and the challenge of re-establishment in a new society, which is the ongoing experience of the refugee families. In addition, these simple narratives tend to cast refugees as in need of rescue. Again, left unchecked in a research context, these narratives can permeate interactions and findings which unwittingly could perpetuate the myths, doing little to re-dress the power imbalance. My findings suggest that the children are far from powerless, and each one demonstrated internal strength which was often recognised by their early educators.

Due to their nature, refugee stories are political and therefore often contentious, which adds a further layer of complexity to conducting research with refugees. The research can be uncomfortable, emotional, and highly challenging. My literature review illuminated broader narratives about refugees which unfortunately, at times has been weaponised and used by the media and politicians to present an image of refugees which is pervasive. Whether subsequent policy making influences these narratives, or the narratives influence policy making is unclear, but the impact in the research process is often subtle and something which I have needed to be aware of. This finding is important and suggests that future researchers need to focus not just on what and how they gather data, but also their own personal viewing lens.

The ethics involved in this study have also been complex and it is important for future researchers to consider these in terms of power. I have developed a range of power - sensitive ethical practices which can be re-used and re-applied in other work.

(Gaywood et al, 2020) My work on positional domains offers (Figure 47) researchers another frame to use when considering their own positionality, before engaging in the research process.

I have found that the ethical process is ongoing and dynamic, requiring considerable attention to the subtle nuances of power distribution. This requires an appreciation of the ongoing power dynamics between research participants and self. What is important for future researchers to appreciate is the responsive nature of managing ethics in a power sensitive way. Should a power imbalance be identified, the researcher needs to be committed to creating a response, in order to address the issues. This requires flexibility in the research design and within the researcher's mindset.

There are a number of structural devices which can assist other researchers who are also committed to an evolved ethical approach. Having an inbuilt member checking system is vital to ensure each participant has an opportunity to comment on any findings and that there is an established procedure which welcomes feedback. Although use of a reflective research diary is commonplace within qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008) and is used as a research method to promote reflexivity, I have found it a vital tool to examine my own biases and enable regular critical analysis of situations, conversations, and incidents as they arose throughout the field work and beyond. Therefore, for future researchers who wish to include refugee children in their research this tool for reflection offers another way to examine some of the subtler power interactions when working in the field.

The contribution of Mina, my interpreter cannot be underestimated or undervalued, and my journal was central in capturing her involvement in my developing conceptualisation. She not only helped me to gain access to the four participant families, but she also acted as my ongoing cultural guide. Mina was not just an interpreter of language, but also an interpreter of culture. She explained unseen social rules which enabled me to make warm relationships with the families and if there were misunderstandings or things became emotional, Mina literally stood in the gap between me and the participants. Through regular ongoing conversations she helped me to tease out my unexamined biases and feel the cultural resonances with my own heritage. My learning from this and recommendation to other researchers is that a

cultural guide is not really an optional extra, or a nice idea but is vital to remain alert to the subtle culturally accepted norms which can frame how interactions can be interpreted.

Whilst this is true, it is also true that the children and their parents do share a commonality of experience which seems to be grounded in the host country's narratives and response to refugees. Yara, Karam's mum and his grandmother, shared with me numerous incidents where they were victims of racial abuse and Hassan's family also experienced something similar, but felt less confident to talk about it. For Rahima her experiences were slightly different as she felt people's pity and distrust, whilst for Ahmed's parents, they both lost status and employment moving from the educated elite, to being unable to work professionally. It could be argued that this response springs from the conceptualisation of refugees as traumatised individuals needing saving, or more negatively as unwanted incomers.

8.5 The implication of the findings on the theoretical lens

All the three theories used in the complex theoretical frame: Said (1978), Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Vygotsky (1978) hold significant status in academia. The unique way I have used them in this study forms one of my original contributions to knowledge and is discussed in the following chapter. However, the findings themselves offer new insights into each of the theories in turn.

The way the children in the study formed relationships primarily with other children who had been positioned in Out-groups seems to disrupt Vygotsky's (1978) notions about the role of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). Whilst it is true that the children's opportunities to learn increased with the advent of these new relationships, this seemed to have more to do with their improved social emotional wellbeing and increased sense of belonging. Making friends with those who were also positioned as either a refugee and/or a developing bilingual speaker, it is unlikely that these new friends could be described as someone who held more 'knowledge' than the study children. Their relationships appeared to be more of a friendship of equals – equally marginalised by their experiences. The staff in the ECEC settings could also be described as More Knowledgeable Others. Peleman et al's (2020) study about children at risk of social exclusion highlights that the interactions between staff and

refugee children were of a significantly poorer quality, merely perfunctory. If this is indicative of the general experiences of refugee children in ECEC, then the adult's role as a MKO, is undermined. Throughout my research, the children have been positively positioned as holders of rich funds of knowledge (Moll et al 1992). Seen through this lens, Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about More Knowledgeable Others, is also problematic. Potentially it assumes that both host children and the staff, hold more knowledge than the refugee children. This knowledge is culturally specific and by raising its status as being important for the refugee children to learn, somehow eclipses their own funds of knowledge, rendering them invisible. This becomes an epistemological issue which questions the nature of the knowledge held by a MKO, asking where does knowledge reside, who owns it and what does this say about how knowledge is perceived? Vygotsky's positioning of knowledge with a MKO, suggests a superiority of that person and the knowledge they hold. This reverberates around the findings and is detectable when gazing through the lens of Said's (1978) theory.

Orientalism (1978) was invaluable in this study. It is likely that it was particularly relevant because the demographic of the local authority in which this research was conducted (Chapter 2). Many of the findings confirm Said's thesis of negative conceptualisation of the refugee children, or the unconscious positioning of the Occident as more superior. However, there are indications that the refugee experience documented in this study offers a more complex picture which can inform Said's (1978) theory. Whilst Said's (1978) work clearly separates the Occident (the White European) and the Oriental with clearly defined boundaries, the findings suggest that this is not necessarily always the case, and that there was a blurring of those boundaries at times. For example, Amira's father Adeel, spoke of his extremely positive experience at work, where he was often trusted over his White British colleagues by his White British manager. The manager could see that Adeel was trustworthy, and a hard worker so naturally promoted him. Rahima and Yara openly expressed how they preferred the way children were treated in England in comparison to Syria, whilst Mark, Karam's second friend, was unfazed by Karam and Rafi's bilingual play, and was perfectly comfortable joining the conversation in English. His focus was on their game and their shared interests. Although small and possibly incidental, these findings suggest that there were times when both the Occident and Oriental stepped out of

their assigned roles, according to Said (1978), and bridged the gap in-between, challenging the more dominant power dynamics.

This idea of the findings disrupting the established notions within the theories continues when considering Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory which has been useful when describing the positioning of the children. Through this lens both In-groups and Outgroups are visible. What the findings add to this theory is the understanding that firstly very young children appear to recognise difference and as a result, the refugee children were largely left alone. This idea appeared invisible to the staff, and maybe is an uncomfortable finding. However, in the same way the children disrupted Vygotsky's (1978) ideas, their response to being isolated disturbed Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory. Rather than accept their Outgroup status, the children instead drew alongside other children in a similar situation thus create their own In-group. The findings also suggest that the children's lived experiences were nuanced, so while the notion of In-groups and Outgroups are useful to describe and possibly explain how different social groups gain identity, the realities for the refugee children in this study was less able to be packaged so neatly, with defined boundaries. Both the children and their families experienced difficult and conflicting feelings about going to their ECEC settings. The children had to negotiate both cultural and linguistic journeys from their family environment into a nursery environment, where at times in each situation they created boundaries around their personal and linguistic spaces. The children's social identity formation was not solely dependent upon which group they were allocated by their peers but was more complex and most likely influenced by their ecological system (Bronfenbrenner 1979) too.

Chapter 9: Final reflections

9.1 Introduction

In the introductory chapter I described the broad concerns of power, emotion and intersectionality which have resonated through this study. The children have been located firmly within their context using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory to help describe all aspects of their life, considering the impact policy and wider narratives have on the children's lived experiences. The literature review carefully situated this study by reviewing recent work concerned with the lived experiences of refugees or people from migrant backgrounds and retrospective studies which examined the lives of Holocaust survivors. Themes were identified and discussed, then the review carefully and critically considered the contribution and legacy of postcolonialism, bilingualism and translanguaging, acknowledging their relevance to this study at key points in my thesis. My theoretical triad comprising of Said's (1978) Orientalism, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory and Vygotsky's (1978) Social Learning Theory, was introduced and has been made visible throughout the subsequent chapters attending to issues relating to the wider themes of power, positionality, invisibility, and relationships. The children have been conceptualised in a strength-based manner, acknowledging that they possess rich funds of knowledge (Moll et al 1992). In the discussion of findings, the theoretical triad has been utilised to consider these wider issues and also include notions of journeying and movement. Throughout this study, I have chosen and justified the use of various creative art forms to support the data collection and presentation of findings which are congruent with both the theoretical and ethical positioning. Storying, or story telling is not only a personal cultural norm but is recognised by scholars as being vital in the creation of identity, particularly for refugee children (Strekalova – Hughes and Wang 2019) and indigenous peoples (Erueti et al, 2014). Themes which have been woven through the two previous chapters continue to resonate throughout this chapter.

9.2 Chapter structure

In this final chapter, I intend to set out **my contributions to knowledge**, consider the **strengths and limitations of the study**, my own **personal journey as a researcher**, the **transformational nature of my research**, make **recommendations for future**

research, think about **possible routes for dissemination** of this thesis and sum up **my final thoughts**.

9.3 Contributions to knowledge

My contributions to knowledge have been driven by concerns about fair distribution of power. They are all innovative and demonstrate the creativity I brought to this doctoral study. They are broadly concerned with *how* research is conducted to remediate power imbalances and are situated within my theoretical, methodological, ethical and pedagogical findings. The field of study I located my research in, is a small but developing field. There is an accepted discipline in Early Years research which is concerned with researching *with* very young children (Pascal and Bertram, 2009) and there is a growing body of knowledge about researching *with* refugees, in Forced Migration Studies (Block et al, 2013). However, there are few pieces of research which have spanned both fields. My original contributions to knowledge are located within this intersection and speak to colleagues in both Early Childhood research and Forced Migration. (Figure 2).

9.3.1 Theoretical contribution

My theoretical contribution to knowledge is the theoretical triad, which developed slowly and in stages, but the final iteration provided a useful and original frame to cradle this study and an intersectional lens through which I have been able to examine the research design, methodology, literature, the ethics, the findings and myself. The theories I used in the lens were concerned with the formation of social identity, social context, and the process of learning through social interaction. The contribution to knowledge is found in how I utilised each theory and overlaid them to create a highly sensitive theoretical lens. The challenge was to be able to investigate the children's everyday experiences in their ECEC settings, which was highly personal and unique, whilst setting their lives within the wider context, which is fast changing due to the geopolitical nature of forced migration. I therefore chose the theories and theorists carefully, ensuring that they were well established, to offer an anchor in a rapidly moving wider context. Each element of the theoretical triad was important (Figure 5) Said (1978) identifying narratives about people who are not European and

conceptualising the Occident (European) was helpful and spoke directly to the children's positionality with a clear recognition of power dynamics. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work was borne out of Tajfel's personal experience of the Holocaust, whilst Vygotsky (1978) enabled me to ground the research in my early years practice. I was very quickly able to use the lens to perceive and analyse the subtle and sometimes not so subtle social interactions surrounding the children and their families. Although the theories I have used are over 40 years old, unfortunately they are still relevant, illuminating the deeply embedded roots of Othering, which continue to pose challenge today. The findings have added to each of the theories in turn (Chapter 8) suggesting the children themselves disrupted the long-held notions enshrined in each. The intersectional lens enabled me to see that the children and their families could not be held into the pre-defined boundaries offered by Vygotsky (1978), Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Said (1978). In very small ways they broke out of these confines seeming to find new spaces to establish and re-establish their lives. The complex theoretical model I have created, is not only workable but can be used both as a frame for future pieces of work which seek to engage with marginalised children or communities, and an intersectional lens through which the whole research process can be examined critically, ensuring it is ethically, power sensitive.

9.3.2 Methodological contribution

My methodological contribution to knowledge is also important for others going forward. The hybrid intersectional methodological model has proven fit for purpose. Developing a hybrid methodology is not new but using a praxeological methodology and combining this with a poly vocal methodology allowed me to capture much of the complexity within each of the children's lived experiences, whilst ensuring it was relevant for praxis, whilst working sensitively and ethically. Praxeology (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012) has blended well with Tobin's (2016) polyvocal approach and ensured even the often-invisible voices were captured, which included Mina, the interpreter and my own. The multi-modal methods used were developed due to necessity, building on and adding to Clark and Moss' (2011) Mosaic approach. Tobin (2016) used video to assist his investigation of migrant children's lives, but for my research this felt unethical and overly invasive. I needed to find a way of replicating a video which could capture the children's experiences. The work of

Theron et al (2011) drew my attention to the possibility of adopting a drawing methodology which they demonstrated was accessible for children and young people in challenging circumstances. The fact that as a team they are predominately based in South Africa and had used their methods with children impacted by the Rwandan genocide as well as those who had been orphaned by HIV/AIDs, resonated strongly with me. This graphic elicitation not only enabled the children and their parents to express some of the deep emotions surrounding their lived experiences, it also allowed their stories to be represented by a graphic artist. When gifted to the children as books, these individual stories contained evidence of their power, and provided them with their own stories, which helped to shape their identity (Strekalova – Hughes and Wang 2019). I have combined well tested research methods with more innovative processes. Working with a graphic artist also enabled me to foreground the children's experience and embody their experiences in a way they were able to engage with. Choosing to infuse the methodology with a creative art focus also adds to my contribution to knowledge. By uniquely including the wide variety of arts-based methods I created a way to engage a largely invisible marginalised community in research. The children were positioned as researchers (Kellet 2010) alongside their parents and were able, through creative methods, to give voice to their experiences. These were recorded visually and replayed to them via a graphic artist. The children, their families and their early educators were invited to comment. Including creative arts was intentionally used to disrupt traditional ways of knowing (Leavy 2020; Gallien 2018) and directly addressing the concerns of unseen power dynamics which can be hidden within more traditional research methodologies. By choosing to incorporate an extensive member checking phase (Figure 40) which included feedback from the Outsiders' peer group, not only increased the study's trustworthiness, but also answered my initial concern (1.2) that due to the emotive nature of the subject, it would be challenging to obtain rigorous feedback from fellow academics. My methodological contribution to knowledge, considered the children's ages, potential powerlessness, cultural and linguistic challenges. Much time was taken to ensure the methods adopted were carefully examined to ensure they were power sensitive and able to remediate some of the power inequities within the research process, all of which will be useful to researchers in both early childhood and forced migration studies.

9.3.3 Ethical contribution

My ethical contribution to knowledge is significant and I have dedicated Chapter 6 to explain and consider my ongoing ethical responses. Researching with marginalised people groups needs to be strongly ethical by nature, because of the potential for exploitation by the researcher. Working with very young children is also sensitive because of their age and ethically there is a need to ensure processes around ongoing assent (Dockett and Perry, 2011) are followed. Combining the two elements, needed a robust ethical response which went beyond the approval of an ethics committee. Working in the field was challenging due to the strongly relational aspect of the research. I needed to be dynamically responsive and remain alert to potential imbalances of power. The models I have created enabled me to navigate these challenges whilst remaining true to the original oral contract established with the participant families. I was able to ensure that the children's voices were dominant (Figure 41) and locate my positionality using the domain of attitudes, alongside the domain of experiences (Figure 47). I developed principles around my ongoing decision making (Figure 42) and set clear parameters around any feedback I offered to the settings (Figure 45). The mapping of my relationships building on Lyndon's (2018) Axioms of Positionality helped me navigate the dynamism of the relationships and remain power sensitive. I encountered ethical issues working with the interpreter and the graphic artist, which required thoughtful responses to ensure the children and their parents voices were respected. My ethical contribution took into account an array of concerns and issues and through this I have developed an ethical approach which, like my methodological contribution, can be replicated within both forced migration and early childhood studies. However, through my professional multi-agency interactions, I believe my ethical approach is transferable and could be used professionally across education, health and social care in a way which would offer respect and dignity to other children and their families who also find themselves facing significant life challenges.

9.3.4 Pedagogical contribution

All the previous contributions to knowledge described, provided the basis for my pedagogical contribution to knowledge. I have set out the Pedagogy of Welcome fully in Chapter 8 (Figure 48 response to my fourth research question. The Pedagogy of Welcome is my response to the serious implications of the findings and is a direct answer to Zahra's hope that her and Ahmed's involvement in the research would benefit other refugee children. The Pedagogy of Welcome builds on my ethical approach and addresses the wider themes of movement, power, emotion intersectionality, invisibility, relationships, and positionality which have threaded through the whole study. This contribution is the practical outworking of my findings and has a very real opportunity to impact practice and policy concerned with not only the early education of refugee children but also other children from minoritized or marginalised people groups. Like my other contributions to knowledge, the principles outlined within the Pedagogy of Welcome are also transferable to other disciplines which seek to work with disempowered people groups. Practitioners from health services, social care, early help as well as educationalists from primary, secondary, further, and higher institutions could benefit from the application of this knowledge.

9.4 Strengths and limitations

This study has several limitations, primarily that it is small scale and located within one local authority in England, which has a specific nature and character. Other limitations include the unique role of the researcher, as a respected practitioner working for the local authority. Although this positionality assisted access to the field, this could present a challenge for future unknown researchers. However, these limitations coexisted as strengths. The sharp focus on four children's experiences provided an in-depth examination of their experiences in ECEC, and the data gathered has added much knowledge to the developing field of study. Using Bronfenbrenner (1979) to frame those experiences and to ground them contextually allowed me to look at policy and its impact. The ethics involved, although complex, ensured that this study was strongly relational which meant that the children and their parents' stories have been captured sensitively. By developing trust, I was able to offer a deeper sense of reality in the retelling of their stories. Lastly, the findings illuminate the often-hidden narratives and experiences of the marginalised and because of the methodological frame offers

insight into practice, so there is a very real possibility of enacting change which could and should impact the lived experience of other refugee children going forward.

9.5 My journey as a researcher/ academic

9.5.1 Personal reflections

This study has been an emotional and deeply personal journey for me, from conception to completion. I began to think about the refugee experience at the funeral of a much-loved relative, where I heard of his arrival in Britain on the Kindertransport. Afterwards talking with my cousins, I began to reflect how *Jewish* they were and how my relative had managed to retain not only his faith, but also his identity. I recalled a time when his wife had commented to me, "*Oh Donna, you are so English,"* and wondered what she meant. My father is also from a European Jewish background and retains many of the cultural characteristics and habits but at that time he rarely spoke about his own history as a first-generation refugee. He considered himself British first and foremost. I began to question why this was, what his experiences would have been and how he might have needed to adapt to find a sense of belonging. (Roer-Strier, 1998) At this time, my two oldest children were pursuing chosen careers. My son was training to be a social worker and had managed to negotiate a placement with an established refugee charity, supporting refugee young people to develop new networks in a new country. My daughter was undertaking a Masters in Denmark with the academics who developed the Copenhagen school of securitisation, where she wrote a paper which examined the trajectory of a foreign born IS fighter (Gaywood et al, 2015). It concluded that the only characteristic shared amongst the case studies was a conflicted habitus, which suggested each fighter shared a deep sense of unbelonging. Given the interconnectedness of our lives, my children's work influenced me and added to my ongoing interrogation about the lived experiences of refugees. The plight of the Syrian people fleeing for their lives because of the ongoing and devastating conflict also deeply resonated. I began to formulate this into a doctoral study when I met with the then Chief Executive of the local authority where I was working. She was keen for me to pursue a study which would support the delivery of services for the refugees who were being resettled into the area – and so began my doctorate journey.

9.5.2 Choice of methods and use of imagery

My personal interests have also shaped the nature of the research as well as the subject matter. I studied art as an undergraduate and therefore visual images, graphic representation, drawing, sculpture, and photography are important to me and continue to impact the way I think. Not only did my interests infiltrate the research methods, but they have also informed the conceptualisation of my research design (Figure 28) and my literature review drawing on my experiences of creating sculpture, to represent solidity, rigour and provide a way to make often abstract concepts as tangible as a built structure. The research findings have also been presented using visual imagery. I used John Donne's (1624) poem as an initial springboard to provide the geographical imagery of islands and bridges. Each visual image, graphic representation or art-based metaphor used were carefully selected to ensure that it added to the story telling and reflected wider context. For example, using the islands and bridges metaphor, is suggestive of the broader refugee experience of journeying to an island nation, the United Kingdom. It is even more pertinent given the focus of the Home Office on irregular migration, particularly arrivals on small boats (Home Office, 2022a). Then the subsequent controversial Nationality and Borders Bill (Home Office 2022b) which require asylum seekers be in possession on a visa prior to arrival in the UK.

The use of a graphic artist to represent the children themselves was also deliberate. I was keen for them to see themselves in their stories, literally, and I recognised the power of graphics to engage them. However, once they had approved their represented images, it was natural for me to include those images in my final thesis. The use of the images of the children has achieved far more than I could have expected, as it has increased the volume of their individual voices. This study has been essentially about representing the children and telling their stories. Although the children in the study are much loved by their families, their stories, like other refugee children, are often untold and their experiences overlooked, maybe because they are young or because of where they come from in the world, where they have ended up and the circumstances surrounding this. Telling these stories has been a privilege but has also been uncomfortable. This is not a piece of fiction and the original agreement with the families of the children, who participated, has remained a central tenet in the story telling process. To ensure that each child's story was representative of their

everyday experiences has been an enormous responsibility. The stories and experiences encapsulated are complex, multi-layered, and laced with emotion. However, running in tandem to this story telling, has been my own developing narrative.

9.5.3 Developing as an academic

In the previous chapter, I described how the Pedagogy of Welcome seeks to make the invisible, visible. When thinking about my development as an academic, it is possible to apply a similar principle. During my doctoral journey, I have attended two academic groups. One is a local group which meet weekly, and the second is based near my study centre which meets monthly. The reason for attending the groups was to connect with academic peers for support on my doctoral journey. However, I found membership of both these groups extremely challenging. This extract from my reflective journal illustrates this clearly,

> *"I am not sure if I actually feel as if I "belong" to the group. They are very welcoming, but there is definitely a shared understanding and shared purpose that I don't feel part of. Within the group much of what is spoken about is hard for me to decipher, because:*
>
> - *I can't seem to ground it in my reality*
> - *The subject matter seems so complex and hidden from me.*
> - *The language of the group, although it is English, is not my natural language. It is an academic conceptual language that I have to concentrate really hard to understand*
> - *AND I seem to be the only one who experiences the group like this.*
>
> *However, I really WANT to be part of the group. I value it – and I want to belong. I don't know how to achieve that feeling of belonging. The words and rhetoric are inclusive and suggests that I do belong – but how do I achieve the feeling of belonging? My enduring memory as a child was always being on the outside looking in, never quite belonging, never quite fitting in, never quite being able to be myself. I did not know what was acceptable. I did not know the culture. Each time*

I moved, I had to negotiate a new culture. Now I find myself, a PhD student and there are times that I still feel like that little girl who doesn't know how to fit in." (Reflective journal, 24.2.17)

This sense of disconnect felt synonymous with my emerging identity as an academic. Becoming an academic for me, at that point, meant being able to master a new language, of academia, and develop a sense of belonging to a community which had previously been unknown to me. Whilst attempting to navigate these groups, many of my findings about the children's lived experiences resonated with me on this journey. Unfortunately, I experienced micro-invalidations, and micro-aggressions from my peers and could often feel hidden power being wielded. However, like the children, making friends acted as my bridge, enabling me to develop a sense of trust and belonging. It was during a conversation with a colleague when I expressed my lack of confidence as an academic, he reminded me about my 30-year career working primarily with children who have experienced significant life challenges. It was then that it became visible to me the transferable skills that I have brought to this study. My ability to make trusting relationships with all the children and their parents is a skill I have developed through many years of working with marginalised groups. Being able to sense and uncover subtle power dynamics again is a skill which has been long in development, for although ostensibly I am positioned as a white, educated middle class woman – I have also occupied another position within an out group, because of my mixed identity. It is largely hidden, but for this study has served me well. Finally, my ability to present my research clearly is a skill grown through leading teams with higher rates of dyslexia, teaching English to women widowed through HIV/AID in Zambia and working as part of a community learning team teaching people with low literacy skills.

Through reflection, the support of my doctoral supervisors, and conversations with my newly acquired academic friends, I was able to re-conceptualise myself and my capacity to become an academic. I recognised the transferability of my creative skills, as well as many professional ones. I saw that my attention to detail, the methodical approach, the ability to recognise patterns in data, create visual conceptual diagrams, problem solve and consider balance were skills I had learned within my four years of undergraduate study in the dark room developing photos, print making, creating 3-

structures, painting, and drawing from life. This new understanding changed my perceptions and made me realise that to undertake and complete a PhD, is a deeply creative process. I was then able to unashamedly pour all my creative energies into this thesis. Changing the way I understood myself, changed how I viewed becoming an academic because I recognised that like the children in my study, I brought with me my own funds of knowledge, skill set and strengths. When I wrote about my initial feelings of joining the academic groups, I was experiencing the desire to break into an established group. Having understood my own strengths and made friends with those who extended a welcome to me or others who were also experiencing a similar dynamic, I understand that being an academic can take many forms which ought not be dictated by elitist ideals held either by myself or others.

9.6 The transformational nature of my research

I have written much about dynamism, movement, and journeying in this thesis but as I consider my own doctoral journey, I can see that there has been a transformational element to my research which it has not only had an impact on me personally and on my perceptions of myself as an academic, but also on those around me. My father has been able to talk more about his experiences as a child, made it known at a public meeting that his parents were refugees and then volunteered to work with a refugee charity. More recently in the retirement community where he lives, he was asked by the chaplain to share his childhood experiences of being from a refugee family at their Harvest Festival (12.10.21). He volunteered me to share my PhD findings with the residents too.

My study has also impacted my professional work. In September 2019 a nursery raised concerns about a refugee child and asked me to work with them, within my role as Children Centre teacher. The child was living with his 4 other siblings and both his parents in a one-bedroom flat. The family had received support from an early help service, and I was advised not to get involved. The parents of the child had been trying to raise concern about their housing situation and felt that the local authority's failure to act was racially motivated, so were pursing this within the law courts. The general feeling from the early help service was that this family was *difficult*. The mother was an academic who had arrived in Britain on a study visa and once joined by her family, claimed asylum as the situation in their home country, worsened. The child was

struggling to connect with his peers but had formed a bond with his keyperson. By applying my findings, and the principles of the Pedagogy of Welcome, I was able to meet with the family, connect with his parents, support the child, increase the knowledge of the practitioners, and negotiate a supported transition into primary school in July 2020 with the head teacher.

In recent times, my research has afforded me opportunities to present at both the British Early Childhood Education Research Association (BECERA) conferences (Gaywood, 2018; 2019a; 2020; 2021) and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) conferences (Gaywood, 2018; 2019; a2021). Having presented my research both nationally and internationally has transformed my network of colleagues, enabling me to engage with other researchers from across the globe. Elements of my ethical contribution to knowledge have been published (Gaywood et al 2020) and I have formed part of a peer review panel for the European Early Childhood Education Research Journal on numerous occasions. I am currently one of the conveners of an EECERA Special Interest Group concerned with children from refugee and migrant backgrounds. As a group we have worked in partnership with the performing arts charity Good Chance to write and evaluate educational resources for children from 0-7 based around the moving arts festival, The Walk. This saw a 3-metre puppet, representing a Syrian refugee girl, walk from the border of Syria across Europe and into Britain. Where she went, towns, cities and villages devised acts of welcome using the arts. The early education pack has been trialled in Turkey, Greece, Australia and England, and is being reframed following the evaluations to be used in Poland to support Ukrainian refugee children. My colleagues and I are preparing a webinar for Polish early educators.

Conducting this research and taking full advantage of any opportunity offered, has acted almost like a bridge for me and allowed me to journey from professional practice into academia, However, the development of the Pedagogy of Welcome demonstrates my ongoing concern for research to impact children’s everyday lived experiences. I would be saddened to leave behind either my professional practice or my newfound career as an academic, so in sympathy with the intersectional element of this study, I am hoping that I can sit within the intersection between the two, using research to

speak to practice, practice to research, all the while employing my practical skills to interpret for both.

9.7 Recommendations for future research

This research has implications for future researchers working in the field with refugee children and their families as well as clear application for early educators in practice. It also speaks more broadly to policy makers and would be useful for those wishing to analyse the effectiveness of the Syrian Vulnerable Person's resettlement scheme. In addition, there is a wide transferability from this study which could be applied to other marginalised Outsiders groups within ECEC settings. Although the study was conducted in England, there are universal themes which would be applicable to other European countries and the Global North as they consider how refugee children are supported post-migration within educational settings. However, there is still much work to be done to build on the existing rather small body of knowledge in early childhood studies. When considering recommendations for future research, I am reminded about an incident with two of the mothers who participated in the study. During my fieldwork, both Rahima and Fatima were keen for me to incorporate their other children into my research because they could see the obvious benefits for Amira and Hassan. Both mothers expressed how much they wanted to understand their children, and they felt that being part of my research project had helped them with this. By asking to include their other children, they were asking for specific attention to also be given to them and document their experiences. I had to explain to them that it was not possible. However, their request did make me think about other possibilities for further research. Rahima particularly felt that Amira's younger brother, who was born in England, was somehow different from her other two children who had been born in Syria. She described how he was far less satisfied and always seemed to be asking for more. My recommendation for future research would include a similar piece of research but specifically with children who are first generation refugees, who were born in England to refugee parents. It would be interesting to compare the results. In addition, to ensure that my theoretical triad, research design, methodology and ethical approach were robust and fit for purpose, it would be interesting to use them again but change the nationalities of the children involved. Comparisons could also be made between the

outcomes if the children were from asylum seeking families, rather than those who arrived on a Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme.

9.7 Possible dissemination

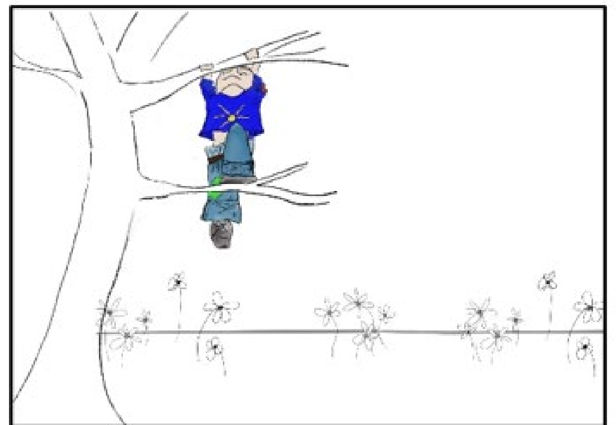
In my final meeting with the children's mothers when I shared with them the findings of the study Zahira suggested that I write a book to support teachers to be able to work with refugee children more effectively. Her suggestion resonated with me and I am still keen to write a book for practitioners which outlines my Pedagogy of Welcome. My intention is to also turn this into training material which will be made available for local authorities, ECEC settings and schools. During my time as a Children Centre teacher, I developed many social stories to help young children understand the complexities of their lives more fully. Thinking about Rahima, and her open difficulty with the negative narratives and conceptualisation of refugees, I also intend to develop a series of young children's books which draw on my findings and avoid the usual peri-migration stories of despair, difficulty then salvation in a new country. I have already been in discussions with the graphic artist (Lippiatt 2019) who illustrated the children's stories for this thesis, and she is keen to develop her drawing and my storytelling further. Early on during the development of the research project I was in touch with the civil servant who was responsible for the Syrian Vulnerable Resettlement scheme, who encouraged me to stay in touch. When my article (Gaywood et al 2020) was published I sent him a copy. Although the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme is no longer in existence, the government seem to be in the process of launching a similar scheme for Afghan refugees. My intention is to re-establish contact and offer my training package for local authorities who are hoping to be part of the scheme, to change the mentality and narrative for the people who arrive in Britain. In addition, the EECERA Special Interest Group (SIG) have received funding from the Froebel Trust to expand our education pack which was based on The Walk project to use with young Ukrainian refugee children, in Poland. The funding covers a short roll out of the resources and finances to develop online training for Polish early educator.

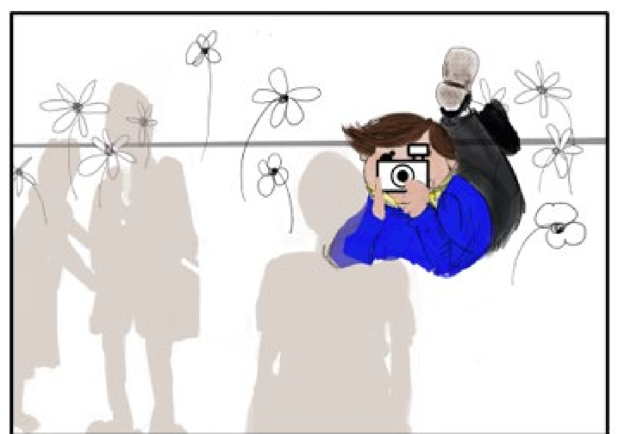
9.8 Final thoughts

Early on in this study, the decision was made to ensure the voices of the children, their stories and concerns were central (Figure 39), therefore it is appropriate for the last

words of this thesis to be dedicated to Ahmed, Karam, Hasan and Amira. One of the many conceptual diagrams I created depicted the intersectionality of the children's experiences and the potential this presented to render them powerless. (Figure 1). I also used it in Chapter 3 to demonstrate their lack of visibility in the literature. (Figure 23). However, having documented their experiences in ECEC settings I found it a different narrative. Whilst it does remain true that refugee children generally have the potential to invisibility and powerlessness, what I have found is that for the children who participated in this piece of research, there is much to celebrate. All the children faced differing but significant challenges either personally or within their families. These included: primary or secondary trauma, illness, mental health issues, disability, racism, the ongoing impact of war, low reading/writing literacy in either Arabic or English, grief and loss plus the added challenge of becoming bilingual. Even though these were often hidden from professionals, the children still were able to demonstrate an innate sense of self. I watched and documented how all the children were able to bring to bear their own inner strength through the choices they made. Whether it was Ahmed, who refused to use the toilet until *he* chose, Hassan who could climb higher than his peers without fear and refused to speak, again until *he* chose, Amira who could command a space without her words so effectively her peers would look to her for permission to enter it or Karam who appeared so unaffected by his experience his headteacher momentarily forgot that he was a refugee. Amira, Ahmed and Karam all made friends with other children who had also been consigned to an Out group, apparently able to feel these subtle social interplays from their host peers. All the children were linguistically able with Karam using Arabic and English interchangeably to include his two friends. Amira was the first in her family to become fluent in British Sign Language as well as Arabic and English, and her achievements by 4 years old, inspired her mum Rahima to train as an interpreter for the deaf. With his cochlear implants Ahmed received the same support as any other child, and still by the end of his reception year he was fully bilingual. Finally, the children's stories and their experiences speak directly to current narratives about refugees. The terrible images of Alan Kurdi convinced a nation that all very young refugee children were in need of rescue and saving. However, I watched Ahmed and Mariam playing doctors, Karam organising his classmates into groups so he could take photos of them, Hassan stacking boxes on top of a table so that he could reach the window to take a photo of trees outside, to show me what was important for him at nursery and Amira making

cakes with her friends. It is these images of four children from refugee backgrounds not just quietly enduring, or bravely carrying on, but living with enthusiasm and delight - these are the images I would like to end with.





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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pilot Study Information Letter and Consent Form for parents

Dear Parents,

I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education (Early Years) at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (in conjunction with Birmingham City University). I am very interested in considering the value of Early Education, in terms of its ability to promote a sense of community. As the granddaughter of refugees, I have been particularly struck by the recent crisis in Syria which has prompted the mass migration of young children and their families. Due to my role within *[redacted],* I am aware that the local authority has been part of the Syrian refugee resettlement programme and am interested in answering the question:

How can Early Education help refugee children and their families regain a sense of "being and belonging" after resettlement?

However, before I can begin to answer this question, I am hoping to undertake a pilot study to find out if the methods I have chosen, actually work.I understand that you have a young child who attends the nursery, therefore I am writing to you to ask whether you would be interested in becoming part of my PhD research pilot study.

My intention is to collect data from you as the parents and the children. I am keen to gain your perspective and views as the parent. I hope to spend time with you so that you can tell me and draw your child's life story first before they came to nursery and then afterwards. You do NOT need to be able to draw well to take part, but I am interested to find out if it is easier to draw about difficult things rather than talk about them.

I am also hoping to observe your child in nursery to see how they are settling in and making friends at the nursery. If possible, I would like to be able to talk with them, ask them to draw themselves in nursery and give them a camera so that they can take pictures of what is important to them at nursery.

The questions I am hoping to answer in the wider piece of research are:

- To what extent does the Early Education setting promote a sense of *being and belonging?*
- How do the participants demonstrate a sense of connectivity in terms of their relationships within the Early Years setting?
- What are the benefits and challenges of being part of an Early Education community?

I hope to spend some time with you to capture your child's life story, through drawing and also to use observations of your child at play in the nursery

All participants and any settings in this study will be anonymised and all data stored securely to ensure confidentiality. It will be securely archived and destroyed once my study is completed. I will write up my findings for the pilot study and a copy of this can be provided for you if you wish.

If you choose to take part in this pilot study, you will be offered an opportunity to check all the findings to ensure that they are authentic and representative. The integrity of all the participants will be respected at all times and you will be able to withdraw from the project at any time.

Should you wish to ask any questions or gain further information from me, I can be contacted by email:

[redacted]

If you would like to contact my supervisors Dr. Tony Bertram and Dr. Chris Pascal, to raise an issue or make a complaint, they can also be contacted by email:

drtonybertram@crec.co.uk

c.pascal@crec.co.uk

Their address is:

CREC/APT, St Thomas Children's Centre
Bell Barn Road, Attwood Green
Birmingham, West Midlands
B15 2AF
United Kingdom

Telephone: 0121 464 0020

Yours sincerely,

Donna Gaywood

Appendix 2: Pilot Study Information Letter and Consent Form for ECEC managers.

Dear Leader/Manager

I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education (Early Years) at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (in conjunction with Birmingham City University). I am particularly interested in considering the value of Early Education, in terms of its ability to promote a sense of community. As the granddaughter of refugees, I have been particularly struck by the recent crisis in Syria which has prompted the mass migration of young children and their families. Due to my role within *[redacted],* I am aware that the local authority has been part of the Syrian refugee resettlement programme and am interested in answering the question:

How can Early Education help refugee children and their families regain a sense of "being and belonging" after resettlement?

However, before I can begin to answer this question, I am hoping to undertake a pilot study to find out if the methods I have chosen, actually work. Therefore, I am writing to you to ask whether your setting would be interested in becoming part of my PhD research pilot study and whether you would be able to select and approach two or three families in your setting, to see whether they would be interested in taking part in this study. It would be helpful if the children have any of the following experiences:

- English as an additional language
- A physical disability/ illness
- Experienced significant challenge

My intention is to collect data using the following methods in order to consider how the children feel a sense of belonging at nursery:

- Using a camera to take photos of "what you like best in nursery"
- Asking children to draw a picture "Can you draw yourself in nursery?" and then talking about it.
- Observations of the children using:
  - AcE social competence and self-concept
  - Leuvan scale
  - EEL Target child interactions
  - Conversations with the keyperson

I am also hoping to spend time with the participating children's parents to ask them about their child's life story:

- before nursery
- when they first came to nursery
- how they experience nursery now

My plan is to ask the parents to make three separate drawings covering the above points.

All participants in this pilot study will be anonymised and all data stored securely to ensure confidentiality. Any photographs taken by the children will be stored in line with your organisation's policy and in agreement with the parents, the practitioner and the setting lead. These will be securely archived and destroyed once my full PhD study is completed. A copy of the final report can be provided to you if you wish.

Those taking part will be offered an opportunity to check all findings to ensure that they are authentic and representative. The integrity of <u>all</u> the participants will be respected at all times and they will be able to withdraw consent at any time. The children's' right to withdraw will be determined by ascertaining their ongoing assent through observation of their body language and in discussion with their parents and keypeople.

Should you wish to ask any questions or gain further information from me, I can be contacted by email:

[redacted]

If you would like to contact my supervisors Dr. Tony Bertram and Dr. Chris Pascal, to raise an issue or make a complaint, they can also be contacted by email:

drtonybertram@crec.co.uk

c.pascal@crec.co.uk

Their address is:

CREC/APT, St Thomas Children's Centre
Bell Barn Road, Attwood Green
Birmingham, West Midlands
B15 2AF
United Kingdom

Telephone: 0121 464 0020

Yours sincerely,

Donna Gaywood

****

Permission for access

I (name)………………………………………. (role title)…………………………………give

my consent to Donna Gaywood to be able to approach the children, parents and

families who access services within [*name of ECEC]* to ask whether

they would be willing to be part of this PhD pilot study.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3: Research Information Letter and Consent form for settings

Dear Leader/Manager

I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education (Early Years) at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (in conjunction with Birmingham City University). I am particularly interested in considering the value of Early Education, in terms of its ability to promote a sense of community. As the granddaughter of refugees, I have been particularly struck by the recent crisis in Syria which has prompted the mass migration of young children and their families. Due to my role within *[redacted],* I am aware that the local authority has been part of the Syrian refugee resettlement programme and am interested in answering the question:

How can Early Education help refugee children and their families regain a sense of "being and belonging" after resettlement?

I understand that you currently have children who have been refugees in your setting who have agreed to be part of this project. Therefore, I am writing to you to ask whether you would allow me permission to visit the children in your setting and work alongside your staff as part in this study.

My intention is to collect data from three sources, the parents, the practitioners, and the children in a variety of ways. (see attached diagram)

All participants and any settings in this study will be anonymised and all data stored securely to ensure confidentiality. Any photographs or videos will be taken and stored in line with your organisation's policy and in agreement with the parents, the practitioner and the setting lead. These will be securely archived and destroyed once my study is completed. A copy of the final report can be provided to you if you wish.

Those taking part will be offered an opportunity to check all findings to ensure that they are authentic and representative. The integrity of <u>all</u> the participants will be respected at all times and they will be able to withdraw consent at any time. The children's' right to withdraw will be

determined by ascertaining their ongoing assent through observation of their body language and in discussion with their parents and keypeople.

Should you wish to ask any questions or gain further information from me, I can be contacted by email:

[redacted]

If you would like to contact my supervisors Dr. Tony Bertram and Dr. Chris Pascal, to raise an issue or make a complaint, they can also be contacted by email:

drtonybertram@crec.co.uk

c.pascal@crec.co.uk

Their address is:

CREC/APT, St Thomas Children's Centre

Bell Barn Road, Attwood Green

Birmingham, West Midlands

B15 2AF

United Kingdom

Telephone: 0121 464 0020

Yours sincerely,

Donna Gaywood

Permission for access

I (name)……………………………………… (role title) …………………………give my consent to Donna Gaywood to be able to visit the children whose parents have already given their consent and to work alongside practitioners in ……………………………………..as part of this PhD study.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 4: Parental Information and Consent Letter (English version)

Dear Parents,

I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education (Early Years) at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (in conjunction with Birmingham City University). I am very interested in considering the value of Early Education, in terms of its ability to promote a sense of community. As the granddaughter of refugees, I have been particularly struck by the recent crisis in Syria which has prompted the mass migration of young children and their families. Due to my role within [*redacted*], I am aware that the local authority has been part of the Syrian refugee resettlement programme and am interested in answering the question:

How can Early Education help refugee children and their families regain a sense of "being and belonging" after resettlement?

I understand that you have been part of the Syrian refugee resettlement programme and have a young child who attends a local nursery, therefore I am writing to you to ask whether you would be interested in becoming part of my PhD research study.

My intention is to collect data from three sources, you as the parents, the children and the staff that work in the nursery. (see attached diagram). I am keen to gain your perspective and views as the parent. I hope to spend time with you so that you can share your child's life story first before you left Syria, your arrival here and then since they have been attending nursery, through making a series of drawings.

I am also hoping to observe your child in nursery to see how they are settling in and making friends. If possible, I would like to be able to ask them to draw themselves at nursery and also give them an opportunity to take photographs of things that are important to them at nursery.

There has been very little research done with young children who have become refugees, particularly those who are under 4. I hope that this piece of research will give you and your child an opportunity to tell your stories and help Early Educators, like me, understand more

clearly how to help other children in the future feel secure in nursery so that they can start learning quickly.

The questions I am hoping to answer are:

- To what extent does the Early Education setting promote a sense of *being and belonging?*
- How do the participants demonstrate a sense of connectivity in terms of their relationships within the Early Years setting?
- What are the benefits and challenges of being part of an Early Education community?

I hope to be able to capture your child's life story through the medium of drawing and also to use observations of your child at play in the nursery. I intend to also use semi-structured interviews when talking to your child's keyperson and small focus groups to gain the staff perspective of your child experience and their own experiences in the Early Education setting.

All participants and any settings in this study will be anonymised and all data stored securely to ensure confidentiality. It will be securely archived and destroyed once my study is completed. A copy of the final report can be provided for you if you wish.

If you choose to take part in this piece of research, you will be offered an opportunity to check all the findings to ensure that they are authentic and representative. The integrity of all the participants will be respected at all times and you will be able to withdraw from the project at any time.

Should you wish to ask any questions or gain further information from me, I can be contacted by email:

[redacted]

If you would like to contact my supervisors Dr. Tony Bertram and Dr. Chris Pascal, to raise an issue or make a complaint, they can also be contacted by email:

drtonybertram@crec.co.uk

c.pascal@crec.co.uk

Their address is:

CREC/APT, St Thomas Children's Centre

Bell Barn Road, Attwood Green
Birmingham, West Midlands
B15 2AF
United Kingdom
Telephone: 0121 464 0020

Yours sincerely,

Donna Gaywood

****

Consent to take part in PhD research project

I (name)………………………..give my fully informed consent to be part of this PhD

study.

****

I also give my consent for (name of child)……………………………….. to take part and I am happy for Donna Gaywood to make detailed observations of them at play.

****

(Optional)

I have spoken with (name of child) ……………………. and explained about this piece of research. They seem to understand and have agreed for Donna Gaywood to visit them in nursery.

****

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 5: Parental Consent Letter (Arabic translation)

Research proposal Information Letter and Consent Form

جامعة مدينة برمنغهام

رسالة المقترح البحثي ونموذج الموافقة

أعزائنا الوالدان،

تحية طيبة وبعد،

أنا طالبة دكتوراه في مركز البحوث المتعلقة بالطفولة المبكرة (بالاشتراك مع جامعة مدينة برمنغهام) واختص في التعليم في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة. يتمحور بحثي حول قيمة التعليم المبكر، وقدرته على تشجيع الشعور بالانتماء للمجتمع.

إنني أهتم كثيراً بالأزمة السورية، التي أجبرت عدداً هائلاً من الأطفال الصغيرة وعائلاتهم على الفرار، خصوصاً أن جدّاي كانا لاجئين. علمت من خلال دوري في منطقة باث وشمال شرق سمرسيت باشتراك مع السلطات المحلية عن برنامج إعادة توطين اللاجئين السوريين، لذلك أستهدف في بحثي معالجة السؤال التالي:

كيف يستطيع التعليم المبكر مساعدة الأطفال اللاجئين وعائلاتهم لإعادة الشعور بالكون والانتماء من بعد إعادة التوطين؟

لقد علمت بأنكم مشاركين في برنامج إعادة توطين اللاجئين السوريين وأن لديكم طفل يداوم في حضانة محلية، فلذلك أتمنى مشاركتكم في دراستي البحثية.

إن هدفي هو جمع البيانات من ثلاثة مصادر وهي: أنتم (الوالدان)، الأطفال والموظفون في الحضانة (انظروا الى الشكل المرفق هنا). إنني حريصة على معرفة وجهات نظركم بصفتكم الوالدين وقضاء الوقت معكم حتى تتشاركوا معي في فترة عيشكم في سوريا وعيشكم الآن في بريطانيا وتجارب طفلكم في الحضانة بواسطة الرسم.

أودّ أيضاً أن أراقب طفلكم في الحضانة لأفهم مستوى استقراره وقدرته على كسب الأصدقاء ومن الممكن أن أطلب من الطفل، بعد إذنكم، رسم نفسه بالحضانة وتصوير الأشياء المهمة بالنسبة إليه.

في الحقيقة، لم يجر من البحوث إلا قليلاً بشأن الأطفال اللاجئين الصغار، خصوصاً الذين عمرهم أقل من أربع سنوات. أتمنى أن تتيح دراستي البحثية لكم ولطفلكم الفرصة لرواية قصتكم. وأتمنى أن يساعد هذا البحث المعلمين مثلي في المستقبل، لإبتكار أساليب لمساعدة الأطفال على الشعور بالأمان في الحضانة واكتساب المعلومات في وقتٍ أسرع.

الأسئلة التي أود أن أستكشفها هي:

إلى أي مدى تشجّع البيئات التعليمية المبكرة على الشعور بالكون والانتماء؟

كيف يعبّر المشاركين عن الشعور بالتواصل من حيث علاقاتهم بالأماكن المخصصة للتعليم المبكرة؟

1

Research proposal Information Letter and Consent Form

ما هي الفوائد والتحديات المرتبطة بالاشتراك في مجتمع التعليم المبكر؟

أريد أن التقط قصة حياة طفلكم بواسطة الرسم ومراقبته وهو يلعب في الحضانة. سأجري أيضاً مقابلات شبه منظمة مع المسؤول الرئيسي لطفلكم في الحضانة ومناقشات مركزة في مجموعات صغيرة، حتى أحصل على آراء الموظفين فيما يتعلق بتجاربهم وتجارب طفلكم الخاصة في البيئات التعليمية المبكرة.

من المهم أن تبقى أسماء كل المشاركين في هذا البحث مجهولة وسيتم تسجيل وحفظ كل البيانات بشكل آمن. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، سيتم إتلاف البيانات بعد استكمال البحث. إن وددتم، يمكنكم طلب نسخة من التقرير النهائي للبحث.

إذا قررتم أن تشاركوا في هذا البحث، فسأتيح لكم الفرصة لفحص كل نتائجه، حتى تتأكدوا أنها صحيحة ومعبرة عن وضع طفلكم. يجب علينا احترام سلامة كل المشاركين في جميع الحالات، وطبعاً لكم الحق في سحب مشاركتكم في أي لحظة.

إذا رغبتم في طرح عليّ أي أسئلة، أو الحصول على المزيد من المعلومات، فلا تترددوا في الاتصال بي. عنواني الالكتروني هو:

donnagaywood@bathnes.gov.uk

إن وددتم إثارة أي مسألة، فبإمكانكم أيضا الاتصال بمشرفيّ، الدكتور توني برترام أو الدكتور كريس بسكال، عن طريق البريد الالكتروني:

c.pascal@crec.co.uk drtonybertram@crec.co.uk

عنوان:

CREC/APT, St Thomas Children's Centre
Bell Barn Road, Attwood Green
Birmingham
West Midlands
B15 2AF
United Kingdom

رقم هاتف:

0121 464 0020

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق التحية والاحترام،

دونا جايوود
Donna Gaywood

2

Research proposal Information Letter and Consent Form

معلم مراكز الأطفال في باث وشمال شرق سمرسيت

نموذج الموافقة المستنيرة على المشاركة في هذا البحث

أنا.. (اسم المشارك) أعطي موافقتي وأنا مطلع تماماً على مضمون هذا الموافقة ومستعد أن أشارك في هذا الدراسة البحثية.

أعطي أيضاً موافقتي على مشاركة طفلي..(اسم الطفل) في هذا البحث ولا مانع لدي من أن تقوم دونا جايوود (الباحثة) بإجراء ملاحظات عنه وهو يلعب في الروضة.

(اختياري ويفضّل الإجابة)

لقد تحدثت مع..(اسم الطفل) وشرحت له عن هذا البحث ويبدو أنه يفهم ويوافق على زيارة دونا جايوود إياه في الحضانة.

توقيع المشارك: ....

التاريخ: ....

3

Appendix 6: Research Information for settings:

Phase one

1.<u>Nursery visits</u>

3 x Observations of child at play (15 minutes each time)

Interview with key person (30 minutes)

Child taking photos (15-20 minutes)

3-4 visits

Phase two

2. <u>Home visits</u>

(30-40 minutes each visit)

Getting to know you visit (optional)

Co-drawing with parent

Drawing interview with parent

Checking the slideshow with parent

4-5 visits

(maximum 3 hours in total)

Phase three

3. <u>Showing the slide show</u>

To child, siblings and family (recording responses) (20-30 mins)

To Early Years practitioners (recording responses) (30-40 mins)

Appendix 7: Being and Belonging Child Observation Tool

Date: **Setting:** **Child:** **Age of child:** **M/F**		
Fifteen-minute written observation: **Start time:** **End time:**		
Involvement level: (circle dominant one) 1 2 3 4 5 solitary play/ alongside play/ paired play/ group play/ with adult		**Zone of Initiative:** (circle dominant one) 1 2 3 4
Effective relationships	**Tally each time observed**	**Other notes**
Initiates an interaction with adult		
Initiates an interaction with peer		
Interacts and cooperates with adult		
Interacts and cooperates with peer		
Appropriately participates in group activities		
Can lead and follow		
Responds to immediate environment through active listening, body language, verbally		
Forms friendships with more than one person		
Shares experiences with others		
Connectedness		
Links his/her experiences		
Shows evidence of attachment		
Show evidence of attachment to peers and wider community		
Demonstrates a sense of belonging in environment		

Appendix 8: Keyperson interview questions

Spring 2018

- **How do you think x experiences nursery?**
- **Can you talk about how they demonstrate a sense of belonging whilst in nursery?**

(how are they forming relationships with their peers, and with other adults)

- **Can you describe how they demonstrate their sense of self**
- **Do you think their experience is "typical" for their age?**
- **Any other comments?**

Appendix 9: Ahmed's Key person interview

(Transcript)

4.4.18

DG: How do you think Ahmed experiences nursery?

KP: Well, I think at the moment, he's having a happy time in nursery. We've had a lot of ups and downs along the nine months he's been with us, eight or nine months he's been with us. Obviously in the beginning he was very upset and didn't have a nice experience in nursery because of change……all of his background, you know - a refugee, having hearing loss, eyesight problems, English as an additional language etcetera, etcetera, etcetera……moved house, moved nursery setting so understandably he was upset while he was here. So that went on for a while. He did quickly form a relationship with me, me and him, you know, quite quickly form a relationship, which was sort of comforting for him. He was upset for quite a while. Then, and progress was quite slow. When I speak to B his hearing specialist, who gave me support and things, she was concerned as I was saying, when she would do observations, she would say the same as I was. Then things did take a turn and he did seem more settled, more happy, and things were like that for a while then for some reason we did have a blip and there were quite a few sessions where mum wasn't able to get him to nursery, because he was so upset at home and we were having lots of times he would play and then he would just burst into tears at nursery. So just a little bit of that but then, things turned again and he's communicating a lot more, a lot more. We are hearing a lot more English from him, and he seems very happy, a lot more settled. Although there are issues that we are …..that do concern us ….but overall I would say he is enjoying himself, he is having a nice time in nursery currently.

DG: Can you talk about how he demonstrates a sense of belonging whilst he is in nursery?

KP: He's forming relationships and he likes to follow the routine, likes to be doing what the other children are doing. So he'll join everyone for group time, he likes to sit by me, likes to get the medal for tidy up time, he…apart from…..yeah following the routine and doing what the other children do so he does likes to be part of the group and what

the other children are doing. Although outdoor play, he doesn't choose. He doesn't choose to have snack. So there's a lot of things, but they are choices so it's you know. When we do things as a whole, as a group, he's always there, he likes to join in.

DG: (Additional question) So do you think he is forming relationships with his peers?

KP: Not with his peers unfortunately. We have made progress becau… but he doesn't show the co-operative play, apart from occasionally with one other Syrian refugee friend that he has got in nursery. They are not always together but they do spend sometime together, and he's definitely got a relationship with her and they do communicate in their own language when they are together, not all…. They don't spend a great …..all of his time with her

DG: So, would he choose to go and be with her or is it just if they happen to be together?

KP: A little bit of both. Sometimes he does seek her out, or sometimes it's just co-incidence they are at the playdough table together, by coincidence kind of thing. He doesn't always…. He tends to do what he wants to do. So, if it's a puzzle he wants to do or role play and she's not around, he'll carry on and do it but he does like to play by himself really. And if other children try to involve him in their play, he's quite standoffish. He doesn't want to join in…. will look away and carry on stirring. He might…. I don't really want to answer your question. Yeah he's quite like that…. And sometimes back when a child saw an episode when he was upset, put their arm round him and he pushed the child's arm away as like "Don't touch me, I don't want any of that" Whereas he would be quite happy to sit on my lap and for me to put my arm around him. He will have that comfort from an adult, but he doesn't want it from a child.

DG: So, you would say, he wasn't forming relationships with peers, but he has with adults

KP: Yeah, definitely and that was pretty much what happened straight away, that forming relationships with adults, it didn't take long for me and him to have a relationship and all adults really within the room but I suppose the progress is the play is alongside and he is happy to stand alongside a child but he doesn't really, the sort

of play together is taking the longest, is taking a long time to happen, that's whats not progressing, yeah that's probably difference yeah.

(How are they forming relationships with their peers, and with other adults)

DG: So, can you describe how he demonstrate his sense of self?

KP: Yes, (laughs) Yes, he's quite assertive and knows what he wants and what he doesn't want. We….most of the time he wants to do what everyone else is doing like I said and will join in and doesn't want to be any different or singled out or like I say is quite happy and likes being part of the group, you can see that he is smiling and happy. We've had a little issue around umm "sorry" (laughs) umm, that he will really dig his heels in, and this doesn't happen you know on a daily basis, it isn't a big issue. But when it does happen, I realised how….it does need some work and I've tried all sorts of ways, but I had a little break through with two very reluctant sorrys from him, but that's progress, because if he's hurt a child, not done something right or knocked something over and I don't know for whatever reason an adult said "Do you think you might need to say sorry to Donna, to little Jack in the room, whoever - his lips are like sealed together and it's No, I don't want to, I don't think I need to and he will dig his heels in to the bitter end, very very yeah. So, he'll do the thinking time. He'll sit out with the sand timer but after, when he's thought and on reflection: do you think that might need a sorry or go over and show your gentle hands to that person, you took the toy off them or whatever: it's no - he's not and twice now he….not with his mouth opening very far…a little sorry has come out. So, I've done lots of praise and said, I'm sure they feel much better now that you've had that little chat and you've said sorry. Made a big fuss of it, left it and we've moved on. So, there's progress. We've yes so, he knows himself, he's got some very strong and that carries over to the not wanting to use the toilet. He's adamant that he will not go to the toilet in nursery and for a long time would not sit down for lunch. We've made a lot of progress on that front. He was standing beside the chair and getting quite upset to he's got his own lunch box he likes all his Spiderman. That makes him feel quite happy, with his lunch box. Bit of a fussy, picky eater, but he does eat, a little bit slowly, but doesn't choose the snack. When it's "Would you like some snack" and it's "No" and there's no changing that "No" Not even a maybe, or do you want to sit with (KP's name) or (laughing) you know, it's no and

it’s same probably that nine months he’s been with us. I think he has probably played outdoors twice. So yeah, he knows what he wants and he’s quite a…. strong

DG: So, does he ever talk about his home?

KP: His family he talks about but not his actual home or what he does at home or no. He will if I ask him questions

DG: What like direct questions?

KP: Yeah, as long as the understanding is there. Yeah, so it’s not that he won’t talk about home, but he will need prompting from me and or me to ask him a direct question…. what colour is your bedroom, or what do you like to play with at home or but yes, he doesn’t volunteer any home life talk. But his family yeah, always Sham, he’s very attached to his little sister.

DG: So, he would answer the questions?

KP: Yes, he would answer the questions with me. So two way conversation I can get out of him in a smaller little room if we play in a smaller room where it’s quieter and usually it’s just me and him. Sometimes I bring other children with him, mainly just on his own and then he asks me questions, not a lot. But I can get to that I feel I am having a proper conversation with him because it is Ahmed led as opposed to all me, asking, asking. There is a…. we’ve got a teaching assistant that works with the hearing specialist lady, who is coming in to do some group work with him around him playing with others, so she’s just sort of started that. So, she is in to encourage him to play with other children not just to have this adult relationship

DG: So other people recognise that this is a problem?

KP: Yes. Yeah the two of them came to do an observation, B and this other lady, and could see that that’s the way that’s where the…….it would be good for him to be actually starting to have some play with other children and join in their play which, like I said, he doesn’t want to do at the moment.

DG: Do you think his experience is “typical” for their age?

KP: Not… just based on his age? No I think his development... he's lower level than other typical... developmentally.

DG: What socially?

KP: Socially yeah. I don't think…Obviously with English as an additional language, the expressive language is lower than other typical four-year-old. But socially, yes yes definitely,

DG: So, in terms of…. if you were comparing him to other children with English as an additional language, would his experience be typical?

KP: No I think we had quite a lot of children that had…one other Syrian refugee, but a lot of other children with English as an additional language and the way… at the beginning they were very similar to Ahmed: different place, different people talking a different language to them etc etc but their English has probably, some of them, the amount of expressive language is about the same, but socially they want to play and are playing with other children. And their play….yeah socially they progress more in their eight months than Ahmed has.

DG: And I suppose you don't know whether, how much the hearing loss has to do with that?

KP: Yeah, yeah. Ahmed has a lot of things stacked against him, bless him. You know, all the moving, the refugee, the hearing loss, eyesight

DG: Yes, he wears glasses

KP: Yes, that has just been picked up. He should be starting to wear glasses after Easter. So yes, he has got more than…. you use the word typical…. Typical EAL child, Ahmed's got a bit more hurdles to overcome than they would but yeah, I think that and if I had to summarise the conversations I had with B – it was in the beginning we were worried about the progress was hardly happening, now it has moved on to there is progress but… in her words, it's not as speeding along as I would expect and I would want really. You know the progress seems to be you know a bit slower

DG: What progress in terms of language

KP: I think just in generally. You know that I have (name of hearing support person)…. she is the hearing, I just have a general conversation of how I'm finding, what he's doing, what he's not doing... what he is struggling with. The general overall picture is that…. She says it's nice that you are telling me he can do this and x y and z but she sort of pulls a face and says she was expecting things to be a bit faster or…yeah

DG: So, is he able to communicate in English? His parents do, don't they?

KP: Yeah, and he has got…. he's getting more confident in using English in nursery and having those conversations. It's not…. It isn't just flying there, if you know what I mean. It's more like I said in a quieter room on a 1:1 basis. He does…. He will answer questions about…quite a long sentence sometimes like, "My daddy drives a car" or something like that. It's there, but he's a little bit…. yeah less confident to use it and it's just…I'm just….it's just not perhaps as much as we were hoping, expecting.

DG: So, are there any other comments or issues that you think would be helpful?

KP: I think I've probably covered it…I don't know of anything else. Like I've said he generally is happy and does enjoy it, with all sorts of play. He's not worried about getting messy. He's not one of these children that sort of steer away from that. The only play he does steer away from is outdoor play, but he'll play with water, play in the role play area, does the puzzles. Small world is his favourite. He's always with animals, knows lots all the animals names, colours…. numbers he can recognise; so that side of things are okay, like I said not happy that he doesn't drink enough or use the toilet. He's been in nursery a long time and he doesn't go to the toilet which I can see what mum is saying as he is not having accidents but really that's not like…..a health issue for his bladder and everything else and I do have lots of conversations about it with mum and dad. They are very easy to talk to, very supportive of what I say to them. We've got a home communication book we use which is helpful so I know if there has been any problems at home, likewise I will say if we've had any issues. Dad brought up about when I said about the sorry. Dad said he was like that at home. So overall he's happy and he's doing, he's going in the right direction but there are still somethings that I'm raising as concerns.

Appendix 10: Questions for home visits

Field work 2018

Drawing interview with parent:

- Can you draw a picture of how your child experiences nursery?
- Does your child ever talk about nursery when s/he is not there?
- Can you draw a picture of how you experience nursery?

Co-drawing activity with children:

- Can you draw yourself at nursery?
- Who is important to you at nursery?
- Can you draw what you like to do at nursery?

Appendix 11: Example of field notes for drawing interview with Yara (Karam's mum)

7.8.18

(Brief notes taken during, then paraphrased and written up directly after the session)

- **Can you draw a picture of how your child experiences reception?**

Yara: Happy. He is missing his friends from school. I am trying to arrange for his friend from (nearby town) to come over and stay the night (Rafi)

DG: Does Rafi live in (nearby town)?

Yara: It's a temporary thing as his brother is in the children's hospital

DG: It seems to me that Karam really likes people, he is very sociable. When I asked him to take photos at school of the things that were important to him, he took pictures of the children and the teachers. He set them up, so it was very intentional.

Yara: Yes, he is sociable like me but L (Karam's sister), is like her father. She can stay in the house for days and not see people.

- **Does your child ever talk about school when he is not there?**

Yara: Yes he tells me everything, what he does.

DG: I wonder whether this is to do with his age and maturity because some of the other children do not speak of their experiences. He went to another school before this one?

Yara: Yes (names a different school), but only for a small amount of time

DG: Was there a problem there?

Yara: No, I moved so I moved school.

DG: Did Karam go to nursery when he was in England?

Yara: Yes, when we were in (a different county). He has a special teacher who worked with him because of his emotional problems, because of losing his dad. (Yara speaks later on of Karam being very angry and hurting younger children)

She shares that after a few months, his special teacher died and that Karam found this very difficult. Almost more difficult than losing his dad. Yara told Karam (after his dad died) that he had gone away and gone to heaven. Karam used to say, that is okay we can get a bus and go there. At first in the nursery, they did not tell Karam that his special teacher had died. He kept looking for her, so they told him.

Yara thinks that with the help of professionals Karam is now understanding more about death, that people go away and they don't come back. She said that the professionals at (Local trauma centre), have shown Karam books about death so he now understands it a bit better.

L is getting help from (Local trauma centre) but they are waiting to have their places confirmed for September which is to do with funding.

Yara is also getting psychological help from the GP

Yara spoke about Karam being very angry but also being very quiet and not wanting to talk. She said that when her husband was in hospital and dying, she went to him, and Karam became very aggressive with her.

When Karam saw his dad in hospital he was terrified of him because of the change in him.

DG: asked whether Karam was afraid that when she (Yara) was ill recently that she might die.

Yara: said that she tried to keep it from Karam when she was ill, but L has said that she was very afraid her mum was going to die.

Yara said that Karam had some problems with his speech in Arabic, he mispronounces some things, and gets some of the time words wrong. Her sister's daughter has dyslexia, so she is worried that maybe Karam does too.

I explained that there is an eye test (I noticed that Karam's eyes were slightly misaligned) which can help, so I suggested that Karam go to the optician to have a sight test, and also shared the name of Myers Ilene Syndrome which is linked to dyslexia.

I also explained how the brain works and how trauma closes down the higher order functioning in the brain, so children cannot learn, and it might be that as Karam was learning speech, the trauma got in the way - but it is very hard to tell which one is which.

Yara shared that Karam is very quick to cry. She said that she has noticed that when a child cries the English people comfort him, but the Arabic people laugh at him and tell him that he is a man, men don't cry and that he is a bit of a baby.

She said that she has made friends with people who say this to Karam, and it makes her want to withdraw from them.

She wants him to have a childhood and doesn't want him to hear things like this. She has tried to tell them not to say these things.

We talked about it, and I told her about my theory having tears on the inside that need to be cried so it is important for them to be cried, and that it helps to prevent people being mentally ill later.

Yara, Mina and I all cried together.

I suggested that as well as telling the people to stop saying these things to Karam she could talk to him and explain that although these people are saying these things to him, she is his mother, and she says that it is good to cry and that this is what his father would say to him too.

Yara said she was going to talk to her friends about this.

- **Can you draw a picture of how you experience nursery?**

Yara: I am sad when Karam goes to school because I miss him very much when he leaves me.

DG: asked how Yara finds the teachers and the school.

Yara is very happy with the teachers and the school. She said that she likes the headteacher (uses his name) and Karam likes him too.

Mina said that her daughter worked with the headteacher and that he is very popular and very good. I said that he fights for the children in his school.

I asked Yara if there was anything else that she thought would be helpful for me to know or if she wanted to ask me anything.

Yara asked if all this trauma would stop Karam from achieving.

I told her that the teacher at school said that already Karam is achieving better that some of his British peers. That he is highly motivated to learn. I told her that when I first observed Karam, he was teaching Rafi and if Rafi was being silly or mucking around, Karam was telling him off.

I shared that although the experiences will not go away for Karam, they will shape his life and I told Yara about my own children who experienced terrible things, but they have gone on to help others.

I also explained that what children need is a “secure base” someone who is always there, who is stable and that she was providing that for her children. I said that she was accessing the help that they need, which was extremely important.

As I was leaving Yara started to talk about her brother who has been taken by the Syrian army. He has been conscripted (25 years old) Her mother, who is in England, has had a nervous breakdown because of it. She said that he is going to have to fight in some very dangerous and terrible places.

Appendix 12: Fieldwork Phase Two

Meeting with practitioners

Questions for the vignette showings:

1. What do you think of that?

2. What did you like or not like?

3. Do you recognise x's experience in nursery?

4. How typical is this of other refugee children's experience, from your own experience.

Method: engage in the conversation with the staff and write up notes straight after the meeting then make a fuller write up

Appendix 13: Amira's story

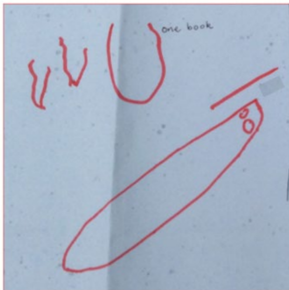
This is Amira and this is her story about how she experienced nursery

1

When Amira first started at nursery she was quiet and spent time on her own.

2

She likes reading books



3

And listening to stories on the carpet

4

Amira likes to go to nursery and is very happy

5

But Amira's mum finds some of the staff are cold towards her.

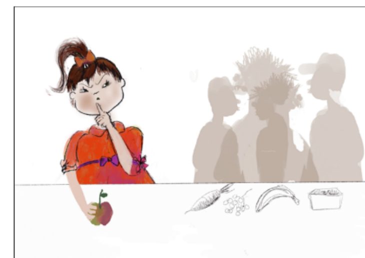
The staff member with a "yellow smile"

6

Amira likes to do things for herself at nursery

7

Amira does not like to play with the boys and when they are noisy at story time, she tells them to be quiet



8

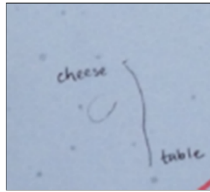
Amira likes to bake cakes at nursery

9

She enjoys snack time

10

This is her drawing of the snack table with cheese

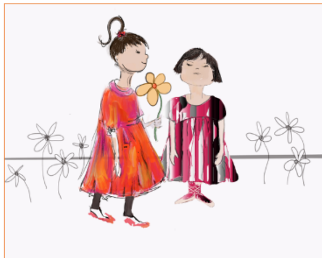


11

And likes to wash up afterwards

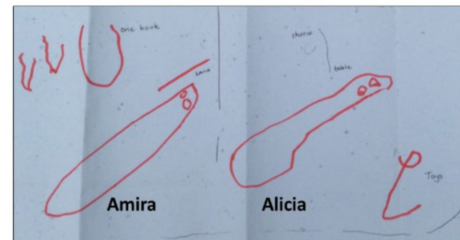
12

She made a special friend in nursery



13

This is Amira with her friend



14

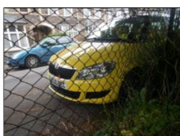
She plays with her outside

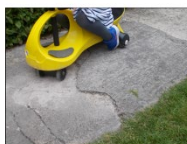
15

And took a photo of her

16

Amira also took pictures of real cars and push along cars, to show the other things which were important to her





17

Amira is very clever. She can speak three languages

18

Appendix 14: Sample of reflective journal.

15.3.17

FOR REFERENCE:
H: manager of the Children Centre team
R, F, V and T: Children Centre team members
CF: the LA team assigned the task of initial resettlement of the families under the SVPR scheme

15.3.17 Team meeting

I arrived at the Team meeting assuming that I was going to do case supervision. H had completely forgotten that I was coming. However, she asked me to lead a reflective discussion about an issue which was arising with the Syrian refugees who had been referred to the Children Centre. I felt completely unprepared for this, but had to sort of leap in. Basically, one of the families was experiencing difficult behaviour from some of the other Syrian families at the school pick up. T came in briefly and began to talk about a "caste" system which was in operation amongst the Syrian community. The way she was talking, particularly, felt very "otheringy" It was as if their "caste" system was so different from what is experienced in the UK. I tried to get her to see that there is an English class system which potentially operates in a very subtle way, but T was really unable to see it.

L kept talking about the language barrier and could not get beyond that. I was trying to say that we were all human and we all have the same needs to feel accepted, but she could not move from this insistence that language was key.

What I have noticed about H, is that she wants everyone to talk about difference, but she is also extremely keen to promote inclusion. I think she and I are on the same page, but I wonder if there is a romanticisation about what we both feel we can offer – particularly in the Stay and Play group.

F and V were very quiet throughout and I decided that I would ask them about this at another time. They did enter into the discussion when we were talking about

prejudice and stereotyping as they both live in the area and they know the reputation it has even within the wider area.

I am wondering whether there are some emerging themes?

R talked a lot about the language barrier

I sensed very early on within the LA there was a romanticisation/ exoticism and a trophy like status attached to the families.

It was a really strange experience reading the CF Newsletter this time. It was such a marketing exercise. It gave an update on how the Syrian families are doing, with an incredibly positive spin. There was no mention of the prejudice from within the group to each other. I was almost as if this is an unacceptably ugly face of people being thrown together, which the CF team either do not know about, or are not prepared to be honest about. Not sure what this phenomenon is called- but I’m convinced I will experience it again.

17.3.17 First Stay and Play

So, I decided to ask F and V about their silence in the discussion on Wednesday. They were both very open and told me that within the area, they know of quite a bit of ill feeling from people who want to know why the Syrian families have arrived and jumped the housing waiting list. Both of them could understand the feelings of the residents but hadn’t wanted to say anything in the discussion.

It seems then, that there are not only tensions from within the small Syrian community, but also there are racial tensions from the local white working-class residents. It will be interesting whether the children or the parents have experienced any overt racism or prejudice AND/OR whether they would feel confident to talk about it.

Both F and V are unsure as to whether the stay and play group could become a hub for the Syrian families, because they feel that it is difficult enough to run the gauntlet in the café, past the Soft Play to come into the group, if you come from the area, but if there is already tensions, they feel it would be nigh on impossible to encourage families of difference to brave it.

Appendix 15: Research activities record

Phase One January - August 2018

	Ahmed	**Hassan**	**Karam**	**Amira**
Child observation 1	9.1.18	31.1.18	31.1.18	26.2.18
Child observation 2	5.2.18	22.3.18	19.4.18	7.3.18
Child observation 3	10.4.18	11.4.18	14.5.18	18.6.18
Home visit Co-drawing	7.3.18	27.4.18	16.7.18	2.5.18
Home visit Parental interview	14.3.18	14.5.18	7.8.18	29.6.18
Keyperson interview	4.4.18	19.4.18	10.5.18	23.3.18
Camera activity	5.6.18 (with keyperson)	26.4.18	10.5.18	16.5.18
Length of time from visit 1 to final research activity	21 weeks (5 months)	15 weeks and 5 days (4 months)	26 weeks and 6 days (7 months)	17 weeks and 4 days (4 months)
Length of time between first and last observations of children	13 weeks	10 weeks	14 weeks and 5 days	16 weeks

February - June 2019

Phase Two

	Ahmed	**Hassan**	**Karam**	**Amira**
Sharing vignettes: child and family	22.3.19	19.3.19	20.3.19	22.2.19
Sharing vignettes: practitioners	8.4.19	28.6.19 *Experienced witness*	28.6.19 *Experienced witness*	11.3.19

Appendix 16: Initial coding table

Code description	Code
Pedagogy	P
Complex relationship between parent and nursery	CR
Low expectation	LE
Ongoing assent	O
English acquisition and use of English	EA
Strength (high internal locus of control)	S
Vulnerability	V
Cultural difference	CD
Practitioner Researcher	PR
Researcher's relationship with participants	RWP
Child/child relationship	CCR
Adult/child relationship	ACR
Hijab	H
Typical development	Typ
Outcomes	OutC
Interpreters	I
Ups and downs of access/Real world research	U&D

Appendix 17: Grouping of codes. Table 2.

Groupings	Intersectionality of challenge	Linguistic competence	High internal locus of control	Importance of friends	The way we do things	Islands and Bridges
Code	IOC	LingComp	HILC	IF	TWWDT	IAB
Issues included	Family health	Complex relationship (CR)	Strength	Social Identity Theory	Cultural sensitivity	Interpreter as bridge
	Disability	Amira (multilingual)	Amira Controlling the boys	Karam Pictures of all the class Arabic and English friends	Educational diplomacy	My relationship with the children AND ongoing assent
	Loss	Ahmed (bilingual and deaf)	Hassan Climbing Selective mutism	Amira With other bilingual child	Suncream	Eid
	Grief	Karam (Fluently bilingual)l	Ahmed Toileting Saying sorry	Ahmed With other refugee child	Love	Transitions
	Trauma	Hassan (selective mute)			Photo consent	
	Racism				Same teacher	
					EAL policy	
					Hijab	

Appendix 18: Summary of felt emerging issues after Fieldwork 1

18.11.18

1. Observations and demonstrations of children's inner strength (ABILITY TO SET UNSPOKEN BOUNDARIES) juxtaposed against occasional moments of vulnerability

Child	Instances of strength	Instances of vulnerability	Relevant theory from pentatonic lens	A priori category from lit review
Hassan	-Climbing on the climbing frame outside (persistence) -Selective mutism -Clear sense of self as able to communicate his likes to me -Ability to take charge of the situation ref: co-drawing	-Isolation in nursery (trying to make friends) -Father reported that when he went to collect R from nursery, he looked like he was in prison.		Narrative of trauma Feelings of isolation
Amira	-Able to set unspoken boundaries with the boys in play -Negotiation of her relationship with me - warned me off with a look but able to engage when she chose -Interactions with other children (towards the end of the time) when she "ssshhh-ed" them during the story time -three languages (Arabic, English, sign language with brother)	-unsure during co-drawing activity (needing hand over hand) -parental concern that L was too soft as she would do anything for her brothers and would give up a toy for them. Mum was concerned that she would be easily dominated.	Cultural issues emerged about playing with boys. Adult discussions about the hijab, girls remaining pure. ORIENTALISM	
Karam	-strongly committed to learning -sense of humour -ability to make friends (at home and at school)	-being called a cry baby by other Syrian parents -occasional impulsivity		
Ahmed	-clear sense of self			

	- own ideas about life: going to the toilet, wearing glasses -Negotiation of relationship with me and his own participation in the research			

2. The importance of a friend and who they were friends with

Child	Description of a particular friend	Relevant theory from pentatonic lens	A priori category from lit review
Hassan	Hassan was the only one of the children who seemed not to have made a special friend. When I was in nursery, I noticed a few times that he attempted to try a social interaction, but the children often left an activity when he arrived. The teacher described how he struggled to interact using gentle hands.	Tajfel	The importance of relationships Feeling excluded
Amira	Amira made a particular friend with another girl who had EAL. Although it wasn't too evident during the first observation that the friendship was mutual, both the parents, the keyperson and during her co-drawing activity it became clear that this was an important relationship to Amira.		The importance of relationships
Karam	Karam had a friend called RD. He was an Arabic speaker and when I started to go in to see Karam, Karam was supporting RD in the class, as he had recently joined. He spoke in both Arabic and English fluently.	Vygotsky	
Ahmed	At the start of Field work 1, Ahmed was very isolated interacting mainly and only with his keyperson. He has hearing aids and was supported by the teacher of the deaf. There was some initial concern about his social interaction. This changed		The importance of relationships Feeling excluded

	when the sessions changed and Ahmed was with M who was also a Syrian refugee child, who lived in the same block. They tended to play closely and often together.		

3.Complex communications between the setting and parents

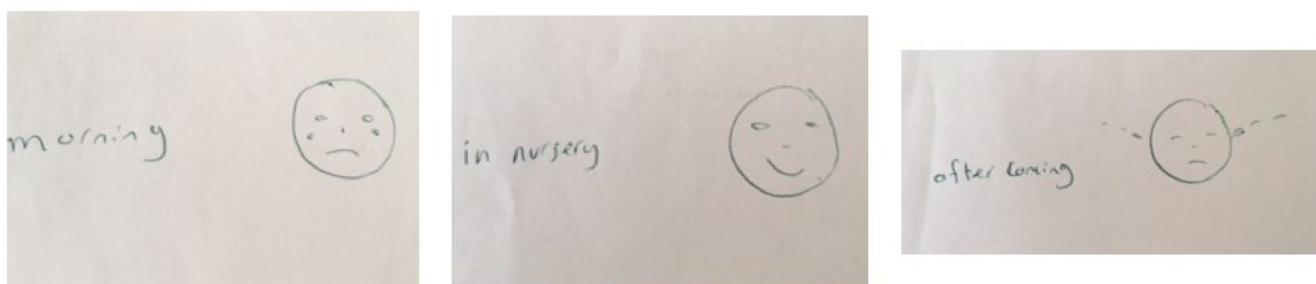
Child	**Description of a relationship between setting and parents**	**Relevant theory from pentatonic lens**	**A priori category from lit review**
Hassan	Omar (dad) wants Hassan to have an education as he did not. He said that although he knew that the teachers were being kind, he felt very stupid when he was at the school.	Bourdieu	The importance of relationships Feeling excluded
Amira	Rahima (mum) liked the "head teacher" (manager) at the setting but did not like one of the workers. She described her as having "a yellow smile" She felt the setting was not welcoming and did not make any effort. (unlike her son's school) The setting said that the communication was difficult with the parents, they mentioned that neither mum nor dad ever stopped much but dashed in and out. They felt that the problem was mum's lack of English The presence of a "befriender" who the nursery was encouraged to mediate the relationship through. Seemed to add an extra layer of complexity. The setting was unsure whether the messages were being passed onto the parents Setting referred to the trauma that L had experienced and felt that it would have been helpful to know more.	Orientalism	The importance of relationships Narrative of trauma

Karam	Previously Yara had volunteered at school. She had been ill and the school expressed concern about her and Karam because the communication seemed to have slowed.		
Ahmed	This was more difficult because of my position at the nursery. Initially Zahra found it difficult to communicate with the nursery staff about toileting. Nursery staff seemed to find it easier to talk to dad. There were issues with Ahmed wearing his glasses, and dad wanted it checked that Ahmed needed them.		The importance of relationships

Appendix 19: The children’s individual stories:

The children’s stories were constructed using data gathered during the first layer of fieldwork. Data sources included: child drawing activities, parent drawing interviews, child observations, child camera activities, and keyperson interviews. Each child’s experience in their ECEC is unique to them, their stories are presented individually.

Ahmed

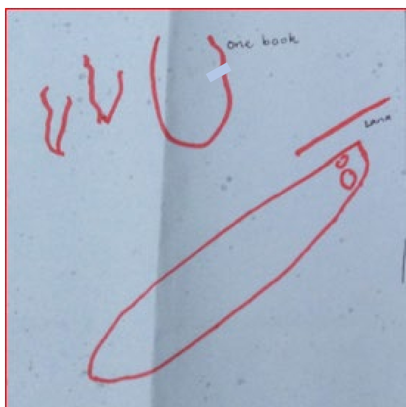


(Parent drawing interview, 14.3.18)

The image above shows a set of three drawings Zahra made to depict how she felt Ahmed experienced Dog Lane nursery. It was clear from her drawings that Ahmed struggled to go into the setting. He would often cry before they left the house, and there were times when Zahra could not coax him to attend. At the beginning of the study Ahmed tended to play quietly alone and showed a strong interest in the small world animals. His experiences were made more complex because he had cochlear implants, so sound and language were fairly new to him. Ahmed was supported by an external specialist teacher who visited regularly to advise his keyperson. He also received regular visits from a specialist early years practitioner who worked alongside his keyperson demonstrating the best ways to enable a positive listening environment and promote speech. Due to Ahmed’s hearing needs, the local authority funded 15 hours to enable him to have one-to-one support from his keyperson. The staff and children worked hard to create a quieter environment for Ahmed to learn and he was often taken into a smaller room to complete targets with his keyperson, which seemed to add to his already isolated persona. As a result of the research observations, staff began to offer Ahmed more opportunity to mix in small groups, to support his social interactions. Things changed significantly for Ahmed when Dog Lane had to re-organise the children’s sessions, due to the pending closure of the nursery and

redundancy of the staff. As a result, Ahmed began to attend sessions with another refugee child, Mariam, who lived in the same block of flats as he did. They soon struck up a friendship which continued at home. Generally, Mariam and Ahmed would invent intricate role play games which often included each taking turns as a patient or doctor, obviously mirroring Ahmed's experiences in hospital. Initially their play was conducted solely speaking Arabic, but later would incorporate English if they wanted to include English speaking children. Mariam's mother told me that their play was similar at home, but they always played speaking English when they were amongst predominately Arabic speakers. Even with a friend, Ahmed struggled at times to conform to expected norms. He found it hard to say sorry if he had hurt another child and refused to go to the toilet whilst at Dog Lane. On his final day, Ahmed went to the toilet for the first time, which caused great celebration amongst the staff and with his parents. Ahmed's keyperson had a warm relationship with him, and the staff all spoke fondly about him. When Ahmed was asked to draw what was important to him at nursery, he drew a car (Fieldnotes:7.3.18). At that time, the family did not own a car, but it was clearly an aspiration of Ahmed's.

Amira



(Child drawing activity, 2.5.18)

This is a picture that Amira drew when I asked if she could draw herself at nursery. She drew herself (with two eyes) and the three u-shaped marks above her are books. Amira, like Ahmed, was very quiet at the start of the study and spent time on her own. She liked reading books and listening to stories on the carpet. Unlike Ahmed and Hassan, Amira liked going to nursery. She enjoyed snack time and particularly washing up her plate and cup afterwards. Rahima, her mum, did not like the nursery

and told me that she was always waiting for Amira to refuse to go, but this never happened. Rahima and Adeel worried about Amira at nursery as they felt that she was very soft and might be taken advantage of, however the nursery did not see this aspect of Amira's character. Amira was proudly independent and rarely asked for help with anything. During the study Amira made a friend with another child, Lamai, who also spoke English as a second language. Amira drew pictures of Lamai and also took photos of Lamai playing outside, when she was asked what was important to her at nursery. Staff at St Swithin's noticed that this friendship seemed to increase Amira's confidence. She played alongside other children confidently and was able to negotiate for tools and equipment non-verbally. She would only allow certain children to play her games, holding the space around her with looks which caused the other children to be wary of approaching. She did not allow boys into the space. When children were messing about during the story, Amira was confident to tell them to be quiet. Although Amira was younger than Karam, she also had mastery of both English and Arabic. As well Amira was the first in her family to be able to communicate effectively with her older brother who was deaf, through signing. Cars also seemed important to Amira, as well as to Ahmed and Karam. She took photos of push along cars and real cars to depict what was important to her at nursery. Adeel and Rahima wondered if this was because she spent ages playing with her younger brother who liked Amira to push him up and down on a push along car, and also liked to play with cars.

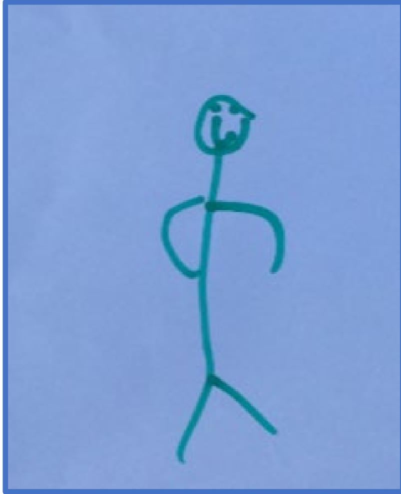
Hassan

(Child drawing activity, 27.4.18)

Hassan's drawing depicts trees with birds on them, which was in response to my question, "*what is important to you at nursery*?" Hassan's love of the outdoors and nature was clear. Fatima, his mum, drew a picture of Hassan picking flowers on the way to nursery and when he was given the camera to record what was important for him at nursery, Hassan photographed things which reminded him of being outside. He was very good at climbing and seemed fearless on the large climbing frame going higher than all the other children.

Like Ahmed, Hassan struggled to go into his ECEC setting, crying, and clutching his father's hand. Of all the participant children Hassan seemed to find his time there most challenging. Hassan preferred not to speak in nursery and like both Ahmed and Amira, he was often alone. There were concerns about his speech and language development because it was not clear if his speech was delayed in both Arabic and English, or whether he was choosing not to speak. Hassan surprised his class teacher as she was sure he would be unable to complete the camera task because she assumed he would not understand. However, during all his interactions with me, it was clear that Hassan could understand English and occasionally he would speak. For example, I showed him pictures and videos of my dog which proved very motivating. Overall, in class, Hassan seemed quite isolated, and his keyperson mentioned that he could hit out at other children. Unlike Ahmed, Amira and Karam, Hassan did not manage to make any links with his peers in class during the project, although during an observation I noted that he hit out at another child in the class, jokingly, as he walked past. The boy responded with a grin. This boy was the only black boy in the class. (Fieldnotes:22.3.18) During one home visit Hassan demonstrated behaviour which suggested that he had significant social emotional and mental health needs (Fieldnotes 27.4.18). Fatima was concerned about her son but at that point Hassan's needs seemed to be viewed by staff at Croft's End primarily as speech and language based, with concern about his ear, nose, and throat health. The school had not secured any extra funding to support Hassan in the nursery. Omar, Hassan's father, also expressed huge concern for Hassan's wellbeing at nursery. He noted how hard Hassan found it to go to nursery, how he refused to talk whilst in nursery and that when he was picked up, how miserable Hassan looked. Omar suggested that Hassan looked like he was in prison.

Karam



(Child drawing activity 16.7.18)

Karam drew this picture of himself at school. He really enjoyed going to school and according to his teachers was achieving well, in some cases outperforming his English peers. Karam was motivated to learn and seemed to take pride in doing well. He was able to concentrate and complete tasks with little support. When I gave Karam the camera and asked him what was important to him at school, he spent ages photographing every child and adult in his class, often organising children into groups or poses. Karam had two special friends Mark and Rafi. Rafi had recently joined the school and was also an Arab speaker. Karam took on board the responsibility to support Rafi in lessons, which his teacher felt had not only helped Rafi, but had helped Karam grow in confidence. Karam played together with Mark and Rafi and was able to speak to both using English and Arabic interchangeably. Yara, Karam's mum, noticed a difference between how Karam presented at school and at home. At school Karam was seen as a lively boy, but at home Yara felt he was often tearful and upset. There were times when Karam seemed slightly impulsive at school (ref Reflective Journal) which caused him to dash about the classroom, this behaviour could possibly have been linked to his mum having to attend hospital appointments because of her ill health which echoed Karam's experiences when his father died in hospital. Unlike the three others, Karam did not have a period of aloneness within the study time, possibly because he was more established and older than the others. However, Yara told me that in his previous nursery, Karam had experienced difficulties with hurting

other children and being isolated, but he had been allocated one-to-one support as staff recognised that his issues were because of his father dying and his traumatic experiences of being a refugee. Karam drew a picture of his father driving a car (Drawing activity 16.7.18). Like his cousin Ahmed and Amira, having a car was important to Karam.

Appendix 20: Email sent to Outsider's group

28.10.19

Hi all,
Thank you for agreeing to help with my research. I have synthesised my findings to a series of headings which I thought I could pass by you for your comments - if that is okay.

Low expectations:

My findings suggest that the adults around the refugee children and their siblings often have low expectations of the children. and their achievements. Some of this may be cultural for the families, as in Syria Early Education is not widespread and does not have the same status as in England. However, three of the four staff teams expressed low expectations before and during the field work or surprise at the final achievements and attainment of the children just before they left. The only staff member who did not, was the reception teacher. She was clear that the child in her class was outperforming his white peers. This school serves a community which is predominately white working class with generational low employment rates, and high levels of challenge for the families.

World separation:

All of the children in the study seemed to actively choose to keep their worlds separate. None of them spoke or shared about their families, unless responding to direct questioning. One parent volunteered briefly in the school, but she noticed how different her son was at school from how he was at home. She said that at home he was more tearful and appeared more vulnerable. There was little or no talk about significant cultural /religious events eg Ramadan either from the settings or from the families. One of the girls seemed to struggle with my presence at times, because I visited her at home and in the setting. One child chose not to speak at all at the nursery, he stopped speaking as he crossed the threshold into the playground.

The way we do things

There were a number of cultural differences which were unspoken and unnoticed which appeared to have the effect of isolating the children. For example: one boys mum reported that he loved to go outside. At the nursery he never went outside. The nursery insisted that he wear suncream. His father, a medical doctor, advised that he did not need it (because he felt the sun was not strong enough to be a problem) and the boy himself could not tolerate it being put on.

The mother of the girl in the study found the relationship with the nursery very difficult and she said that the staff had "yellow smiles" which in Arabic means they smile with their mouths not their eyes. She felt they were not warm, or loving to her daughter. The staff talked about how pissed off they used to get with the mum as she was always late, so they were using the English understated non verbal communication to let her know this. They also felt restrained by the received wisdom about not touching children, so felt unable to express any affection to the child.

The siblings of another one of the boys talked about how they would go down to see him in the playground because they knew he was struggling at nursery. The school leaders barely acknowledged their input in supporting their brother.

Importance of having a friend

Making and having a friend was extremely importance for the children to begin to feel like they belonged and could get involved in the everyday life of the setting. Two of the children made friends with other children who spoke Arabic. One made friends with a child who also did not speak English as her first language and the fourth, did not make a friend. He struggled to interact with the other children and was often left isolated with children actively moving away from him if he tried to join their games.

Lack of understanding /acknowledgement of personal family challenge

All the children experienced significant challenge in their family life. This included:

-mental/physical illness of a sibling or parent

-a special educational need/disability of a sibling or themselves

-racist incidents as a family

-complex issues with the mothers which included: unwanted pregnancies, miscarriage, abortions and an unapproved new marriage

-ongoing grief and loss

-the impact of previous traumatic experiences

-ongoing impact of the war in Syria on family who had not been able to leave.

However, the Early Years education professionals, had a limited understanding of this as much was hidden. A number expressed during reflective discussions that it was hard to remember that the children were refugees with other lives.

Please use these three questions to consider your responses.

- What did you think of that?
- Is there anything which resonates with your own experience of being an “Outsider”?
- Can you briefly describe any incidents or experiences which come to mind as a result of reading these findings?

Many thanks for your support with this,

Donna

Appendix 21: Pedagogy consultation with ECEC staff unrelated to the study

29.1.20

Following the presentation of the findings, the staff were asked the following two questions: What do you think of this and was there anything which stood out to you? They were given time to discuss these in small groups, then asked to make notes documenting their ideas. One person from each group fed back to the larger group.
Following this, they were asked: How might you use these findings to inform your practice? The same process was followed.

Things that stood out		
Group one	**Group two**	**Group three**
"The yellow smile"	The yellow smile was interesting	Yellow smile: common for us but can be seen as fake. Affects relationships between parents and practitioners
The statistics of our nursery – how many EAL children we have	Islands and bridges	
The importance of a friend		Friends brings them out of their shell
Being understanding knowing about background and culture	Different cultural expectations Need to know more about background	How many cultural differences there are and respecting them.
	Cars	Cars were a constant wherever they go
	How quick children learn language	Really resilient
		Have home separate from nursery. Don't like it when they mix
	Low expectations is sad	People having low expectations

Possible changes to practice		
Group one	**Group two**	**Group three**
Forms: more in depth chats with EAL parents	Change enrolment form	Knowing who has refugee status
	Update the ALL ABOUT ME to include a family photo	
Introduce small groups – mixing cultures	Try to introduce a buddying system	Encouraging friendships
Knowing more about celebrations / fesitvals. Talking about them correctly	Organise mosque trip	Recognise key celebrations

Consistency (of staff) to ensure make bonds (with children and parents)	Ensuring we have good relationships with parents	Building stronger relationships with parents
	Parents social evenings/morning. Families to bring something to eat and share	Trying new food
		Learning about cultures
Handovers: Don't take things to heart. Try to explain certain things. Ask them if they understand	Already have books for the children about the nursery, extend this to include books about each child's home	Talk about home more

Analysis and application to practice:

Reflections: 29.1.20

The yellow smile:
The staff were very struck by the "yellow smile" and all were aware that they would/could use culturally understood body language to communicate with parents. They felt that this might need to change, as it could interrupt the relationship between themselves and the parent. It was an establish and agreed norm that relationships with parents were very important. Staff also commented that they must be doing something right because parents were bringing their friends and recommending the nursery, which was why they have seen a significant increase in immigrant, asylum seeking and refugee children attending.

In the Outsiders group micro-aggression and micro-invalidation was mentioned. Unconscious bias discussion. The impact of Orientalism throughout the whole research

Recommendation in terms of pedagogy:
Staff to have CPD/ times of reflection to consider cultural norms and examine their own assumptions/ bias. Consider the "hidden curriculum" Unconscious bias
Also include cultural ambassadors and think about the role of staff

Friends:
This is a very strong theme. In the research one manager said that she felt that making friends happened naturally like children on a beach. But the discussion here and the feelings of the staff was that the setting could and should do more to support children to make friends

Recommendation in terms of pedagogy:
Have a robust policy and system to support children from refugee and EAL backgrounds to make friends. Possibly to include a "buddying" system and the use of carefully crafted small group times.

Greater understanding: culturally and about experiences.
These discussions in the ECEC group were prompted by the Bronfenbrenner model. Staff saw that children sit within a context. I shared about the flag incident in the research and the need for a cultural guide. Staff began to understand that children are impacted by geopolitics even though they are only small. There was a huge commitment to fully understand each child's context. The underpinning Early practice assumption is that each child is unique, and that each child needs and deserves to be fully understood. Staff also felt that it was important for everyone to know the child's

refugee / asylum status. They had not fully considered the impact this may have on the children lives and experiences.

Recommendation in terms of pedagogy:
An examination to be made of all enrolment forms and the ALL ABOUT ME FORMS to ensure that they were fit for purpose and able to capture some of the life experiences of the children and their families

Low expectations:
The staff team did not like this and felt sad about it. They were adamant that this should not be the case. There was a discussion about a little girl from North Korea who had experienced this, which they were aware of. This was also mirrored in the Outsiders discussions, from both doctoral students.

Appendix 22: Invitation letter to the final ethical member checking meeting and follow up email/text

Hi (participant)

I hope you are well and managing in such tricky times.

I am just writing to you as I am in the final stages of my PhD and before it is submitted, I felt that it would be right to share with you and the other practitioner participants the findings of the study. I have already shared these with the children and parent participants.

I am proposing to do this via Zoom for ease and have two possible dates:

Thursday 7th October at 6pm

Monday 10th October at 2.30pm

You and any of your staff who took part would be very welcome to join either of those meetings, and your feedback would be greatly appreciated.

Please do let me know if this is something you would be interested in and I can send you the relevant links,

Kind regards

Donna Gaywood

Follow up email/text to share final findings

Oct 21

I hope you are well.
I am just sending a follow up email in regard to my PhD findings.

I set the Zoom meetings up as I wanted to run the findings past the professionals who enabled and participated in the research, in case there was any feedback I needed to take on board, but I realised it was optimistic to expect people to be able to attend, given the current context.

I presented my findings at a conference in September and it was video-ed. I have been given copyright clearance to share the video in November with any interested parties. It is only 15 minutes long but if you were interested, I could make it available for you and your staff. I would welcome any feedback, however, there is absolutely no pressure to take part,

Please let me know if you were interested in this,
Kind regards

Donna Gaywood

Appendix 23: Record of member checking for all research participant

Name (pseudonym)	Role in research	Job title	Educational level	Ethnicity	Findings feedback accessed
CHILD PARTICIPANTS: primary source					
Hassan	Child participant	n/a	Early Years	Syrian Bedouin	✓ Own story
Ahmed	Child participant	n/a	Early Years	Syrian	✓ Own story
Amira	Child participant	n/a	Early Years	Syrian	✓ Own story
Karam	Child participant	n/a	Early Years	Syrian	✓ Own story
PARENT PARTICIPANTS					
Fatima	Mother of Hassan		Nil	Syrian Bedouin	✓ Hassan's story (unable to attend the full findings meeting)
Zahra	Mother of Ahmed	Archaeologist	Degree +	Syrian	✓ Full findings
Rahima	Mother of Amira		Secondary	Syrian	✓

					Full findings
Yara	Mother of Karam		Undisclosed	Syrian	✓ Full findings
Omar	Father of Hassan	Farmer	Nil	Syrian Bedouin	✓ Hassan's story
Adeel	Father of Amira	Nut business owner	Undisclosed	Syrian	✓ Amira's story
KEYPERSON PARTICIPANTS					
	Keyperson of Hassan	Nursery teacher	Degree	White English	Withdrew for feedback
	Keyperson of Ahmed	Early Years practitioner	Level 3	White English	✓ Video clip of research findings
	Keyperson of Amira	Manager	Level 3	White English	✓ Video clip of research findings
	Keyperson of Karam	Foundation Stage Lead	Degree	White English	Withdrew for feedback
OTHER RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: checking trustworthiness					
	Expert witness/ feedback on Hassan and Karam's story	Head teacher Croft's End Nursery and Infant school	Degree	White English/ Greek Cypriot	✓ Hassan and Karam's story Offer declined for full findings feedback
	Expert witness/Feedback on Hassan and Karam's story	SENCO	Degree	White English/ Egyptian	✓

		Croft's End Nursery and Infant school			Hassan and Karam's story
Mina	Interpreter/ Cultural guide	Designated LA interpreter	Secondary +	Egyptian	✓ Feedback of findings
	Feedback on Ahmed's story	Staff team Dog Lane Nursery	Level 3- Degree	White English Indian	✓
	Feedback on Amira's story	Staff team St Swithin's	Level 3	White English	✓
	Feedback on Hassan's story	Siblings	Primary-secondary	Syrian Bedouin	✓
Bilal	Feedback on Amira's story	Sibling	Primary	Syrian	✓ Amira's story
	Feedback on Karam's story	Sibling	Secondary	Syrian	✓ Karam's story
	Outsider feedback on initial results	Charity CEO	Doctoral student (Care leaver)	White English	Offer declined
	Outsider feedback on initial results	Senior lecturer	PhD	English Black Caribbean	✓ Video clip of research findings
Eduard	Feedback on initial results	Relation and child refugee	Secondary	White Jewish Austrian	✓ Video clip of research findings
RESEARCH INFORMANTS					
	Colleagues	LA team delivering Syrian	Level 3- Degree	White British	Offer declined

		Vulnerable Person resettlement scheme			
	Colleagues	Children Centre Services team	Level 3- Masters	White British Indian	Video clip of research findings sent to manager of team
	Early Cultural Guide	Researcher	PhD	Syrian	Did not require information about findings
	Researcher's father	Retired quantity surveyor	Secondary	White English /Austrian Jewish	✓ Video clip of research findings
	Unrelated team feedback on initial findings to support pedagogy of welcome	City Centre day care nursery team	Level 3- Degree	White English	✓ Full findings