

Movement, meaning and affect and young children's early literacy practices

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This paper reports on an analysis of patterns of children's bodily movements in an Early Years classroom. I illustrate two prevalent patterns identified during close observations of children's walking movements as they followed their interests while accessing continuous provision in an Early Years setting in England. I termed the patterned pathways movement/ interest formations and draw a relationship between these formations and affective atmospheres, suggesting that these atmospheres were created by the dynamics and flows of children's ongoing bodily movements. I propose that affective atmospheres and movement/interest formations are intricately connected to child-produced meanings as children re-imagine, re-shape and re-purpose classroom spaces and materials. In this way I contribute to conceptual understandings role of children's whole bodily movements and the accompanying affective atmospheres in the emergence of young children's literacy practices. My findings substantiate viewpoints that children should be provided with the opportunity to engage in exploratory play and move freely in education settings. Furthermore, I suggest that practitioners be attuned to the affective dimensions of young children's emerging literacy practices in Early Years classrooms.

Key words

Early Years classrooms literacy practices movement embodied meaning making

Introduction: Multimodal Meaning Making and Young Children's Literacy Practices in Early Years Settings

Children's multimodal and playful exploration of the learning environment in Early Years classrooms has long been a topic of investigation. Social semiotic theory (See for example, Kress, 1997; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001) suggests that children's early literacy activity is guided by synesthetic activities which draw on all the senses and involve visual, kinaesthetic and gestural modes. Investigations into children's multimodal orchestrations have extended understandings of the ways in which children's communicative repertoires are shaped by their interactions with adults and peers (Wolfe and Flewitt, 2010). In addition, the materials and resources that surround children both within and beyond education settings have been seen to play a significant role in the kinds of meanings and practices that are produced (Bomer, 2003; Rowe, 2008; Pahl and Burnett, 2013). Wohlwend (2008; 2011) explored the ways in which

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children draw on visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes in order to explore the material world as they engage in multimodal play. Drawing a significant parallel between play and early literacy, Wohlwend (2011), illustrates how children make meaning in diverse ways as they interact with the material environment and with their peers, readily integrating these shared and imagined meanings into their play. In this article I draw from a larger study, informed by these understandings, where I examined young children's meaning making practices in an Early Years classroom during their first year of formal schooling. I came to this study as a former Early Years practitioner, and more recently as a researcher, guided by sociocultural accounts of literacy that acknowledge literacy as a social and ideological practice (Street, 1995). Therefore, I conceptualise literacy learning as deeply embedded within associated relations of power. A sociocultural stance provides important explanations for why literacy practices vary across time and place (Gutierrez, Bien, Seland and Pierce, 2011) and therefore, the potential dissonances between home and school literacy practices (Heath, 1983; Levy, 2011). It is my view that the Early Years classrooms are highly specialised and regulated places where children, with diverse literacy practices based on their own home and community experiences, come together in the joint experience of early literacy. In the light of this, I was keen to undertake a study that would enable me to give recognition to the diverse ways in which children access the early literacy classroom and examine the kinds of literacy practices that emerge during children's play within continuous provision. I considered the ways in which children's practices emerged and the ways in which these were shaped by children's ongoing bodily movements, the classroom organisation, rules and routines, and the material resources provided for children. Here, I draw specifically on two episodes of data generated through my moment-by-moment observation of a class of four and five year old children as they moved and explored. I draw on the concepts of *movement* and *affect* as defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and the

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notion of *affective atmospheres* as described by (Ehret and Hollet, 2014). I draw a relation between what I have termed children's movement/interest formations and the notion of affective atmospheres in order to contribute to understandings of young children's ongoing and spontaneous bodily movement and the ways in which this is patterned and characterised by shifting dynamics, and the ways in which this shapes the kinds of meanings and literacy practices that emerge. During my study I paid close attention to children's ongoing moment as an omnipresent feature of children's classroom explorations. My observations considered movement on a range of scales, for example, children's handling, shaping and moving of classroom materials such as bits of card, moving and handling of classroom finger puppets, and the orchestration of haptic and semiotic repertoires of movements that accompanied interactions around iPads. In addition, I noted the ways in which children's movements played out in relation to the kinds of places and artefacts that children constructed through their playful explorations. Here, my discussion focuses in particular on children's walking movements, and the way in which walking movement led to pathways that often became collective and patterned practices, emerging as what I have termed movement/interest formations. In this way I provide insights into the significance of ongoing patterns of walking movements and their accompanying dynamics, in children's production of meaning in Early Years settings.

Foregrounding Movement and Affect in Accounts of Early Literacy Activity

In recent years, poststructural perspectives have provided insights into the phenomenon of literacy, often drawing attention to what are seen as limitations of structuralist accounts. Leander and Boldt (2012), for example, suggest that existing understandings of literacy are predominantly guided by text-centric views of literacy practices and claim that such views foreground the rational and purposeful design of texts. In order to gain new insights, Leander and Boldt (2012) propose that descriptions of literacy activity should include 'movement,

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indeterminacy and emergent potential' (Leander and Boldt, 2012, 22). The authors suggest observing literacy in the 'ongoing present' with a view to gaining insights into the formation of 'relations and connections across signs, objects, that might take place in unexpected ways' (Leander and Boldt, 2012, 22). Likewise, poststructural concepts of *movement* as defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and *affect* (Massumi, 2002) suggest that the body and its movements and sensations have been neglected in representational accounts of human activity. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) see the human body as moving within space and time, and always in relation to an ever-changing environment. In this way, embodied human experience of moving, being and feeling are given significance. Massumi (2002) drew on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in order to conceptualise affect. According to Massumi (2002), affect is non-conscious visceral bodily experience related to the movement of bodies and the continual passing through experiential states of being, prior to our conscious awareness of them. Affect then, is related to sensations of the body, and not those manifested, generated or initially registered *consciously* in the human brain. Instead, affect is observed through the process of bodies' movements through lived experience, as the body moves, feels and interacts with the flows of energy across people, institutions and nations (Massumi, 2002). Drawing from the work of Spinoza, Massumi (2002) reminds us that affect does not relate to a personal feeling, but rather to the body's capacity for affecting or being affected and to sensations of bodies' movements through lived experience, as the body moves, feels and interacts with the material environment. Deleuze and Guattari state the following:

We know nothing about the body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into a composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or be destroyed by it either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body

Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 257

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The nature of ongoing bodily movements and their interrelationship with meaning making (Wetherell, 2012) and the concept of affect are current areas of significant interest in literacy research. Studies have focused attention to the ways in which children's literacy practices are constructed moment-by-moment in ways that are often unpredictable and surprising. On this point, examining the potential of spontaneous bodily movement sits comfortably with notions of exploratory, open-ended play. Olsson (2009), for example examined young children's movement and experimentation, considering how learning emerged as practitioners followed children's movements and interests. More recently, Hackett (2014) noted pathways made in a museum by two and three year old children and proposed that walking and running constituted "powerful, intentional and communicative practice" (Hackett, 2014, 5). Sellers (2015, 14) drew inspiration from children's movements in order to study the continual flow of change and the potential of the "productive moment of becoming" and hence questioned notions of pre-determined trajectories of learning. The interrelationship of sound and movement as children played together with mud and water has been explored by Hackett and Somerville (2017, 374), the authors proposing that speaking, gesturing and sounding arise from embodied and sensory experiences as children move.

The concept of affect has been drawn upon in literacy education in order to explain the sensory and embodied experience of literacy activity. Focusing their attention to the moving body when working with older children during literacy activity, Ehret and Hollett (2014, 428) propose that the moving, feeling body creates "*affective atmospheres*" that influence meanings that are made in unpredictable ways. The concept of being affected and affecting was explored by Lenters (2016) who suggested that affective atmospheres can be generated by manoeuvrability experienced by children in literacy activity, and that this can open up new possibilities of being and doing. Focusing on the ways in which an 11 year-old boy embellished school practices of writing by including figures from a *Stickpage* website,

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Lenters (2016, 305) proposed that children were 'overwriting' official school texts. Lenters explained how this kind of overwriting opened-up new trajectories in the pupil's writing life and opportunities for "becoming other" (Lenters, 2016, 30). In addition, Lenters illustrated how the affective atmosphere and feeling histories generated by such activity in turn led other pupils in the class to new writing trajectories.

In what follows, I contribute to these discussions, drawing together the notion of affective atmospheres and children's moving bodies. I suggest that the movement/ interest formations I noted from my moment-to-moment observations of children and the affective atmospheres that are produced by the quality and dynamics of children's ongoing movements, are both shaped by, and shape, the ongoing production of meaning and young children's emerging literacy practices.

Methods of Observing Young Children's Movements and the Context of the Setting

The episodes of data presented in this article are drawn from a research study where I adopted an ethnographically informed approach. Field work was carried out between September 2014 and June 2015 and I visited a class of twenty-four, four and five year old children during their first year of formal schooling. The setting where the study took place was in the north of England. Census data illustrates that the school serves a social, cultural and linguistically diverse community of pupils including those of Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Portuguese, and White British heritage. The children were at the Early Years Foundation Stage period of their education, which meant that they were provided with time and space to investigate the classroom and its resources, largely undirected by an adult. The classroom was carefully designed and resourced by teachers with pedagogical goals in mind, as outlined in the statutory orders for this age range (See Department for Education, 2017). During my study I made fifteen two-hour visits to the setting and during this time I focused on the ways in

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which the children accessed the classroom environment and the ways in which children's early literacy practices emerged.

In order to examine children's ongoing activity, I drew on the concept of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to account for the ongoing process of 'convergence and divergence of semiotic, materials and social flows' (Burnett and Merchant, 2017: 223). I considered the meanings that emerged as being in direct interplay across three dimensions as follows: (a) the classroom, its four walls, furniture, norms, routines and practices; (b) the materials available to children; (c) children's bodily movements (See Author, 2018). In my fieldwork, I was guided by the children and followed what I perceived as their intense interest, attempting to interpret the significance of what took place. This meant staying attentive to what was going on around me, and also being aware of the impact of my own presence in the setting. The study was guided by the principles and practices of ethnography and qualitative in its approach (Hatch and Coleman-King, 2015). My regular visits to the setting involved conducting naturalistic observations (Punch, 2009) of children's self-initiated activity. During my visits I would scan the classroom to see where children's interest took them and move closer to observe their activity. On most visits there was some activity or set of resources that seemed particularly appealing and caught children's attention. I took video footage of such activities, sometimes talking to children about what they were doing. I played, where possible, the least adult role (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008), aiming not to interrupt children's usual activity, while equally cognisant that the methods and practices I was employing and my very presence in the setting were complicit in constructing that which I was investigating (Law, 2004). I tried to keep my observations unobtrusive and non-reactive (Scott, 2000) so as to minimise any interruption in the flow of activity that my presence would incur. Data generated included photographs of the classroom, children's activity and artefacts and video footage of children's activity. My field notes contained both descriptive

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and reflective content. Data analysis was inductive (Hatch and Coleman-King, 2015) and involved the multimodal transcription and analysis of micro-moments of activity recorded on video. Through a process of repeated watching and multimodal transcription, I attended to the positions and movements of materials and children across micro-moments. While observing children I sketched the flows of their walking movements and noted the dynamics, speed and direction of movements to try and account for what was difficult to record in words. In this way, my rough and hand sketched diagrams provided impressions of children's ongoing bodily movements moment-to-moment in the classroom. The two movement maps presented as illustrative examples in this article show the main flows and pathways of children's movements during this episode from my perspective as researcher in the field. Eisner (1998) argues that sensibility and perceptivity (which may be seen as subjective) are important in qualitative research as the observer perceives the world through their bodily senses:

The self is an instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it. This is done mostly without the aid of an observation schedule. It is not a matter of checking behaviors, but rather of perceiving their presence and interpreting their significance.

Eisner, 1998, 34

Informed consent was provided by the setting and parents/ caregivers gave written consent for their child's involvement in the study. As I was observing and filming children in 'real time' the notion of informed consent was paramount. Alderson and Morrow (2004) argue that children should be seen as competent minors, and should be given opportunities to provide *consent* as oppose to *assent*. Flewitt (2006) makes a useful distinction between the processes of *provisional consent* and *negotiated ongoing consent*. She asserts that informed consent is very difficult to give prior to investigatory research, as the precise direction of the study may be unpredictable. Instead she presents the notion of provisional consent where consent is granted on the grounds that the research will continue to be negotiated and will

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develop broadly within participants' expectations. This process is built on reciprocal trusting relationships. Negotiated ongoing consent involves the researcher being sensitive to children's responses and involves an ongoing dialogue between participants to ensure there are no ill effects of the research.

As I arrived at the setting each morning, children were assembled on the classroom carpet and working as a whole group with the teacher. After the teacher-led session has finished, the children would leave the carpet. I would scan the classroom to see where their interests took them and move closer so I could observe activity taking place. On most visits, there was some particular activity or set of resources that seemed to be attracting the children's attention. My time was spent fluidly in terms of what I observed and where I moved in the classroom as I followed children as they followed their interests.

Identifying Prevalent Movement/Interest Formations

Reading across my data led me to identify three prevalent movement/ interest formations that emerged as children moved across the classroom, following their interests (See Author, 2018). These include converging movement/interest, focal to radial movement/interest, and focal movement/ interest. 'Converging' was a movement/ interest formation where children collectively brought materials and ideas together to one particular classroom area or space. This resulted in children producing a shared or imagined space, sometimes populated with collected, re-purposed or shaped materials. 'Focal to radial' is a movement/interest formation that arose where children found intense interest in a set of resources or materials in one area and took these from that area, again re-purposing, re-imagining and/ or re-shaping to produce multiple artefacts and meanings, thereby populating different classroom areas with the materials resources and meanings. 'Focal', the third movement/interest formation described here but not illustrated in this article, is where children spend time interacting around a focal

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point, such as a classroom resource/ set of resources. Here an episode of children's meaning making is more likely to remain within that space or focused on or around that particular resource. In this article, I draw particular attention to the affective atmospheres that accompanied converging movement/ interest and focal to radial movement/interest formations as these two formations involved children walking from place to place.

In many ways, the activities and resources that the children engaged with can be seen as tools of literacy instruction (Bomer, 2003), and in unique and often surprising ways, they were indeed taken up as such. The first episode describes what took place around the Disney film Frozen © themed 'spot tray', a film very popular with the children, and the second describes activity that took place as the children became intensely interested in strips of card.

Episodes of Data

Converging Movement/ Interest and the Emergence of the Seaweeds Sea

The converging movement/ interest episode I recount here describes activity that converged around a spot tray (See Figure 1). A spot tray is a hexagonal, usually black, raised- edged plastic tray of approximately 1 metre in diameter. Originally designed for use by builders for the manual mixing of powder/ liquid self-hardening materials such as concrete or plaster, the spot tray is now marketed as a container for small world and other 'messy' play resources.

This one had been decorated with items that were intended to represent the popular Disney movie 'Frozen'©. I observed as one child went to the spot tray, picked up the story characters, and put them down again, with little interest. She wandered around a little and after a few moments, the tissue paper and other bits of coloured paper on the workshop bench caught her attention. Soon the child had taken scissors and had begun to cut up pieces of paper, sitting on the classroom floor. Quite soon she was joined by other children, who also began to collect, cut and arrange materials in a seemingly haphazard way across the floor. I spoke to the child and she informed me they were making a 'Seaweeds Sea' but was too

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intent on her activity to say much more and walked away. Another child, who had recently joined in, interjected and informed me he was cutting out fish. Were the sea and fish prompted by the themed spot tray and its characters, I wondered? Was it the sea that surrounded Anna and Elsa's kingdom and had taken away their parents? Did the bluish-green cellophane and tissue paper with its sea-like colour prompt the emergence of the imagined sea? It had certainly captured the children's interest and the meanings that were emerging appeared to be heavily influenced both by possibilities of the classroom resources and materials and the emergence of their collective interest in such things. This interest had first converged around the Frozen spot tray, then began to spread around a larger, but still converging area of the floor area between the spot tray, the workshop bench, and the classroom door. The scene was patterned by the business of children's hand movements as they cut, arranged or foraged for more cellophane or tissue paper, gestured to each other, passed each other bits of paper, brushed hair out of eyes, or pulled glue off fingertips. Children's walking movements, as they made Seaweeds Sea, were patterned. Pathways taken across the Seaweeds Sea or across from the workbench to the sea were meandering, tentative, full of pauses and slow, but often intensely tentative, creating a meshwork of pathways across the area. Children moved from workshop bench to the floor, and back to the spreading Seaweeds Sea, cutting and shaping as they did so.

At this point, probably prompted by the fact that the Seaweeds Sea was spilling out over the classroom floor and obstructing the official pathway from classroom corridor to classroom, the teacher introduced a second spot tray (See 'children's spot tray' in Figure 1) and directed the children to transport the Seaweeds Sea into the second spot tray. The introduction of the second spot tray and the instruction to put the materials into the spot tray inevitably introduced a differently defined space. Now the tentative cutting, talking, and making, placing of bits of paper and cellophane which appeared unplanned and unpredictable, seemed

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to change. Children's movements became a much more direct, speeded up, to-ing and fro-ing with bits and pieces from the floor to the newly introduced spot tray in repeated movements until the floor was clear. The careful proliferation of bits of paper that were placed into the Seaweeds Sea instead became a tipping, rushed and direct, contrasting to the attentive and deliberate placing that had been taking place before.

Figure 1: The Frozen Spot Tray : Converging movement/ interest (About here)

Focal to radial Movement /Interest and Following the Strips of Card

This second episode began with children's intense interest in strips of card that were placed on the writing material shelving (see Figure 2 below). The strips of card, each of about ten by three centimetres, were neatly stacked in a pile on the writing resources shelving, and at the beginning of my field visit, I had not noticed their presence. I became aware of the card strips as I saw two girls sitting at the writing table, in-role as a teacher and pupil, playing with the strips. One child was pointing, gesturing and instructing the second child to write letters onto the card strip in a very similar orchestration that might occur between a teacher and pupil. A boy came to the writing table, his interest drawn by the two girls' activity, and he asked where he could find the card strips. From that point, what happened took place very rapidly as other children quickly began to show interest in the strips. I watched with interest as children cut, wrote on, and re-purposed and re-imagined the strips in a multiplicity of different ways, taking them to different areas of the classroom as they did so. A number of child produced artefacts emerged amongst the flurry of activity taking place (See also Author, forthcoming). One child produced a lift-the-flap artefact, another produced a tissue-paper-lined carton nest for her cut up letters, a third a strip of writing which was posted into his personal drawer.

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Again, the patterns and dynamics of walking movements that accompanied this production caught my attention as children traversed the classroom, re-purposing the strips as they did so. Children's enthusiasm for this production was notable in the ways in which they moved in and around the area. Walking was important to the meaning and artefacts that were produced as the card strips moved out from the central storage space to other areas of the classroom. This produced novel pathways to and from the place where the paper strips were stored, to the personal drawers, to the workshop area where the tools, or to the computer bench. These pathways quickly formed and as they did so they formed a meshwork to and fro, from writing table, to workshop, to counter. The eruption of the activity and interest in the card strips travelled quickly between and across the children. In turn, children's attention appeared to be captured further by the flurry of movement taking place. This dynamic of movement appeared to be mirrored by the production of child-produced artefacts and objects, which in turn, perpetuated further production and flows of movement.

Figure 2 Following the flow of card strips: focal to radial movement/interest formation (about here)

Discussion: Movement/Interest Formations and Child-Produced Meanings

The data presented in this article are illustrative of the wider study and suggest that children's walking movements play a highly significant part in shaping the kinds of literacy practices that emerged. For this group of children, access to the organised learning environment always involved walking to find something of interest. Children's interest in the classroom resources and each other produced movement/interest formations that were accompanied by fluctuating dynamics of speed and slowness, which simultaneously communicated and generated interest across children. Walking and interest often led to children producing patterned pathways as they assigning imagined meanings to the areas in the classroom. These meanings did not

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appear intentional or pre-planned, but instead often appeared to arise from children's ongoing bodily movements and shared interests. In the sections that follow, I discuss how my observations and analysis suggest that children's pathways and the dynamics of their bodily movements were an inherent part of the meanings that were made collaboratively by children. I suggest that as children played, the dynamics of their collective movements created affective atmospheres that held a communicative or semiotic salience. This semiotic salience was 'contagious'; it fluctuated in dynamics alongside bodily movements, speeding up and slowing down alongside children's production of meaning, meaningful artefacts and places.

The Generation of Shared Movement/ Interest Pathways

Throughout the course of the fieldwork, I had noted those areas more 'open' to negotiation, or more open-ended were always popular haunts. Pathways to and from classroom areas that were perceived as more open-ended were traversed many times. Some of these pathways were official, delineated and marked by furniture, or strips of washable flooring cutting across the softer carpeted areas. Sometimes children followed these. However, children often created novel and improvised routes, as they found quicker, better or more interesting routes to and from the places and resources they liked best. The pathways often joined places that were open-ended to the places where popular resources, often those that could easily be transformed, were stored. Both the official and ready delineated pathways and children's preferred pathways became enmeshed with, and therefore part of, their evolving and changing practices and patterns of movement. Children's pathways when repeated by numerous children captured the attention of further children, who might choose to show interest and join in. As a researcher, observing and tracing children's pathways across the classroom, it was interesting to see how a novel pathway might come into being, how some became repeated and well-embedded into the patterns of children's movements around the classroom. The Seaweeds Sea, a pretend place, imagined by the children and populated with

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re-purposed and re-imagined materials, spread out across the floor. As this occurred, walking movements that converged around the area became patterned by children. As the paper strips were collected, moved and transformed, newly created pathways emerged radially outwards.

The Quality of Movement, Collective Production and Affect

Poststructural perspectives view ongoing movement as the constant state of things. The body is seen as in constant movement in response to the ever-changing environment (Massumi, 2002). By virtue of being a living body within a continually changing classroom assemblage, children bodies in this study are seen as in a state of ongoing movement; Not all movement is seen as deliberately or consciously employed as a communicative mode or an intentional act in pursuit of meaning. As I observed children, watching their movements, I saw movement was the constant state of things, and movement appeared to both *give rise to* the meanings children made and in-turn propel further movement and meaning across moments. Thrift (2007) suggests that aspects of embodied life are attended to as the body is in action, and as such, intentions and decisions may be made before the conscious self is aware of this.

Children's often unplanned and continual movement as they interacted with each other and the material environment was characterised by surges and lulls. What was notable when observing children across episodes were the changing quality or dynamics of bodily movement. Some activities seemed to be contagious as they were mirrored by other children, and this often drew more children into the particular activity or place. I noted how movement appeared to take on a different quality when it became this kind of collective endeavour, and as children took on the ideas and activities of other children. This resulted in a 'speeding up' of production and episodes of highly energetic movement. Movement often became more direct, with an assertive quality. This often led to play taking place across larger areas of the classroom, or branching out into multiple areas. In this way, flows and lines of movement seemed to intensify, speed up and slow down alongside the rapid production of materials and

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meanings. These surges of activity are notable across the data episodes where children quickly took-up each other's ideas and explored their potential. This was manifest in the rapid re-shaping and re-imagining involved around the paper strips, through the differences in the quality of walking movements as the children were making the Seaweeds Sea, or when filling the newly introduced spot tray with materials.

Here I return to Massumi's (2002) proposition that affect is related to sensations of the body and is observed through the process of bodies' movements through lived experience, as the body moves, feels and interacts with the material environment. The rapidity of the re-shaping of materials during card strips episode, and the rapid imagining of spaces during the Seaweeds Sea activity, for example, brought with it shifts in the quality, speed and intensity of children's movements. Affect then, can be seen as manifest in relation to the dynamics of children's movements - direct and swift, slow and meandering pathways, repeated criss-crossing of significant spaces, or intricate and richly dense semiotic orchestrations. The flows of children's movements as they followed their interests and these gathered impetus, appeared to intensify and communicate purposefulness. My observations suggest that affect may be related to feelings or a sense of being able to *do*, *be* or *make* in the ongoing present that emerges across children; for this group of children, re-purposing, re-imagining and re-shaping the classroom and its materials was inextricable from the continual construction and re-construction of meaning, moment-by-moment.

Movement, Meaning and Affective Atmospheres

Across my study, and in the two episodes of data shared in this article, I noted how the quality and dynamics of children's movement appeared to hold a salience that can be described as affective. Massumi (2002) describes how transitions across moments may be accompanied by a feeling of change in capacity and thus drawing a relationship between

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affect and opportunity for manoeuvrability. Children's ongoing activity in classroom contexts then, may be accompanied by sensations of being able to act, to move, or conversely, to be limited in movement and unable to act. This notion provides a possible explanation for the changes in the dynamic quality of children's movements and the movement/interest patterns that emerged. Ehret and Hollett (2017, 256) suggest that "affects sometimes intensify, attenuate, or even cohere in atmospheres that make projects and places feel like something." Through my data it appeared that the dynamics and quality of young children's movement and the child-production of meanings it yielded were relational to affective atmospheres as children made places that 'feel like something' (Ehret and Hollet ,2017, 256). As children made meanings through their movement in this study, collective places where they could participate in doing things together emerged.

In this way, affective atmospheres can be seen as in direct relation with the quality and dynamics of children's collective and patterned movements, and the opportunity to generate meaning and meaningful places together, afforded by ongoing opportunities of being together in the Early Years classroom.

Figure 3 presents a conceptual framework of movement, affective atmospheres and the production of meaning, highlighting the contribution of this paper. The framework proposes that affect for the group of children in this study was generated through the constant change, of the classroom (including the norms, routines and organisation of the furniture), children's bodily movements, and the meaning making potential of the resources available to children.

Figure 3 Conceptual model of movement, affective atmospheres and the production of meaning (about here)

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Implications for Practice: Understanding the Role of Ongoing Movement and Affective Atmospheres in the Emergence of Early Literacy Practices

This study makes a contribution to the field of early literacy in that it foregrounds the significance of children's ongoing bodily movements in Early Years settings as young children's literacy practices emerge. In addition, it draws together current thinking about affective atmospheres, suggesting that these are relational to the quality and dynamics of children's ongoing, collective and often patterned bodily movements as meaning is produced.

Data shared in this article focuses on children's intense interest. Such intense interest inevitably drew my attention to different kinds of movement. In some respects, this is suggestive of the limitations of the study. During my study, while I did speak to the class teacher and teaching assistant, I did not attend to more formal or directed teaching activity, or explore children's home literacy practices. My interest was in the impact of the early literacy environment when children were mostly undirected by an adult. Any representation of ongoing movement can only ever be partial. Furthermore, movement/ interest formations were fluid and unpredictable, emerging rapidly, shifting or changing as children joined, or moved away. Here I have represented my perceptions of the salient flows or movement.

Perceived low standards of literacy are a current concern in England. These concerns inevitably impact on Early Years policy guidance. As I was completing my study, Ofsted (2017) published a report that positioned early learning as preparation for later schooling and called for a move toward a formal approach to the teaching of early literacy, positioning early literacy as a set of discrete individual skills to acquire. In contrast, my study suggests that early literacy is far from a sedentary activity and that young children's early literacy practices emerge from their interactions in flexible environments that allow for free movement and exploration. Where literacy is seen as a sedentary practice, children's pathways, borne from

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their practice of walking, of to-ing and fro-ing, following their interests and each other, can go against the grain of educators' goals or may align with such goals. On that basis, they may be ignored, sanctioned, or applauded. Too much walking, without much deliberation, might be seen as 'off-task' behaviour, or a lack of engagement with the learning opportunities presented in the setting. Here I am reminded of Spinoza's proposition:

The idea of anything that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our body's power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our mind's power of thinking

Spinoza 1996, 76

In order to understand children's diverse literacy practices, practitioners may need to pay attention to and examine the potential of spontaneous movement within classrooms. Focusing on the interrelationship of children being together in the ongoing present in the classroom and seeing the kinds of meanings and places that are produced, positions us well to see learning as a process of becoming where possibilities for being and participating are collectively, materially and spatio-temporarily contingent and realised. My suggestion then follows that of others (Sellers, 2015; Compton Lilly, 2013) in that we need to acknowledge the diverse ways in which children construct meaning and meaningful places together. This involves looking at what is produced and the ways in which literacy comes into being (Kuby and Crawford, 2017). In addition it involves furthering practitioner and researcher understanding the role of affective atmospheres and ongoing spontaneous movement in early literacy learning.

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