

## SELF BEYOND SELF/LOST IN PRACTICE

### *Surveillance, appearance and posthuman possibilities for critical selfhood in children's services in England*

*Submitted by Ruth Hubbard to the University of Exeter  
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## Abstract

The selfhood of social professionals in children's services is under-researched, and where the primary focus is on practice 'outcomes'. Informed by a critical social policy frame this thesis focuses on the selfhood of social professionals in children's services to ask how it might, or might not, be possible to think, and do, self differently. I bring into play a critical posthumanist (non-sovereign) *becoming* self alongside, and in relation to, the other 'allowed' or 'prescribed' selves of neo-liberalism, professional practice and (critical) social policy itself. Utilising theoretical resources, in particular from Arendt, Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault, I characterise this as thinking with both 'surveillance' and 'appearance', and self as an explicitly political project. In a post-structural frame I pursue a post-methodological rhizomatic and cartographic methodology that aims to open up proliferations in thinking and knowledge rather than foreclose it to one clear answer, and where I also draw on a small number of interviews with experienced professionals and managers in children's services. A rhizomatic figure of thought involves irreducible and multiple relations that are imbricated on the surface; it is a flattened picture where theory, data, researcher, participants and analysis are not separate, where all connections are part of an overall picture, and in movement. I argue that social professionals occupy a deeply striated landscape for being/knowing/practising, a particular ontological grid that tethers their selfhood to the pre-existing, and to intensifications in a neo-liberal project. Here, 'rearranging the chairs' becomes *more of the same*, where the sovereign humanist subject is "a normative frame and an institutionalised practice" (Braidotti, 2013, p.30). In thinking otherwise, beyond traditional critical theory, a posthuman lens draws attention to the ways in which we might be/live both inside and outside of the already existing and where we become with others, human and non-human in shifting assemblages. However, the self prescribed and prefigured in dominant discourses constitute the historical preconditions from which experiments in self, and other possibilities may emerge. Practices of de-familiarisation, a radical, non-linear relationality, and a hermeneutics of situation are suggested as strategies for thinking forward, for appearance, and a self beyond self.

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## *Chapter 1*

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Presenting and mapping the territory*

*Dominant strategies do not occupy an empty landscape. They have to overcome resistances, refusals and blockages. For many reasons, the public realm....is part of the 'grit' that prevents the imagined neo-liberal world system functioning smoothly.... The contested fortunes of the public realm are testimony to the limitations of neo-liberalism's plan to rule the world.*

(Clarke 2004, p.44-45)

*If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk around well wadded with stupidity.*

(Eliot, 1973, p.226)

#### 1.1 SELFHOOD AND SOCIAL PROFESSIONALS IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Social professionals operate in the spaces between policy goals and practice outcomes. The task of *securing* the professional to the 'dominant strategies' of any given order becomes, then, part of its project, as alluded to by John Clarke in relation

to neo-liberalism<sup>1</sup>. The battle for the “teacher’s soul” and the “terrors of performativity” (Ball, 2003) indicate that the “ground of such struggles is often highly personal” (p.216), and penetrating. That selfhood is multiply and repeatedly constituted in, or saturated by, material and discursive relations<sup>2</sup> is a broad position explained and advanced from a whole variety of theoretical positions, though with varying degrees of attention to, or the problematisation of, questions of dominance and subjection (and the possibilities for something other – ‘agency’ perhaps). Kitzinger’s simple statement “Identity....is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be” (1989, p.82) *does* direct attention to the operation of power pointing out that we can only name ourselves within, or in relation to, discourses and practices that are permitted us (see also Scott 1992). One paradox of neo-liberalism and its modes of governance is that it claims such a bounty for ‘freedom’ – “the magic of the marketplace” (Cohen and Arato 1994, p.22) - yet offers such a poverty discourse and narrow axis for self. Ball declares “we are none of the things we now do, think or desire” (2012, p.33).

Informed by a critical social policy frame this thesis focuses on the selfhood of a range of social professionals in the children’s workforce – the diverse array of professionals and practitioners in the public, private and third sectors in, broadly, social work, health, youth work and education - to ask how it might, or might not, be possible to think, and do, self differently. This declares selfhood as a central concern for practice but in this (re)claiming I seek to disrupt and to rework an understanding, to move beyond (*or through, or with*) the requirements of self in neo-liberalism, and

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<sup>1</sup> By ‘neo-liberalism’ I mean both a political (commodifying) project and ideological commitments (discursively and materially produced) that promote free market economic (individualism) as the fundamental driver of economic and social progress, and a concomitant residual welfare state.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase ‘material and discursive relations’ refers to the idea that both discursive and material practices may be important; it signals the inclusion here of a variety of theoretical positions that might focus on the material, rather than, for example, a classically poststructuralist emphasis on discursive productions in language. Of course, the discursive can also include the material and my general usage of ‘discourse’ is intended to include both, unless otherwise specified; I do not intend to produce a binary. However, the materiality of lived practices can sometimes be left out of the equation as has been noted by various material feminist theorists and captured in Barad’s (2003, p.801) assertion that “Language has been granted too much power”, and by others such as actor-network-theorists (for example, see Fenwick 2010; Fenwick and Edwards 2010). Discourse refers to specific social conditions that are historically situated and “Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements” (Barad, 2003, p.819).

the alternatives in other 'allowed' discourses, such as those of 'the professional'. I utilise theoretical resources, in particular from critical posthumanism (for example, from Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, and Braidotti) and Foucault and Arendt, bringing into play a non-sovereign (posthumanist) self alongside, and *in relation to*, the prescribed sovereign, humanist subject of the neo-liberal project. I characterise this as thinking with both 'surveillance' and 'appearance', and self as de-centred, dynamic, and emergent.

Children's services in England is a particularly pertinent space for an examination of self given the explicit moves to inter- and multi-professionalism and notions of integrated working that were central to their development; such moves clearly involve an 'encounter' between self and (the new) policy/practice in terms of *who we are* and *what we do*. In this, research themes and approaches (for example, about the nature of knowledge), and technologies, are also swept up. Similarly, Watson and Forbes point out that their slash in 'inter/professional' can be seen "as a moment for disorder/reorder [that] gives warrant for *new conceptualizations*" (2012, p.187, emphasis added). Now might be a good time, then, to ask whether the kinds of selfhood and identifications required for children's services ever held a promise of human flourishing, and to ask, what else is possible?

Epistemologically and ontologically this is not a fixed project in the sense of following through one line of thinking, securely rooted. The 'lining-up' and attempt to secure the selfhood of social professionals as part of the existing policy project assumes "that there is one world, one ontology" (Fenwick 2010, p.88) but (and as Fenwick herself asks), what of the many (or a world that is multiple)? So I seek to expand space, to *make difference*, in terms of the selfhood of social professionals, introducing a rupture, and new connections, to fixed patterns. Here, self can be multiple, and operate simultaneously, in a variety of configurations and connections. This pre-faces a de-centering of the subject, and *movement, juxtapositions*, and (new) *connections* in a kind of 'working the ruins' (see St Pierre and Pillow 2000; Lather and St Pierre 2013) or as 'getting lost' (see Lather 2007; 2008), and as nomadic (Braidotti, 2013), and rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980). And,

in posthumanism, and using the image of rhizomatic thought, this produces a researcher subjectivity which is, itself, an assemblage of movement and transformation in my engagement with theory and data as mutually constitutive and active agents (Lenz Taguchi 2013).

This thesis aims to both de-territorialize and re-territorialize; it can be seen as the collecting or gathering together (in the writing - see Richardson and St Pierre, 2005), of elements towards a particular (novel) assemblage – the rhizomatic (be)coming together of expanded notions of self, with social professionals, with children’s services policy and practice. The introduction of a non-sovereign (posthuman) self into this mix is a molecular or deterritorializing line of flight, to rupture and produce different effects and new possibilities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983/1972, Deleuze and Parnet, 2002/1977). At the same time, in line with a molar or (re)territorializing (stabilising) move this thesis does not deny other productions of self. This attempt is ambitious, something of a hybrid, a double(d) move which takes seriously the production of self and knowledge in multiple ontological and epistemological configurations – not only the rhizomatic but also the linear, as a kind of “ontological politics” (Mol, 1999) or ‘choreography’, in a reparative reading (Sedgwick, 1997). This is self not as either/or but as a “both/and” (Lather 2004, p.2) multiplicity, working together, in connection and in which I, too (as the researcher), am entangled. The juxtaposition of the linear alongside and with/in the rhizomatic also, then, in part, undermines any impression of something called ‘mastery’ or an attempt at some kind of definitive ‘truth’ for:

*The rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight*

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980, p.21)

My thesis title reflects this double(d), both/and approach – ‘Self Beyond Self’ signifies the de-territorializing move and ‘Lost in Practice’ the re-territorializing one; with the slash their tension and interaction.

As it is, professionals in children's services can be described as both everywhere and nowhere (Hubbard, 2010). They are everywhere because professionals are the primary resource between policy imperatives and practice outcomes, therefore pivotal to government agendas. However, professionals are also nowhere – “the missing subject” (Thompson 1990, cited in O’Doherty and Willmott 2001, p.457) - because they are constructed simply as tools, oriented towards, and required, to produce and demonstrate policy outcomes in particular ways, in marketised, managerial and performative (Ball, 2003) policy discourses. Latterly (post 2008), these reflect more than ever the “colonisation of the ‘social’ and the ‘educational’ by the ‘economic’” (Stronach and Clarke, 2012, p.54). Whilst they may never be fully secured, far from shaping practice, professionals appear virtually absent, simply the neo-liberalised and ontologically linearised, technicised, scientised instruments of policy diktat. (And, inasmuch as they fail to deliver to this agenda, they fail as selves.<sup>3</sup>) This invokes a self stripped of self, and therefore disappeared as legitimate territory for contestation, one of “power’s clever ruses” (Allen, 2007, p.2). Both an absent self and a required (tightly deciphered and disciplined) self means discussion of alternatives, or different assemblages for self, is simply irrelevant to the ‘real business’ of improving outcomes – examining notions of expanded or possible selves is not in the neo-liberal/managerial orbit, or at least only insofar as this supports the main agenda. Self (as an expansive project) is in shutdown, as Latour might say, “a closed argument” (Latour, 2004), or a ‘gated community’<sup>4</sup> shielded from examination. This is also the self as lost (or locked) in practice. In the face of the everywhere and nowhere (lost) self, my stance represents an *assertion* of self, and of professionals as people, drawing attention to potential attempts to surface, recover, or develop (spaces for) personhood in practice – and a questioning of the possibilities for ontological reorientations in the ‘post’ (human). This is an attempt

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<sup>3</sup> The situation is captured succinctly by an anonymous reviewer of Ayre and Preston-Shoot’s (2010) *Children’s services at the crossroads*, on Amazon: “Many of us who work in children’s services have become increasingly concerned at how our *confidence and competence* seem to have been gradually and inexorably undermined” (review posted 17 June 2010, my emphasis). Anonymous reviewers aside, in his *Progress Report* following the death of Peter Connolly (‘Baby P’) on changes made as a result of the *Climbie Inquiry*, Lord Laming (2009) also reflects on the loss of confidence of social workers *and*, strikingly, quotes a 16 year old girl who says of her social worker: “She does things by textbook, she doesn’t know me as a person” (p.44)

<sup>4</sup> I have appropriated this expression from Pearce (2013) and her discussion about research communities (p.464)

to displace, disrupt, or to 'sidestep' what have become conventional and powerful conceptualisations about self, and what *effective, efficient, and best practice* is.

I should be clear: whilst questions of self and subjectivity abound in what has been called 'the ontological turn' there is, likely, no government minister, no OFSTED inspector, no senior manager in children's services and no commissioner of children's services that would regard the (critical) selfhood of social professionals as an important (perhaps even as a legitimate) arena of inquiry. Here, I speak with some experience, of long-standing engagement in the academic/professional development of a range of social professionals (and their commissioners). In the tight frame of children's services legitimate questions arise only insofar as they support the main agenda - questions of selfhood are regarded as *simply irrelevant* (perhaps an indulgence) compared to the 'real business' of improving outcomes. In the current policy/practice paradigm such questions are already impossible. This situation is reflected (or pre-figured and enacted) in all the 'machinery' that was developed 'to support' the new services – the new structures required, the quangos, the (pre-defined) outputs/outcomes, the monitoring approaches and methodologies that went with them, the new technologies. And, of course, the new *Journal of Children's Services*, spawned in 2006 by the new arrangements, is in thrall to the quantitative, the scientised, the diagnostic measure or tool, the linearised, the evidence-based, the logic model, the randomised controlled trial....in which (professional) self is absent, *and this absence is seen as desirable*. This is arguably the "disciplining and regulation of inquiry practices to conform with conservative, neo-liberal programs and regimes" (Lincoln and Denzin 2005, p.1116; see also Ball 2003). My point is not so much that particular organisational structures are not, somehow, legitimate, nor that particular approaches to practice cannot bear fruit (at least for someone or something), nor that knowledge cannot be 'produced' in positivism/neo-positivism. It is that this, simply, is limited, and paradoxical – and, in absenting self from the agenda it is at the same time *prescribed, inscribed, and such a limited production* - for those engaged in multiply complex practices, and as part of a (our) public sphere.

So, this thesis is not about 'improving outcomes' in the way that has been prescribed and pre-figured, for this also rests on an ontological assumption of the world consisting of discrete units (including social inter/professionals themselves) connected via straightforward, unidirectional static forces and upon which children's services policy (change) has been premised, and "where policy-making is disconnected from endorsing the openness of the future" (Dewandre 2013, p.10). And, as Radford asserts: "Research cannot deliver the kinds of clear and simplistic lines between evidence and practice or policy that is being demanded" (2008, p.156).

## 1.2 RESOURCES

The approach and resources adopted to look at self here involve not just a question of the dominance of neo-liberalism as an ideological frame of reference and the elucidation of a critical theoretical lens in opposition. However, nor is it to follow the moves in some wider academic (and particularly professional practitioner) literature where there is some questioning and critique of the mode of operation of self prescribed in children's services from a (re)professionalising standpoint. These involve (re)asserting *professional identity/ies* - the policy imperatives for children's services can, indeed, be seen as involving a weakening or de-coupling of self from professional identifications for the purposes of their (re)securing to the new (neo-liberalised) agendas. Hence, counter-responses that attempt to shore up professionalism, professional identities and professional agency where 'professional' stands for something other than a mere tool of policy prescriptions (see, for example, Ayre and Preston-Shoot 2010; Baxter 2011). My suggestion is that these arguments may be limited in a number of ways. Watson and Forbes challenge us, for example, to think about how we might actually envisage the "deterritorializing of professional silos" (2012, p.187) for interprofessional practice. Further, these approaches offer or propose alternatives that continue to be rooted in, and to replicate, the *same structures for self*, that is, as confined within the liberal humanist model - a sovereign self and his (sic) desire for 'mastery'. Both neo-liberal policy formulations and professional discourse are premised on the existence of the

humanist subject. This is problematic if one does not, indeed, see the world (and professional self/practice) as narrowed to, and aligned with, this understanding.

Another line of enquiry could focus on the discursive and linguistic practices that shape (or construct) social realities (and self). However, strict adherence to discursive practices and social construction models can rest heavily on a language/reality dichotomy that tends to a kind of disembodiment where the self is lost in language (games). This also creates problems for linking knowledge to things (Barad 2003); and can come close to a disavowal of real lives going about real business with real meaning (and effects). If poststructuralism has provided important insights about how discourses intersect and overlap, it has been “less effective at providing insight about how discourses.....intersect with phenomena” (Davis, 2008, p. 57). My turn to the posthuman, therefore, is not a turn to the linguistically created self but one to the performed, enacted, materialising, and entangled, in its *doings*.

### 1.2.1 *The dominance of humanism*

Enlightenment thinking posits Man as conscious and self-regulating with an infinite capacity for rational thought and advancement. The principal dogma of humanism is that of the separation of human from nature, the idea that to be human is to transcend the biological and evolutionary. This asserts the primacy of mind over materiality and embodiment, and makes the human independent of other life forms, conferring him (sic) with reason, authority, autonomy and agency (Wolfe, 2010; Nayar, 2014; Braidotti 2005, 2013) and with a “voice....emanating from a unique, essentialist subject conscious to itself” (Mazzei, 2013, p.734). This Cartesian dualistic separation of mind and body from which flows multiple other binary distinctions – man/woman, self/other, science/nature, black/white - is that upon which our organisation of the world appears to depend.

The self in a classical humanism, then, “derives directly from ideals of human perfectibility, rationality, and agency inherited from Renaissance humanism” (Wolfe,

2010, p.xiii). Here the human operates in opposition to a world that he (sic) can master and control or at least follow a course of action in accordance with his needs, desires and wishes in a way that produces history (Nayar, 2014). In addition, the 'human' as it emerges from its historical configurations is normatively Eurocentric, white and male, with its mirror images (women, disabled people, ethnic minorities) confirming the same. In this way processes of 'othering' and classifications of the less-than-human highlight exclusions from the ideal - not only are humans privileged over other forms of life, likewise some kinds of humanity (Nayar, 2009; Braidotti, 2013); this particular 'human' in humanism has formed the basis of widespread critique, particularly from feminist and post-colonialist perspectives.

According to Braidotti, the sovereign humanist subject called forth is "a normative frame and an institutionalised practice" (2013, p.30) as well as bedding down in a universalising and Eurocentric "civilizational model" (*ibid*, p.13) founded in its faith in human self-reflexive reasoning and progress. In its working through in (a dominant) liberal humanism, the self is an autonomous, independent individual with agency and responsibility; it is through the exercise of a conscious and self-governing will that the subject achieves individual freedom and mastery (Hayles 1999). In more radical forms humanism emphasises solidarity, collective endeavour and social justice. But in both formulations the humanist subject is writ large and separate from other things in the world.

In this world-view, a (pre-existing, sovereign, knowing) subject thus has the capacity to act *on* the environment, *just as is assumed in policy and practice configurations for children's services*. Neo-liberalism is premised on just such a rational, free subject with agency and, as I have suggested above, the requirement placed on (the self of) practitioners is to align to a neo-liberalised children's services project. In this commodification (or interpellation) of self, what is involved is a continual (re)production, refinement and demonstration of self as reasoning instrument directing, acting on, and intervening in, the practice arrangements of particular settings – what happens (and what is demanded) in children's services practice rests on the existence and (re)production of the liberal humanist subject. Hayles

describes the liberal humanist world as one involving a close relationship between a desire for mastery, an objectivist account of science, and an imperialist project of subduing nature and where “conscious agency is the essence of human identity” (1999, p.288). Not only does this prescribe particular humanist selves, the backdrop of policy is, likewise, based on its assumptions, and most research follows suit.

### 1.2.2 *Posthumanism and monism*

Coleman and Ringrose (2013) note shifts in social science that move away from the linear and that might require us to pay attention to the world as mobile, messy, creative, changing and open-ended, and sensory and affective. It is this kind of world (the world of children’s services practice) that I suggest is not captured by dominant modes of research, policy and practice that, as part of this world, also assume the largely stable, coherent, responsible individual of an underpinning humanism. In turning to a critical posthumanist frame, I am encouraged by Foucault who, in ‘What is Enlightenment’ asserts:

*....the critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered.....as an attitude.....in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed upon us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them*

(Foucault, 1984, p.48)

The autonomous subject of enlightenment thinking and as the centre and observer of the world, is de-centred in posthuman ontology - we are not the ‘history-makers’ or disembodied intellects, nor is the world passive and inert waiting our inscriptions or agency (Deleuze and Guattari 1987/1980; Barad 2007). As Hayles tell us: “In the posthuman view....conscious agency has never been ‘in control’” (1999, p.288).

A recently coined term, posthumanism runs through the history of ideas, for example in Nietzsche and Spinoza. If humanism rests upon Cartesian dualism, then posthumanism turns to the moral philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, and monism. Here there is only one single substance in the world where things are inseparable (Grosz, 1994), there is oneness, one living matter – a nature-culture continuum (Haraway,

1997), and “bodies are not substances but rather modifications of a single substance” (Manning, 2012, n.p.). From this oneness, all other things flow – everything is connected, mind and body are not separate but, actually, both are ‘bodies’ and able to affect each other *in relation*. This means what we are internally, and the external world we seek to control and ‘work on’ (as humanist subjects), as well as all the borderlands between the two is not up to us exclusively, but are outcomes of interacting forces. It is also why Barad (2003, 2007) prefers the term ‘intra-action’ rather than interaction, to capture how things *get inside each other*, rather than simply exist as separate from each other; this evokes a ‘skinlessness’ to people and things, whereby they are enabled to affect and change each other both inside and out. Deleuze reminds us of Spinoza’s seventeenth century exclamation in his *Ethics III* - “We do not know what the body can do” - and Deleuze continues:

*This declaration of ignorance is a provocation. We speak of consciousness and its decrees, of the will and its effects, of the thousand ways of moving the body, of dominating the body and its passions – but we do not even know what a body can do.*

(Deleuze, 1988, p.17-18)

This blurring of boundaries between all things in the world obviously conflicts with Cartesian rationalism and the separation of mind and matter – it turns out that “these are not dualistic entities structured according to principles of internal or external opposition” (Braidotti, 2013, p.56).

Instead, the world is one that “incorporates important material and discursive, social and scientific, human and non-human and natural and cultural factors” (Barad 2003, p.808) together, as parts of the same. This, then, involves a turn to the relational, the material, and a self not as pre-existing, not “sovereign, coherent and autonomous” (Nayar, 2014, p.2), but as multiply diverse and performed/enacted, in the middle<sup>5</sup>. Here agency “is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurations of the world” (Barad 2003, p.818), in entanglement, as becoming, as an effect of

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<sup>5</sup> A number of general formulations can be posited here, including self as enacted, emergent, becoming, performed, effected; these are utilised in particular ways according to specific theoretical formulations – my point here is a general, post-humanist one about self not pre-existing.

relations not *vice versa*. 'Experience' in these posthuman formulations is outside ourselves, something bigger than us that overflows, it can include "a draft, a wind, a time of day, a stream, a place, a battle, an illness" (Deleuze, 1995/1990, p.141) involving an experiential, affective encounter with difference through which we *make* meaning. It is not an individual property, it is "contextual and collective, therefore a singular experiential event is (as yet) subject-less" and "subjects are constituted in relation *within experience itself*" (Semetsky, 2010, p.477, emphasis added). The self is a part of the forces, intensities, connections and flows-in-movement that is life (Braidotti, 2005). This is a 'post'(humanist) space of becoming heralding an attempt at "enlarging the space of the possible" (Osberg, 2010, p.xiii).

This theorisation of selfhood draws attention to the ways in which we might be/live both inside and outside of the already existing (and beyond the humanist sovereign and *a priori* subject of liberal individualism). In this respect, Spinoza's moral philosophy is one that emphasises joyful, affective relations (Deleuze, 1988) where "matter is one, driven by the desire for self-expression and ontologically free" (Braidotti, 2013, p.56). 'Joyful' relations are those where the self/body can be composed in productive, expansive, multiplicitous relations with other things (human and non-human) in the world (Deleuze, 1988). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Ringrose captures this, "we have to analyse what the affective capacities of assemblages are in political and ethical terms – are they 'life-affirming' or 'life-destroying?'" (2011, p.602).

### 1.2.3 *Performativity, and bringing things into relation*

Posthuman relationality involves a deliberate uncertainty, an opening to, and interest in, the formation of novel bodies and existences (whether human, conceptual, technological and so forth), and the ways they are mutually implicated, co-existent, tangled and imbricated on the surface (St Pierre, 2011a). It guides us to an interest in the *practices through which knowledge is produced* (what is in the mix, the assemblage). This involves a consideration of relationships between

material and non-material things that *produce* self, or through which self emerges, at any given time or moment, and what new effects might be enabled if one introduces new elements in relation. This performative view, emphasising practices, stands in contrast to a representational understanding of the relationship between science and the world where science seeks to represent nature and produce knowledge that is a map, or mirror, of a reality (Pickering, 1995), but is separate from it (words and things exist in separate domains).

Instead, the world is “continually doing things, things that bear upon us not as observation statements upon disembodied intellects but as forces upon material beings” (Pickering, 1995, p.6). This directs our attention to the potential limits of self in current formulations and the things that might be brought together in relation - whether they be material, conceptual, technological and so forth - for new emergent formations. Here self is a participant in these formations and not *a priori*, and a product of multiplying configurative practices. This means self is in a continuous process of subject and bodily formation through discursive formations and practices – bodies *materialize* inextricably interwoven with how they are represented and become and in interaction with things (Butler, 1993). By introducing new configurative elements into the mix, then, in (affective) relation, different effects (selves) might be produced. This performativity locates knowledge in what is happening, in multiple practices in the world.

#### 1.2.4 *Posthumanist differing*

The monistic world of posthumanism also draws attention to what is ‘other’ *as part of the same*, that is, things are not strictly different/other but, instead, we are engaged in *processes of differing* depending upon the ways in which ‘things’ (ideas, technologies, bodies) are brought into different configurations and connections, as they can be *ad infinitum*. This is why Deleuze and Guattari assert that “pluralism = monism” (1987/1980, p.20) because the (one) world multiplies according to ongoing, dynamic configurations. Likewise, Lorraine refers to moving beyond “oppressive self/other relations...[and]...the differentiating force of life itself” (2008, p.60) and “a

range of continuous variations in human living” (2011, p.81). This confers a kind of plenitude on the self as it moves, and makes new relations with, things in the world, both affecting and being affected. The point is to keep producing new configurations for self in practice. One might ask what is the point of producing more and more multiplicity because in the end one has to decide, or to act (for example in children’s services). However, if one sees the world as performative, and engaged in knowledge *practices*, one cannot separate thinking about or being, from acting or doing; for example, our descriptive accounts are themselves specific ways of relating things and enacting reality, we already construct self as we argue about how to construct it. Making multiplicity *is* action and enacts reality in what it enables to exist; discussion is decision-making or normativity in action.

#### 1.2.5 *Posthumanism and perspectivism*

It is important to understand that posthumanism is not an *alternative perspective* where we perhaps make some argument or establish some facts about it, then (re)look at self in children’s services where, for example, posthumanism can be brought to bear, in a disavowal or negation of the liberal humanist subject. In a monist posthumanist world this is, of course, not possible. Productions of the subject in humanism are, simply, part of the complex mix of relations in the world, but they cannot be negated. It is the world itself that is multiple rather than it being possible to have multiple perspectives *on* the world and decide between them. Perspectivism maintains the distinction between an object and how we experience it, forcing endless (re)productions of that distinction, for example in research formulations. In posthumanism as performative, involving the foregrounding of practices, things cannot be entirely rejected, only reconfigured, or brought into new relations, for the formation, enactment and production of things. The introduction of a device, idea, technology and so on can become a new part of a configuration and can help produce different effects, but it cannot *negate* other existences, only multiply them. This relationality makes for a vibrant reality. In her research work in healthcare in a Dutch hospital, Annemarie Mol foregrounds practices in this way highlighting the performative practices of different kinds of health professionals in

relation to complex health problems. Here, she says, “reality multiplies” (Mol, 2002, p.5) as an inherently complicated and multiple and fragmented assemblage in relation, and where various pieces of data relate and are in juxtaposition with each other; she says this is inherently productive for treatment practices. It ‘unbrackets’ practices (from *representing* merely different perspectives to be decided between), and makes all different realities significant and consequential. The point is to bring new things into relation, and to see what happens.

There are, then, key ontological (and epistemological) issues at stake here. These emerge and work through a situation where the policy, professional practice (and, for that matter, related research discourses) available to children’s services practitioners are anchored, more or less, to versions of the Western humanist subject. This is a sovereign self “endowed with a will, a freedom, an intentionality which is then subsequently ‘expressed’ in language, in action, in the public domain” (Butler 1995, p.136) – ‘the professional’ acts on ‘the environment’. Different ontologies, as Mol demonstrates, can generate different realities; in posthumanism, different things and different people (selves) can become-with, or transform, each other.

#### 1.2.6 *Power, surveillance and appearance*

In *critical* posthumanism, not all things are equal in terms of their influence in the world. Foucault and Arendt also provide some theoretical resources that potentially help to organise thinking posthuman personhood, and as effects of power. For both, self is not a natural or given entity (so they align with a posthumanist understanding as described), it is a political project involving power; both analyses see self as emerging from systems of social relations (and, importantly, involving a non-sovereign self). However, Foucault’s account characterises self as constituted in “spaces of *surveillance*” (Marquez, 2012, emphasis added) subject to specific ‘disciplinary’ and ‘normalizing’ technologies that profoundly shape the constitution of self and what becomes possible, and that implicate self in reinscriptions. Thinking

with Foucault, then, is to consider how power implicates the production of selfhood in its re-making. Arendt's more optimistic account conceptualises power as communicative (and desirable in itself), hence the emergence of self in "spaces of *appearance*" (Marquez 2012, emphasis added) through 'action', and in the context of plurality. Thinking with Arendt, then, is to stress the condition of being an actor as inherent with possibility (for presence/appearance) *through engagement* with others.

The spaces and interaction of surveillance and appearance are thus implicated in the production of critical selfhood, in the dynamics of being both implicated in reinscriptions (Foucault) and, at the same time, being an actor with potential to create newness (Arendt). This is not to (try and) create a binary (or reintroduce mutually exclusive perspectives) between 'surveillance' and 'appearance'. After Foucault, Sharon (2012, p.12) points out the possibility of reinstating modern categories in efforts to capture something new or think differently; this would be a reversion to Cartesian dualism and the point is more to work what 'surveillance' and 'appearance' can do, in intra-action. This is less to pit deconstructive/postmodern potentials versus the disciplinary and modern (in Sharon's case in relation to emerging biotechnologies), more to show how they might co-exist, tangled and imbricated on the surface, in becoming (St Pierre 2011a). As Barad explains: "individuals emerge through, and as part of, their entangled intra-relating" (2007, p.ix).

So surveillance and appearance are intended to draw attention to the conditions, balance, or dynamic mix/infusions perhaps reflecting moment-by-moment opportunities and risks for selfhood in complex practice assemblages or operations and that, rather than simply involving the "shuffling round of foundational categories" (Sharon 2012, p.12) might also capture their co-relations as more than, simply, intersections, but as mutually constitutive. I am suggesting there may be a multi-faceted, interrelated, ever changing interplay of spaces of appearance and surveillance for the production of selfhood in appearance, sometimes operating at the same time, and in which the workings of power (in neo-liberalism) are taken as

part of this, as read . That is, the narrow performative self identified, for example, by Ball (2003) and Stronach and Clarke (2012) that is prescribed and inscribed as economised, mechanised and marketised, in policy technologies of neo-liberalism – in surveillance – may always already be there.

This means that the ways in which the multifaceted systems operating in children’s services flow through and with particular selves (‘surveillance’) are a significant sphere for analysis and critique, but the point is to unsettle and disrupt these perhaps as a form of “ontological politics” (Mol, 1999). The bringing into relation and the juxtaposition of a different (posthuman) ontology for self - in tension, fluid, affective, and as leveraging different formations, is a “focus on making difference rather than making similarity” (Fenwick 2010, p.92). Moulard-Leonard describes what might be thought and done as:

*experiments in living that push towards a threshold of another kind of self: can we extricate ourselves from the connections and assemblages of which we are a part in order to form new assemblages more in keeping with the unfolding of our new capacities?*

(Moulard-Leonard, 2013, p.103)

### 1.3 CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

I should reiterate that my work is not about trying to produce a ‘successor regime’ for self (the new, real story of self) – Foucault, Butler, and many others make it clear that this would simply be to court continuing participation and reabsorption in what already exists. Nor is it an attempt to domesticate further, by ‘explaining’ the workings of self more thoroughly or presenting a more inclusive notion of self, I seek to transgress the boundaries and structures of that (permitted) self. And I do not wish to reduce what practice is to the workings of self, nor essentialise the subject (whether of professionals or of users). To focus on selfhood and claim it as important in itself, and for practice is, then, not to centre the subject – in fact, I have presaged a radical de-centering, in assemblage – however “a deconstruction of the

subject does not liquidate the subject” (Herbrechter, 2013, p.196) – people remain important.

To bring the selfhood of social professionals into an encounter with posthumanism is to challenge “the panoptic immunity” (Miller, cited in MacLure, 2010, p.3) of the liberal subject, where current policy and practice configurations act as (Foucault’s) panopticon - a prison for the self - and are resistant to different formulations. That is, policy and practice in children’s services is predicated upon the existence of the liberal humanist subject, this is not questioned and, moreover, the requirement for the practitioner is to tether ‘self’ to its neo-liberal project. The posthuman brings an assertion that, actually, the “states of things are neither unities nor totalities, but *multiplicities*” (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002/1977, p.vii) and so cannot be rooted in a narrowly defined liberal humanist subject. What critical posthumanism does is to open a space for discussion and argument in relation to the actors (human and non-human – technologies, ideologies, organisational arrangements and so forth) that enable and enact quite particular selves. Our posthuman condition, beyond the tethered self of liberal humanism suggests people (and objects, ideas and so on) are networks, or *gatherings*, not simply to be represented, and are also themselves representative of multiple others. Posthumanism suggests that self is linked to the particular assemblages with which self is in relation; elements in the assemblage enable existences in particular ways and enact particular realities. Bringing posthumanism into play, into a relational mix, expands the assemblage to potentially lever new selves.

If neo-liberal and professional discourses foreground the production of selves in their own image(s), then posthumanist becoming in assemblage is, likewise, productive and performative - “a generative tool” (Braidotti, 2013, p.5). This draws attention to what might be going on in the production of self beyond liberal humanist subjects. This adds to self, conferring plenitude and abundance on the narrow and neo-liberalised self. It is in the connections and interactions between humanist and post-humanist signifiers and shapers that something new, (a vision of) self beyond self, might emerge.

This brings some difficulties as, whilst the 'turn to the self' (at least in Western thought) has become increasingly prominent in much social theory, theory and practice appear to be going in opposite directions - as social theory engages with self, policy and practice (for children's services) arguably diminishes it. Whilst this suggests fruitful territory for research investigations, it also cautions whether discussions of self can bear any fruit alongside the powerful, commodifying neo-liberalised discourses, whether there is really any 'elbow room' in practice for discussions of different selves. Putting "'post' ontology to work" (Lather and Pierre, 2013, p.631) in dynamic interaction with the profoundly prescribed challenges a situation whereby government policy, regulatory apparatus, institutions and organisational arrangements, and a whole host of practices attempt to cohere, coalesce and line up a self in their own image, deeply impacted or, for example, as implicated, or as a desiring machine<sup>6</sup>. To bring into play a non-sovereign self alongside the powerfully commodifying is, then, a big move - it attempts to shift or flip, as well as to expand and traverse, the territory, to bring new possibilities and potentials.

In this thesis I argue that the selfhood of children's services professionals is under-researched and also, despite the availability of social theoretical resources, always secured to versions of the liberal humanist subject, and one particularly required by neo-liberal and managerialised policy-making and implementation (but also by professional identifications and discourse). I have introduced this self utilising a number of descriptions – as the everywhere and nowhere self, as lost or locked in practice, and self as a 'gated community' - the humanist subject aligned with a prescribed self of neo-liberal policy frames is a narrowing of self. My premise is that the self(hood) of social professionals in children's services is important - professionals operate in the spaces between policy prescriptions and practice outcomes – and the importance of self is the case in itself, for practice, and as linked to a dynamic public sphere (for democracy) – it is political. In moving beyond

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<sup>6</sup> This is a reference to the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion that institutions can be productive of desire (see also Watson's (2009) vivid descriptions of her "Complicity/Resistance" in this frame (p.22).

standard, critical theoretical moves, my overall research question is to ask how it might be possible to think (and do) self differently, and this can be expanded in three further questions:

- (i) How, and in what ways, is the selfhood of children's services 'professionals' pre-figured and constituted?
- (ii) How might posthumanism (as a generative tool, and brought in to relation) help in re-thinking and re-framing the selfhood of social professionals?
- (iii) What might be thought and done then, in connection between the prescribed, and the open?

Chapter two develops the ontological and epistemological positioning outlined, and explicates my research strategy and methods.

## Chapter 2

### METHODOLOGY AND BECOMING-RESEARCHER

#### *Research strategy and methods*

*Each researcher who puts the “posts” to work will create a different **articulation.....remix, mash-up, assemblage, a becoming** of inquiry that is not a priori, inevitable, necessary, stable, or repeatable but is, rather, created spontaneously in the middle of the task at hand, which is always already **and, and, and.....***  
(St Pierre 2011, p.620, emphasis in original)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

When (knowledge and) research is seen as performative, ‘science’ becomes a practice that enacts particular realities, rather than providing answers about the world as we ‘know’ it. This entails risks because it brings with it questions about the particular practices one engages in through which knowledge is produced or assembled, and what is brought to bear, or not. Why this particular ‘invention’ of reality and not that one, when, in a monistic world, everything can be connected to everything else? Understanding research as performative draws our attention to the prevailing configurations and representations and the ways they interact dynamically with and are productive of self; a sovereign and pre-existing self is not assumed. Prevailing assemblages (and how its elements work together) for self are important. In this thesis existing possibilities for, and representations of, self in children’s services are seen as productive of self-practices that are *pre-figured* in certain ways (and dominant), they order the world of self in particular sedimented or ‘gridded’ ways. They are important because they cannot be expelled or ‘disproved’ as in a classical view of science and the world, in the monistic domain of posthumanism

that I have outlined, they remain part of the mix. Paying attention to existing configurations for the emergence and practice of selfhood does, however, provide a starting-point and potential for introducing novel elements that can be productive of different or new practices of self. By focusing on how self is produced in current representations, policy and practice in children's services, this opens up spaces for discussion, contention and the possibility of different or novel configurations in a relational mix or assemblage, and a self beyond the existing. The theoretical (and ontological and epistemological) resources I have outlined help to lever these spaces, and their assumptions are embedded in my research questions.

This chapter develops (my rationale for) the research strategy employed, firstly in relation to the already existing ; that is, I locate the research approach with/in and alongside existing paradigmatic research typologies. Then I discuss the research 'apparatus', mechanisms and methods employed for a performative and relational (posthuman) research practice. This leads to (is productive of) the four subsequent chapters which are all responses to the propositions that the selfhood of social professionals in children's services is pre-figured, and that thinking in the posthuman, by introducing it into the mix, can potentially expand or reorient the landscape for self. The chapters *do* different things, but In their different ways, they are all consequent upon the introduction of 'posthumanism' and *in relation* to existing representations and configurations for selfhood.

## 2.2 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

*Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things,  
animals or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within  
them* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980, p.290)

At the workshop 'The subject and language in the "posts"' at the 2013 *Summer Institute in Qualitative Research* at Manchester Metropolitan University, Elizabeth St Pierre presented the latest iteration of her and Patti Lather's *Postpositivist New*

*Paradigm Inquiry* table<sup>7</sup>, and this is reproduced in table 1, over. This table, like others (for example, Guba and Lincoln 2005), can be used as a means of distinguishing different paradigms (worldviews) in the classic formulation of ‘epistemology driving theoretical perspective, driving methodology, and methods’ (for example, see Crotty, 1998). They are based on Kuhn’s paradigms that are differentiated by “incommensurable ways of seeing the world differently and of practicing science in it” (Kuhn 1996/1962, p.4). Traditionally, then, a Kuhnian paradigmatic incommensurability has driven research within set paradigmatic ‘fields’. These are founded in “the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.105) as they are:

*essentially intellectual cultures.....fundamentally embedded in the socialization of their adherents: a way of life rather than simply a set of technical and procedural differences*

(Oakley, 1999, p.155).

Hence typologies, such as Lather’s and St Pierre’s abound<sup>8</sup>. Theirs, however, tends to try and indicate more movement and complexity (and the possibility of *less* incommensurability) than some others, despite the separations of the table. In addition, their version is also more extensive in terms of an expansion (in labels applied to) particular positions (in the two right-hand columns of the table), after ‘structural’ methodologies.

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<sup>7</sup> Previous iterations of this table are in several publications and journal articles, notably Lather (2006; 2007) in which she also gives an account of its development (p.37 and p.164 respectively).

<sup>8</sup> It is still quite common to find a small number of competing alternatives, for example, divisions drawn along quantitative and qualitative lines and a distinction between positivism and interpretivism; sometimes these two dimensions are conflated (quantitative/positivism vs qualitative/interpretivism) although many others have shown how these divisions are by no means clear cut and mutually exclusive (eg Hammersley 2007; Crotty 1998). Guba and Lincoln (1994) are amongst those that distinguish critical approaches in addition to positivism and interpretivism, and O’Donoghue (2007) adds postmodernism. Zuber-Skerritt (1996) posits educational action research as a core paradigmatic approach. In their detailed typology, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) offer positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism and participatory (after Heron and Reason, 1997) paradigms.

Table 1

Postpositivist New Paradigm Inquiry

<i>Predict</i>	<i>Understand</i>	<i>Emancipate</i>	<b>Break</b>	<i>Deconstruct</i>	<i>Next???</i>
*Positivist	*Interpretive	*Critical		*Poststructural	Post Post
Neopositivist	Naturalistic	Neomarxist		Postmodern	Post theory
Mixed methods	Constructivist	<Feminist>		Postcolonial	Ontological Turn
	Phenomenological	Critical Race Theory		Post-critical	New Empiricisms New Materialisms Citizen Inquiry
	Ethnographic Symbolic interactionist	Praxis-oriented <Freirian Participatory Action Research		Post-humanist Post-Fordist	Neopragmatism
	Interpretive mixed methods	Gay and Lesbian Theories Critical Ethnography		Queer Theory  <Discourse Analysis Race-feminist Poststructuralism (Wanda Pillow) Postparadigmatic Diaspora (John Caputo) Post-everything (Fred Erickson)	Participatory Dialogic Policy Analysis

\*Indicates the term most commonly used

<Indicates cross-paradigm movement

**Break** indicates a shift from the modernist, structural, humanist theories/discourses on the left to the postmodern, poststructural, post-humanist theories/discourses on the right. In the post theories, all major epistemological, ontological and methodological concepts (e.g. language, discourse, knowledge, truth, reason, power, freedom, the subject, object, being reality, method, science) are deconstructed

Reproduced from Lather and Pierre (revised July 2013), originally Lather (2006). Presented by Elizabeth St Pierre at 'The subject and language in the "posts"' workshop 24.7.13 at the *Summer Institute in Qualitative Research: Putting Theory to Work* 22-26 July, 2013. Education and Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Paradigms (and their methodologies) in the positivist, interpretive and critical traditions (the left-hand columns of the table) rely on a self-contained structure (often of a dualist nature, involving a number of binaries such as subject/object, nature/culture) and system of methodological rules that guide thought to (better) truths (knowledge). For example, Jennifer Greene, in responding to (questioning) a collection of diverse explorations of 'post-qualitative research' in a Special Issue of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (2013), captures her own position as a blend of interpretivism and critical theory and simply states she thinks of research as "the systematic process of recording and analyzing information about targeted phenomena....toward better understanding of those phenomena" (Greene, 2013, p.752)<sup>9</sup>. This indicates an attachment to theories linked to a tripartite Enlightenment ontology (what is in the world, what is real), as separate from epistemology (what we know about the world) with the further separation of the research subject (who knows it). In addition, there is an orientation here towards a better understanding of *what already exists*.

Poststructuralist responses have involved a questioning of what already exists, and an orientation to *deconstruction*; in particular, poststructuralism has drawn attention to how meaning (including the subject) is constituted by language and the discursive, and so inherently unstable. As part of this, the link between knowledge and power (in critical perspectives) has also been (re)worked in poststructural formulations. Grasswick (2011) argues, for example, that it is *situated knowing* (Haraway, 1988) that is the most influential concept to have been developed out of feminist epistemologies, the assertion that knowing is located and limited, and linked to one's social location (and power). She asks "if knowledge is situated then in what sense can knowledge be objective....[and]....if social location limits one's knowledge, how can we know *across* social locations?" (2011, p. xvi). As a result, many have sought to combine critical theoretical positions (such as from feminism) with (newer) poststructural perspectives to work towards a whole variety of 'liberatory

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<sup>9</sup> Greene (2013) is chosen here to exemplify as she specifically responded to an invitation to explain her (very different) approach *alongside* a collection of articles all working with the 'post-qualitative' in the Special issue cited.

epistemologies'. Poststructuralism has thus generated a wide range of theoretical positions and methodologies, particularly in relation to discursive and linguistic practices, and social construction models that are *not* to do with a better understanding of what already exists, but seek to unsettle the apparent stability on which such understandings are based. Hence, they also challenge methodology as a set of (disinterested, objective) rules that guide the researcher to 'truth' or a better understanding. As Coleman and Ringrose (drawing on Law and Urry 2004, and Barad 2007) comment: "social science methodologies not only describe the worlds they observe but...are involved in the invention or creation of the world" (2013, p.1).

However, a number of emerging bodies of thought have further critiqued and challenged classificatory paradigmatic/methodological approaches, and their epistemic bases. In looking back at Lather and St Pierre's classification (*Table 1*), positivist, interpretivist and critical paradigms can be understood as linked to modernity, and a poststructural paradigm as emerging from conditions of postmodernity. For my purposes, the difficulty with both of these is that they *both* separate professionals and their practice, albeit in different ways, that is, they are representational not performative, are variously humanist, not posthuman. On this point, Dolphijn and van der Tuin comment: "postmodernisms and modernisms are manifold, on the one hand, and epistemologically similar on the other" (2012, p.110).

The claim here is that both the modern and the postmodern are humanisms, that both 'science' and 'the postmodern' maintain a "representation/materiality dichotomy" (Colebrook, 2004, p.56), that is, they are both part of the same organizing structure whereby things might be either real or discursively produced/socially constructed but that, nonetheless, *maintain the humanist subject*. Similarly, Braidotti (2000) identifies, the humanist subject of both biological determinism *and* social constructivism. The 'linguistic turn' has come in for particular criticism – Karen Barad (2003) opens with "Language has been granted too much power" and, citing Nietzsche, challenges representationalism where we are placed above or outside the world we "allegedly merely reflect on" (Barad, 2007,

p.133). And, Maggie MacLure, in asking ‘where are the ruins?’, similarly acknowledges “a cast of postmodern characters, lurking, strolling, or dancing in the ruins of research” (2010, p.2) whose purpose has been to problematise and destabilize the idea of the objective social scientist, her “disinterested truths...” [and to maintain appropriate] “...safe distance between herself and the research participants” (p.2), yet maintains “interpretive mastery and narrative coherence...the ‘panoptic immunity’ of the liberal subject” (p.3), “the bland dialect of mutual regard” (p.4) and, in data analysis, “once again, digging up themes and stacking up categories” (p.4). Her point is that these practices can only replicate a given world rather than make available different opportunities or possibilities.

The problem of researching in this vein is that, in one way or another, self is reproduced, replicated and reinstated in all the (pre-)existing structures for self upon which such paradigmatic positions are founded. Self here does not have the opportunity to escape, to present or produce anything different or new. For empirical rigour this insight is arguably important – research ‘objects’ (in this case, the self) have to be presented with the opportunity to produce different knowledge from that which is predicated, expected, or assumed. Emergent bodies of thought – Chandler groups these around “new materialists, actor-network theory and post-humanist approaches” (2013, p.516) – do offer different kinds of research (inventions) and opportunities, via the introduction of posthumanist approaches that emphasise inclusion of all the non-human actors in activities, meaning-making and knowledge building, as well as the human. In a posthuman world, moving against pre-set structures of self that are assumed in existing research arrangements, what happens, or *is* (and the production of knowledge), involves a variety of things (both human and non-human, material and non-material) where agency or intentionality is distributed. Knowledge or being (self) becomes an enactment or effect of an entanglement or assemblage (made up of multiple things – representations and language, material objects, ideas/theories, ideologies, organizational arrangements and so forth) as a “living force” (Colebrook, 2004, p.64). What is in the world (humans and non-humans) and what we know about the world cannot be separated, they are entangled, interacting, and constantly shaping one another in what happens

(and in the production of knowledge). This is beyond any individual's direction and not reducible to their individual qualities or powers; paraphrasing Barad (2007) (about Haraway), Mazzei states:

*In other words, agency to change the world and be changed by the world emerges within the intra-actions of multiple people and things and does not pre-exist those encounters.* (Mazzei, 2013, p.734)

Of course, posthumanism as a frame of reference *does* have an interest in presenting the world as messy, unstable, complex, open and uncertain (rather than linearized, reduced, ordered and manageable). But my point here is that it is only through the introduction of 'the posthuman' in some form that the *possibility* or *option* for something different for selfhood becomes available. Posthuman possibilities are thus concerned with a research rigour in this respect, in their *making available other possibilities* (in relation).

This introduces a performative and relational 'onto-epistemology' (Barad, 2003, 2007) where things emerge in the world which are, at the same time, shaped both by what we know and the material and, likewise, *we cannot think it separately*. This is why St Pierre, in particular, writes of the collapse of the 'categories' of humanist qualitative inquiry and coins the term 'post-qualitative' research practices.

The 'Post Post' (see *Table 1*) does not, however, simply herald an additional paradigmatic classification in a territorial (and transcendentalizing) gesture as this involves "invoking sequential negation and a narrative of progress (ie it is dualist)" (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, p.111). This is a *transversal* move which intersects epistemic divides across the horizontal on Lather and St Pierre's classificatory table. It invokes a realism (but not in the traditional sense of one separately knowable, and even less as object), and agency (not as an individual attribute) and knowledge (not as 'out there'), but *all* as "the ongoing reconfigurations of the world" (Barad, 2003, p.808) in entanglement, together, and as a 'post'(humanist) space of becoming. Likewise, language and social constructivism (of the poststructural) is still 'in the mix' (relationally) in this 'material-discursive' character of all events (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012), in movement. They summarise:

*Not primarily interested in representation, signification, and disciplinarity, new materialism is fascinated by affect, force and movement as it travels in all directions. It searches not for the objectivity of things in themselves but for an objectivity of actualisation and realization*

(Dolphijn and Van der Tuin 2012, p.113)

This performative onto-epistemology (knowing in being) is one of Deleuzian *immanence* where the various elements of the world are not consistently or substantially divided up but where connections are emphasized over forms of separation in mutually constitutive patterns, non-linear intra-actions (Barad, 2007). This is knowing-being as caught up *in the fold* where a researcher-subject (or any person) is:

*Neither a sacralized inner **sanctum** nor a pure socially-shaped entity, the enfleshed Deleuzian subject is rather an 'in-between': it is a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects. A mobile entity, an enfleshed sort of memory that repeats and is capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations, while remaining faithful to itself."*

(Braidotti, 2000, p.159, emphasis in original).

In addition, in research that relates to practice and being (in children's services), a performative ontology of *becoming* (onto-epistemology) which focuses on what happens (or at least with what is happening) is, I think, particularly important; the multiple 'requirements' of 'research' seem, so often, to take the practitioner *away* from practice (rather than ever-more engaged *with* it). So, a performative concern about what is happening is, in this sense, strikingly affirmative (for practice/practitioners), it involves a belief in the world and "belief in the possibilities of world(s) we have not yet thought" (St Pierre, 2013, p.652).

At the same time (perhaps paradoxically), research remains, here, 'productively irritating' as it refuses to simplify, reify or 'fit' a positivist/post-positivist 'standard' (with the RCT as its apotheosis), by its insistence on something much more messy, complex and contradictory, "disrupting the metaphysics of closure" (Watson, 2009, p.4) around knowledge, the subject, and how we know it. This is also, of course, where my research questions (and content) become *the same problem* as that of conducting the research – the research seeks to explore beyond the liberal humanist

subject of practice, invoking posthumanist configurations and *becoming in entanglement or relation* (both performative and relational) and this is the same demand I have then made via my paradigmatic position, for my becoming-research(er). In this I also acknowledge my (part) '*invention of the world*' (see above), its partiality (as well as temporality), rather than claiming research as something called objective, and truth-seeking.

## 2.3 RESEARCH DEVICES

### 2.3.1 *Rhizomes and assemblage*

The image of thought (or figuration) here is the rhizome, increasingly being called upon, and put to use, by researchers who articulate Deleuzian and post-humanist/new materialist starting points<sup>10</sup>. Deleuze and Guattari compare the rhizome to the arboreal where the latter (re)presents a research methodology rooted in orthodox, scientific formulations (with a singular root, sequentially linearised/ordered, and hierarchical). The rhizome is not opposed to this unidirectionality but is different – instead, a multiplicity, ceaselessly making myriad and multidimensional connections; making lines of flight, the rhizome:

*....exemplifies nomadic movements across spaces: as embedded in a particular situation, rhizome goes in diverse directions instead of a single path, multiplying its own lines and establishing the plurality of unpredictable connections in the open-ended smooth space of its growth*  
(Semetsky, 2008, p.xv)

And:

*Any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be....A Rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.*  
(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980, p.7)

The purpose of the rhizome is to be generative of meaning via connections and intensify 'knowing', to move towards thinking (and doing) differently (though this is

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<sup>10</sup> See, for an exemplar, Sellers (2013); also several of the chapters in the collection edited by Coleman and Ringrose (2013); Ringrose (2013); Watson (2009); Mazzei (2013); and Lenz Taguchi (2013).

never settled, established, definitive, as moment-by-moment things fold, and fold again in the and...and...and...), and to create and constitute, (im)plausibly, 'the real'.

A rhizome is a figuration for how thinking/knowledge can be “opened up and proliferated rather than foreclosed and simplified” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p.vii). A rhizomatic figure of thought (enacted, or formed as an assemblage) involves irreducible relations (not separate entities), and should not be thought of as an (en)closed picture, it connects multipliciously beyond what is represented to the not-yet-thought, and is only temporary and in movement. There are many ways one might get into it – and its infinite variations – and many ways out. A rhizome is flattened (no overarching or horizontal/vertical ‘themes’ with some kind of ‘deep structure’; indeed, themes are not appropriate (here are only ‘schematic cues’ ) for everything exists alongside (and in connection) with the rest, in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms this flattened plane is referred to as ‘smooth space’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980). What is sought is what happens in the connections and the interactions (or intra-actions) and in the process of making and un-making (and the multiplicities that lie beyond). Here, the trappings of conventional qualitative inquiry such as coding, thematising, and data reduction (for a clear answer) are seen as narrowing and reductive (and these work within entirely different paradigmatic formations). Jackson and Mazzei describe these conventions as involving “commodification” and the rhizomatic assemblage an alternative, a “process of plugging in as a production of the new, the assemblage in formation” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p.2; see also Haggis, 2008). Thus, knowledge is not about (fore)closure to clear answers but about relations between different points of connection and how these work and what they do, and of continuing to make more connections, to keep moving , to produce novel configurations and emergence.

### 2.3.2 *Mapping and Cutting*

Thinking selfhood rhizomatically draws attention to infinite possibilities through infinite connections, whereby self is produced as part of a rhizomatic assemblage. It reminds that any assemblage delineated or gathered via specific connections made

between points, or that are brought into relation with each other, can only ever be partial. Gathering together in a (textual) assemblage is a mapping, it is cartographic (Dolphijn and Van der Tuin, 2012). Mapping produces something, but it does not assume 'representation' because drawing means "to create and not to copy" (Semetsky 2006, p.xx), it is a process, and "what is drawn...does not pre-exist the act of drawing" (Massumi/Deleuze and Guattari 1987/1980, p.xvi). Deleuze and Guattari (1983/1972) want to know how these (mapping) creations work, and what they produce.

In her discussion specifically about interviews in posthumanist, post-qualitative enquiry, Lisa Mazzei (2013) utilises the Deleuzo-Guattarian (1983/1972) image of a Body without Organs and develops the idea of a 'voice without organs' (VwO) for interviewing in posthumanist inquiry. She explains:

*...all the things that have been understood as possessed by humans and products of their agency (e.g. ideas, language, speech, social relations) are entangled flows that are in a continual process of making and un-making, of becoming. Thus, voice in postqualitative inquiry becomes an entanglement of desires, intensities, and flows, a VwO that is made and unmade in the process that we call research and analysis. If, as in posthumanism, agency is an entanglement of flows...then a VwO is becoming in the entangled flow of social relations, existing in the between-the-two of research-data-participants-theory-analysis.*

(Mazzei, 2013, p.735)

What Mazzei is explaining is that 'voice' in interviews emerges from, and is itself, a rhizomatic assemblage "in the entangled flow of social relations". Mazzei's 'map' of this in a research process involves, as she says, 'research-data-participants-theory-analysis', and through which voice emerges, it does not emanate from a singular, traditional essentialist (rather a multiplicitous, overflowing) subject. She is attempting to capture/map the *gathering* of different parts of the productive assemblage contained in 'voice' to look at *how things work, how knowledge is produced*, rather than simply their meaning *per se*. The significance is in the map that is created (and the particular connections and potential transformations that are then enabled, or not).

Barad (2007) also refers to mapping practices, and as involving the drawing of *boundaries*; boundary-practices run counter to smooth spaces but, nonetheless, are necessary for intelligibility, as the rhizome can never be fully mapped (in a monistic world this might involve mapping *everything*). Barad calls these boundary practices ‘agential cuts’ and they involve the process of choosing what one brings into connection in an assemblage, even as one (as the researcher) is also entangled in it. The ‘cuts’ made are *knowledge-making practices* that enable and constrain certain things (and that also invoke an ethical research responsibility), so researchers need to be explicit in their making.

Here, then, in identifying and mapping elements in a particular assemblage for self in children’s services a number of boundary-practices (cuts) have been deployed. The four chapters subsequent to this one are the ‘productions’ that then emerge, *based on* these cuts. For this study, which is both an examination of what currently exists for self, and an opening to a possible new territory invoking posthumanist formulations, I have operated at a level of generality (unlike Mazzei, as discussed above, my concern is not only ‘voice’). That is, I am not examining the specific selves, of particular individuals, in certain practice settings (which might suggest quite different and specific assemblages operating for productions of self). Instead, my ‘rhizome’ is the much broader territory of children’s services policy and practice (and as it has developed) and, of course, this includes the selfhood of social professionals. My mapping therefore involves a number of ‘sub-territories’ in this mix, in a particular assemblage (and that are then gathered up, brought in relation).

The ‘cuts’ made here are quite straightforward in their connecting together into a rhizomatic, research assemblage, and to become productive of meaning. These cuts proceeded in the light of an initial *gathering together*, before they were worked into greater relation with each other as part of a specific research assemblage, to be made productive, and for a textual production (this thesis). This initial *gathering* included eight interviews with senior practitioners and managers in children’s services (see section 2.3.4 below), reflections and writing about my own active policy/practice/teaching engagement over ten years with children’s services

professionals, organisations and policy makers/stakeholders, and a range of related (critical social) policy and practice, and theoretical, reading.

This gathering also included, initially, some different, wider elements too, that have subsequently not been brought into play in the final thesis. For example, I was in Norway in July 2011 when Anders Behring Breivik murdered 77 people in two attacks that were “intensely penetrating” (de Graaf, 2013, p.3) across the country. As an *affective* event this had been quite profound. It had caused me to think deeply about the role of citizens and those with professional responsibilities in democratic, civil practices in the wake of such events (for example, in relation to child abuse crises and responses such as those triggered by the deaths of Victoria Climbié and, subsequently, Peter Connolly, in England) . Originally, it seemed important to be able to include discussion of these events, and the *connections that could be made* for the production or emergence of the selfhood of social professionals in children’s services, in particular in relation to a democratic function or role. However, ultimately, I could not as effectively link and connect this in as I would have liked and it has proved beyond the scope and size of the final thesis to bring these considerations *into relation* with the rest. The wider point is, of course, that different assemblages, and connections made, might produce different outcomes, the point is to be as transparent and explicit about the choices made.

Of course, there always must be much that lies beyond the particular ‘cuts’ made, things omitted, in the assemblage drawn, even where these lie arguably close by, and even as they remain beyond the scope here. For example, leadership discourses/practices in children’s services might have been called into play to a greater degree, as much of the organisational development in children’s services has promoted and emphasized (particular versions of) ‘leadership’ in practice.

What *is* brought into relation for the purposes of this thesis assemblage (production) are the following - these are the particular choices (cuts) I made in relation to a range of possibilities (and that also reflect a direction of travel, or folding in, through thesis chapters):

- A critical social policy territory of ‘social identity’;
- Actual developments in children’s services in England - policy and practice arrangements unfolding between the Climbié Inquiry (Laming, 2003) and new arrangements under the Coalition government (from 2010);
- Research in practice formulations about social professional selfhood, and the conceptual territory of an intensifying neo-liberalism and austerity;
- Interview ‘data’ from research conversations with social professionals;
- A posthuman, theoretical territory;
- (A researcher orientation to) affective and open-ended engagement

It is these territories (which are themselves unstable and multiple, involving, for example, material elements such as new technologies) that are brought into connection in the thesis, *as consequential*, for the emergence of self. I am interested in how these elements work together, what they do, and how they are productive of self. A novel connection in the configuration is, here, the posthuman theoretical territory, and the potential this might bring for thinking and doing self differently. The assemblage that is both generated (made), and generative, might, after Mazzei (2013), perhaps be described thus: policy-practice-ideology-participants- theory-researcher, where each of these relates to particular ‘cuts’ made, as described, and where all these elements are conceived as relational, multiple actors. Each of the four chapters produced places an emphasis on different points and connections in the assemblage; in each, however, posthumanism is also called into play as a relational actor, to see what might be made or enacted. The chapters function as relational, performative ‘set-ups’ that enable a relational, performative orientation (rather than the simple replication of liberal humanist subjects or ‘essences’, for example). Here self can be *more than self, beyond self*. Posthumanism becomes an ingredient in the assemblage, and a device for inquiry practices.

The rhizomatic research assemblage delineated might lack specificity in terms of *particular* assemblages for particular individual managers or practitioners in particular practice settings in children’s services. However, the research aim here is

broader, it is to map out a general territory - to examine the potential and possibility for a new thinking/being for social professionals. In addition, in this initial mapping, a research examination seeks to align with the theoretical territory outlined, that is, to give weight to a variety of different things operating in relation in assemblage (the practices through which knowledge/the self is produced), rather than risk the possibility of over-emphasising and potentially (re)inscribing an individual 'experience' and an individual subject.

### 2.3.3 *An experiment in effecting relations*

What matters in the assemblage is how it works, in the connections that are made in novel configurations, how they (affectively) intra-act, to produce (different) selves. In my posthumanist, performative research formulation, concern is directed less to the 'interrogation' of particular 'sources' (for example as pre-existing, that is, prior to the relation) and more to what they produce (as multiplicitous themselves), and how the elements in the assemblage *work together*, what they do to each other, how they *work* to enable knowledge (particular selves). This can be described as a research practice invoking *an experiment in effecting relations* between sometimes quite different, even juxtaposed, things, objects and ideas (for example, the liberal humanist subject versus the posthuman).

An interest in 'the relation' is not to be *not* interested in any one object in an assemblage (though this is not about the accurate representation of singular, unified subjects and objects with essential qualities). On the contrary, it is to be profoundly interested in what they can do, what they can make, how they affect in their intertwinings and co-productions, and that are consequential for selfhood. The research 'intervention' is to *make available* different elements, including the posthuman, in connection, to provide opportunities for different or new formulations – becoming - where entities are dynamic, unstable, complex, and the relation precedes the object (and new possibilities) (Pickering, 1995).

Effecting relations in posthumanism is to adopt an open-ended and affective orientation. It is somewhat risky since, rather than deploying a set of tied down and pre-defined techniques it is, rather, an opening to 'the other', to difference. For the researcher it insists on one's own (commitment to) engagement, curiosity, and becoming-of-own-self as it, too, relates and intermingles with others in a way that will produce effects. In her reading of Deleuze and Guattari, Tamsin Lorraine writes of the use of "intuitive insight" (2011, p.82) and as involving "attunement with fleeting intensities and affects in sensation and thought" (*ibid.*). Not dissimilarly, Pedwell discusses and reworks *empathy* and "the possibility of embodied relationality and connection it offers" (2014, p.190, emphasis in original). These affective elements capture something of my own bearing, orientation or stance to, and with, the 'research materials' (the different parts of the assemblage). This is a specific interpretive stance that defies, or tries to sidestep, the conventions and impermeability of social borders, to feel flows, intensities and affects. All this is a reference to the quality of 'dialogue', intra-action, communication, connections that I attempted to utilize to work with (apparently) oppositional ideas and things. It is an attempt to move both with and beyond (the categories of) left-right binaries (and other dualisms) even while acknowledging the poverty of neo-liberalism and the 'failures' of alternatives, and in line with a Deleuzian 'spirit'.

This "affirmative relationality" is drawn philosophically from Bergson who suggested that "the difficulties of ordinary dualism come, not from the distinction of the two terms, but from the impossibility of seeing how the one is grafted upon the other." (1869, cited in Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012, p.121). Deleuze and Guattari's take on this is that "related terms belong to one another" (Deleuze, 1994/1968, p.30) emphasizing how one thing cannot exist in the same way without its other, and echoing a Spinozan monism. What is therefore required is an affirmation or acknowledgement of belonging, in order to be able to move forwards. It is not that dualisms (certainly as representational entities) do not exist, the point is to acknowledge and work these, and work these in ways that are structured by positivity rather than negativity.

Similarly influential in an orientation towards my research materials and in seeking to move with, and beyond, what might be termed traditional critique (as linked to critical theoretical perspectives), Sedgwick's ideas of 'reparative reading' (versus 'paranoid reading') inform my reading-writing-thinking and in co-constitutive relation with the possibilities of the rhizome/assemblage – in how I have thought/done it. The idea of 'reparative critique' comes from Sedgwick's strikingly titled 'You're so paranoid you probably think this introduction is about you' (2003). She articulates 'paranoid reading' as that framing and infusing traditional critique. She describes it thus:

*Paranoia is anticipatory*  
*Paranoia is reflexive and mimetic*  
*Paranoia is a strong theory*  
*Paranoia is a theory of negative affects*  
*Paranoia places its faith in exposure*

(Sedgwick 1997, p.9)

In her discussion she goes on to debunk each of these in turn and argue for an alternative. For example, paranoid reading, she argues, is fuelled by a self-confirming sense that one is making a triumphant advance towards truth and vindication - but truth and vindication are rare in commodified, neo-liberal, control societies; on the other hand, the reparative reader cultivates 'weak theory' with joy in the self-confirming nature of the affects. Sedgwick argues, then, that our engagement should be reparative:

*...in which we imagine potential futures, new histories, and novel uses for objects or information that might otherwise be hostile to our own subjective purposes and identities*

(McGuire, 2013, p.141-2).

In similar vein, Lather (2008) captures this move away from a traditional critical theoretical mode to a reparative critique that "shakes out the impacted and overdetermined" (p.222) and involves:

*....practices of critique that assemble and confer plenitude on something that can then 'give back' toward nurturing resistant culture in a way that helps save oneself by extracting sustenance from a culture not very interested in one's sustenance.*

(Lather, 2008, p.222)

In other words, this is a call to think otherwise, through and with and beyond dominant meanings, bringing a surplus to bear (an excess), for reworkings that might be productive; it accepts as given that the 'old' critical theoretical formulations stand already. Likewise, Watson (2009) utilises the Baroque, calling up the ontology of the fold and the epistemology of the Wunderkammer "in which knowledge arises in the juxtaposition and connection of things, and is intimately connected to wonder" (p.3). And, Barad suggests we employ diffractive practices of reading – her image is of waves overlapping as they break between rocks - modes of attention which are not motivated by the hermeneutics of suspicion, but are rather suggestive, creative and visionary (see O'Rourke, 2013). This is close to Nietzsche's concentration on *amor fati* (love of fate). It "requires us to love a potentially repellent object....and this in the knowledge that our love will not modify our fate" (cited in Han-Pile, 2013, p.224).

Braidotti contributes:

*This is why I defend the idea of amor fati as a way of accepting vital processes and the expressive intensity of a Life we share with multiple others, here and now*

(Braidotti, 2013, p.190).

The idea of reparative critique, then, suggests something about the ethical quality of the connections in rhizome/assemblage, and in their writing; to find a way into association (rather than repulsion) – to live/be/deal with difference in ways that produce newness .

#### 2.3.4 Interviews

I conducted eight interviews as part of my research, with social professionals (senior practitioners and managers) in children's services. Earlier I explained how the interviews were part of an early *gathering*, as I worked towards delineation of a research assemblage. The decision to utilise interview material in the thesis was one of the key 'agential cuts' I made for a research assembling (see section 2.3.2).

Research ‘participants’ were (variably) known to me; all had some kind of connection with (children’s services) continuing professional development activities at the small university where I worked, whether as a former student, as a ‘supervisor’ of students on professionally-qualifying courses, or as someone sitting on a Professional Advisory Group in my university. A spread across organizational settings and sectors was deliberately selected, not so much to ensure alignment with theoretical sampling methods (though this was the case) and therefore greater validity, but to secure the possibility of a greater number of connections across sectors in children’s services, ‘the sample’ was purposive in this respect. Participant descriptors are in Table 2, below.

*Table 2*  
Interview participant descriptors

	<b>Service setting</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Role</b>
<b>1</b>	Health services	Statutory	Manager/senior practitioner
<b>2</b>	Health services	Statutory	Senior practitioner
<b>3</b>	Social work/care	Social enterprise	Chief Executive
<b>4</b>	Social work/care	Third (voluntary) sector	Chief Executive
<b>5</b>	Youth and community	Public/private partnership	Senior practitioner
<b>6</b>	Youth and community	Third (voluntary) sector	Manager/senior practitioner
<b>7</b>	Education support	Statutory	Manager
<b>8</b>	Education support	Statutory	Manager

It should be noted that *Table 2* gives only descriptors, that may be misleading or problematic in some ways. They do not capture the complexity, both of the settings and sectors involved, nor of the complexity of movements by participants (nor their potential 'identifications') in and out of sectors and settings (and cross sectors and settings). For several this had involved relatively recent moves, due to significant numbers of changes in children's services organisations being implemented as part of public sector cuts and a changed orientation to children's services by the Coalition government in England. For example, participant 4 had up until less than a year before the interview, been employed in a statutory, multi-agency children's services setting - the descriptors imply static categories, when these are arguably anything but, and static/stable 'categories' are, of course, problematic in a posthuman research orientation.

The argument in conventional qualitative inquiry is that the structures (or strictures) and methodological rules followed for 'interviewing' make those engagements different (they contribute to something called objectivity and validity). In posthumanist becomings and entanglement, all connections are part of the enactment (a real) and they cannot be separated out by the application of such 'rules' into a field of reality (what we ask, what our 'participants' tell us), a field of representation (research presentations constructed after the 'interview') and a field of subjectivity (of participants and researcher). Voice, in the traditional sense "emanating from a unique, essentialist subject conscious to itself" (Mazzei, 2013, p.733) is no longer present, experience is distributed and "exceed[s] the traditional notion of the individual" (Barad, 2007, p.23) of humanist qualitative inquiry; this is a move away from the traditional centering of the subject (and their voice/experience). Voice, then, does not emanate from an individual person but is part of a milieu, and one of multiple connectives. Words spoken by participants are part of a mutually constituting production (and also potential triggers to new connections/assemblages, or Deleuzian 'lines of flight') (Mazzei, 2013).

The eight interviews were secured via ethical clearance and informed participant consent; interviews were taped and transcribed, and 'data' stored confidentially, and

so on. Research conversations lasted between an hour and 90 minutes and took place anywhere the 'participant' felt comfortable and that was convenient for them - one was in a hotel, one in a café, two at participant's homes, two in my university office, and two in participant's offices.

The ethical basis of 'interviewing' here has, however, some different concerns from more conventional approaches. Here, ethics does not emanate from an overarching system of prior rules which Hickey-Moody and Malins suggest "work to close off and limit the potentiality of a situation, foreclosing its future" (2007, cited in Coleman and Ringrose, 2013, p.11). My interviews were only very loosely structured, they are productive encounters and I simply set in train the process without knowing what might result. In a loose structuring (and in the expectation of my 'participants' to do some structuring), I made some 'agential cuts' (Barad, 2007) in the process of interviewing. These decisions, as part of my intra-action in the process, serve to exclude or include particular intra-active possibilities in the moment of the conversation, although "not as an agent in full control of outcomes and becomings" (Barad, 2007, p.178). I, too, was being made in the doing of the conversation, as "part of the larger material arrangement of which 'we' are a part" (ibid. p.178). Here, ethics are in-the-moment, situated, involving a responsiveness to 'the other' not as a "radical outside to the self" (Barad, 2007, p.178) but in entanglement and co-constitution, a responsibility of "having-the-other-in-one's-skin" (Ziarek, 2001, p.55); this is "an immanent forms of ethics aligned with my performative, relational posthuman research approach. This is one which "resides within....matter and practice, and which seeks to evaluate relations as they emerge" (Hickey-Moody and Malins, 2007, cited in Coleman and Ringrose, 2013, p.11). St Pierre describes these kind of ethics as "invented within each relation as researcher and respondent negotiate sense-making" (1997, p.186).

The early-ness of the interviews was largely an intuitive move, an open-ness to possibilities. This meant conversations were (intentionally) not proceeding from a fully developed and 'worked out' theoretical 'frame' (more in a spirit of curiosity and interest); nor could 'participants' be asked to answer questions that were

formulated later from (came out of, or were produced in) my research. In more conventional terms, the tentative or provisional nature of these have an advantage of potentially reducing 'bias', simply opening up a territory. Connected to this, all kinds of possibilities and directions might have been possible, in opening up a territory. The interviews were, however, theoretically informed, not only from a lengthy history from which I cannot disentangle myself and that informed the responses I made in conversation with participants, but more explicitly by an Arendtian notion of a non-sovereign self and 'appearance' (from some early reading).

Loosely structured, conversations proceeded from three question areas:

- Their working life, what they did, perhaps their background (if relevant), and role(s);
- What they thought was happening in 'practice' and what it's been like for them in the last few years; and,
- To what extent their sense of self (in practice) was important, why, and what supports and diminishes this?

These open question areas were designed to open up space for discussion, for respondents to 'step into' or insert themselves, and to which I responded - these were *conversations* not simply question and answer sessions; in the remainder of the they are, indeed, called 'research conversations'. I was inviting both description/views, and them-selves and, by open questions, I was inviting a range of possibilities.

As part of the third question area about sense of self, I did make a further (planned, explicit, less open) intervention, at an appropriate point in the discussion. I asked all participants whether they ever thought of themselves *being made* in, and through, practice interactions with others, and also whether they ever thought of themselves as being *part of* democratic life, enacting democracy. This drew on my early Arendtian reading of non-sovereign subjects, and as this relates to an everyday

democratic life. Additionally, I also wanted to create in the interview a bit more of *an encounter* between me and the participant, to build on and develop an intra-active conversation where I, too, was inserting *substance, and inviting a response*. This was a further alignment with my paradigmatic and methodological positioning and aimed to be generative and productive.

I was selective in my use of research conversations, in accordance with the set up, and (assumptions behind the) my research questions. The purpose was not to supply a 'rich picture' for example, though the research conversations did generate a rich 'data source', nor otherwise to thematise, categorise or code to, for example, extract kernels or elements of an essential 'truth'. My purpose was to bring participants' (words) *into relation* with other parts of the research assemblage, as discussed, for producing, or generating, self/ves and novel possibilities. My particular research questions already assumed there were existing prescriptions for self, *and the possibility of something beyond*. It was within this frame, and also where I could delineate *generative connections*, that selections were made. In conventional inquiry, this might be said to potentially constitute an interest or bias and I turn to this, and related issues, in the next section.

### 2.3.5 *The methodology as production*

In explicating an ontological and epistemological positioning, and my research 'devices', this chapter makes a number of explicit and implicit claims. I have already suggested that a posthuman orientation, by being concerned with *the practices through which knowledge is produced* already involves, in part, a concern with research rigour. This is because it actively allows for *the possibility* of alternative or novel or unexpected productions, rather than being rooted in, and therefore likely to replicate, accepted structures (for self), and as divided from the world. As Lather and St Pierre comment:

*The ethical charge of our work as inquirers is surely to question our attachments that keep us from thinking and living differently. .... [T]hinking differently changes being.... and that is the goal of the new ontology, the new inquiry after the 'posts'*

(Lather and St Pierre, 2013, p.631)

Elsewhere, Patti Lather asserts what is 'at stake' in rejecting scientism<sup>11</sup> in poststructural research, and that others have begun to label 'post-qualitative':

*...what is at stake when research is at stake is whether research can be a mode of thought that refuses to secure itself with the consolations of foundationalism and nostalgia for presence, the lost object of correct knowledge, the security of understanding. This is a move out of the sort of 'devotional scientism' that underwrites the Christian-capitalist-industrialist creed and toward what Nietzsche (1974) termed a 'gay science', a science based in the very splintering of the mechanisms of control and the resultant incredulity about salvation narratives of scientific progress, reason and the over-administered world.* (Lather, 2009, p.18)

As part of this, Lather is critique-ing the (research) rescue discourses of 'successor regimes', including those of qualitative research seeking to "restore the good name of research with these 'new' and 'better' methods" (2009, p.18). She is suggesting we think differently about 'research'.

In posthumanist becomings and entanglement, all connections are part of the enactment (the real) and they cannot be separated out by the application of 'rules' into a field of reality (what we ask, what our 'participants' tell us), a field of representation (research narratives constructed after the 'interview') and a field of subjectivity (of participants and researcher)<sup>12</sup>. Voice, in the traditional sense "emanating from a unique, essentialist subject conscious to itself" (Mazzei, 2013, p.733) is no longer present, experience is distributed and "exceed[s] the traditional notion of the individual" (Barad, 2007, p.23) of humanist qualitative inquiry; this is certainly a move away from the traditional centering of the subject (and their voice/experience). What this seeks is (an *explicit* mapping), not "the objectivity of

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<sup>11</sup> Citing Hayek, Lather defines scientism as "not so much the actual practices of science as the infusion of the standard elements of scientific attitude into all aspects of the social world" (2009, p.17).

<sup>12</sup> See Mazzei (2013), pp.733-736 and the original quotation from Deleuze and Guattari: "There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world), a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders." (1987/1980, p.27).

things in themselves but for an objectivity of actualization and realization” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012, p.113).

In a performative, relational onto-epistemology it is therefore necessary to address what happens, the processes through, and in, research, its emergence – even as it emerges together (in entanglement) and in its temporary, space/time-specific re-presentation or re/de/construction – and to respond to the challenge of “where our research goes and what it does there” (St Pierre, 2000, p.27). This chapter has provided a detailed paradigmatic rationale, and as this leads to the employment/deployment of a number of research devices, including the production of a (rhizomatic) research assemblage, mapping and cutting, effecting relations, and the use of interviews.

What it might also be important to draw attention to is the methodology as *(re)production*. Thinking outside the conventional ‘categories’ of humanist research is necessarily difficult. In a performative posthumanism there is necessarily, for example, no pre-existing ‘researcher’ so this chapter reflects both the process of ‘setting down’ a methodology and the ‘becoming’ of/in/through research(er), an attempt at both “composing and performing” (Gough, 2006, p.xiii). It has been articulated in the form laid down here, after the event, and exists (like the research itself) only as a temporary, even momentary, ‘fix’.

So, this is a particular and temporary (re)capture of research activity, happenings and processes – the methodological (becoming-research(er)) basis and organization of the research – which was not (could not be) there in planning or pre-figuration. How can this be ‘tested’, or held up to a light for the purpose of asking whether this is an ‘accurate representation’? This can probably only be done via a logic of the temporality of this space, its inherent instability, and a recognition that the past (what happened) is never incontrovertible or absolute. What I have done is to (re)construct what happened in a situation where research aims, methodology and content largely emerged together, and continued emerging together, over time, as one/a multiplicity. My methodological (re)creation must be the perspective from now, looking back, in which I have attempted to do justice to the research according

to a logical ordering and a building up of complications and detail to the scene, and the (new) understandings this might generate.

This study actively engages in, and attempts to make a research 'intervention' by the introduction of a performative, relational, posthuman theoretical territory as part of an intra-acting assemblage. This suggests a quite particular interest. This active, interested, affective engagement with(in) a research assemblage runs somewhat counter to more orthodox 'scientific' methodologies. In these, 'interest' (or bias) needs to be minimized in order to access a real or objective (existing) world; at the very least a reflexivity in relation to 'biases' is normally *de rigueur*. It is regarded as at least partially possible, or desirable, to gain unmediated or 'unencumbered' access to an objective world. When research is regarded as performative, however, it is *premised* on interaction, nothing can be produced *without* interaction, without *involvement* we can get nothing, or at least nothing that can be articulated in a meaningful, full way. (Latour, 2004). The devices, representations, theories and so on that we use are (knowledge-making) practices through which we cultivate and actualize engagement in the world and with others. If they are understood as practices, then practices can be changed. This means an active attention to the mode and operation of 'practices' is required, in order that they might be revised as necessary. This, therefore, becomes less about taking care not to impose preconceptions, and more about engaging actively with our devices and practices with, as we research (and our assumptions and partiality of what is being produced, as we move through/with it).

## 2.4 PROGRESSIONS

Mine is an attempt to examine the selfhood of social professionals in children's services in an interested, performative manner. I endeavor this by way of bringing into relation, and working, a novel assemblage, which introduces posthumanism *into the mix*. The four chapters that follow are *productions*, that is, they attempt to work

as *actualizations*, as within the parameters laid out in chapters One and Two, and they *do*, and are productive of, different things.

Chapter Three examines critical social policy representations of selfhood via the concept of 'social identity' as a dominant mode of being/knowing, for practice, and also brings into relation a posthumanist orientation to explore these conditions and circumstances for self in assemblage. So, the chapter examines the *work* that social identity (in its various forms) *performs* for social policy and how it desires to affect and effect self-productions.

Chapter Four examines the aftermath of the *Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report* (Laming, 2003) and the new policy and practice arrangements that unfolded (in their do-ings) for children's services in England and what these predicate for social professional selfhood, to secure it to its project. This chapter brings in to play some research participant voices as these interact with the emergent narrative. There is also an examination of some of the artefacts (materials) of children's services (notably new technologies and systems) and as these, too, interact with, and produce, social professional selfhood.

Chapter Five brings together a performative, posthuman theoretical territory, participants, and aspects of research and practice in children's services. It looks at representational and performative understanding in children's services research, where the former is concerned with 'impacts' (and largely works to remove self from the equation) and the latter with 'productions' and emergence of self in action. The constraints on self and how an expansive selfhood is lost in intensifications in neo-liberalism and austerity, also emerges.

Chapter Six brings a posthuman theoretical territory in relation with my interview data to see what might be produced. This draws attention to the conditions and circumstances that shape productions of self and as self emerges in entangled ways, in re-presentations, Posthumanism is used as a 'lever' to help see, and think, selves which might lie beyond re-productions of the humanist subject, in appearance.

## Chapter 3

### SELF AND SOCIAL POLICY

*The limits to selfhood in critical social policy analysis; effecting a new relation*

*A concept is a brick. It can be used to build the courthouse of Reason. Or it can be thrown through the window.*

(Massumi, in Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980, p.xii)

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The posthuman subject is dispersed, not settled into itself, or divided up from other things in the world, it emerges with them in shifting patterns. This directs us to the *practices* of self and also to the circumstances and conditions (that are themselves not stable or unchanging) that are part of self-making.

This chapter directs attention to (the field of) *social policy* (and in particular, critical social policy) as marking out trajectories as to how we understand (and do) self – its particular discursive landscape is part of the emergence of selfhood, involving particular conditions or circumstances. This discursive landscape constrains and enables what can be, said, and done. The chapter examines the ‘work’ that social policy *does* as part of an assemblage for, and the constitution of, selfhood. I argue that the work it does presupposes and involves both a humanist subject and a selfhood intertwined with social identities. This predicates the naming of (our)selves according to a number of particular *categories*, as well as an associated and particular kind of politics for self. My way into the debates considers the disciplinary territory of (critical) social policy and moves via an examination of a series of articles in key, mainstream social policy journals that focus specifically on the significance of

social identity for social policy. The chapter acts as both a (re)presentation and critique of social identity and brings into play insights from posthumanism suggestive of different (re)productions of selfhood. Making available posthumanist formulations as an additional connection in an assemblage for self is to provide leverage, to intervene, in the conditions through which self is produced, to glimpse what might happen in effecting a new relation.

An 'ontological turn' has, of course, become very significant across the social sciences and humanities – in her recent (2013) book on *The Posthuman*, for example, Rosi Braidotti takes on 'the Humanities' as a whole and its problematic human-being-at-its-centre (as even the name explicitly acknowledges), ultimately arguing they need to "mutate" (p.147) into "multiple posthuman futures" (p.150). My ambition here is much more modest – I want to look particularly at the dependence in critical social policy, on (categories of) *social identity*, and what this does (and does not do) in terms of the constitution of the selfhood of professionals. The quotation above gives something of a flavour – social identity is a concept from which much can be built and, it has indeed, come to prove something of an indispensable building block in critical social policy. At the same time, Brian Massumi suggests that concepts are *acts* and have no subject or object apart from themselves – what matters is what they do, their circumstances and, here, how they work to open up or foreclose.

The territory of social policy as a field of study is, of course, highly appropriate for moving onto a discussion of *actual* (children's services) policy and practice (they are connected) but it *does* bracket or disconnect a lot, including multiple other social theoretical and psychological starting points for an account of self. These are therefore shifted into the what-is-not-told at this point. One can argue that this is simply *practical*, anything else would be beyond the scope. That may be so, but I am making a particular 'agential cut' here - the *nature* of the demarcation made is of significance - there is a methodological (as well as a practical) rationale here. Social policy does not (and cannot) operate separately from its own multiple (discursive/material) entanglements in relation, for example, with the dynamics and

operation of power, politics, events and so on (including this researcher, and other 'disciplines'). In a rhizomatic, flattened mapping mine is a demarcation of what social policy (via particular notions of social identity) 'brings to the table' in its working. An 'agential cut' (Barad, 2007), as outlined in the previous chapter, involves a significant boundary-making practice, a (temporary) delineation or enactment that separates out something from (within) a phenomenon (an entanglement/enactment - in this case self/children's services) in order to gain knowledge about it. This is, specifically not, a Cartesian subject/object move where 'I' examine 'social policy' because this is already entangled – phenomena are "relations without pre-existing relata" (Barad, 2007, p.139). In her posthumanist rendering, what Barad argues is that an agential cut is *part of the phenomenon itself*, that is, it does not pre-exist its doing, the 'observer' is not *a priori* to knowledge of the phenomenon. This moves *against* what are traditionally separate and dichotomized domains of being/knowing (and researching). This is intra-activity as part of a rhizomatic/reparative creation-in-action (in the writing), which is an alternative ontological positioning, or condition:

*Reality is composed not of things-in-themselves, or of things-behind-phenomena, but of things-in-phenomena" and "relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions"*

(Barad, 2007, p.140)

This might suggest a way of reading this chapter's movement-mapping-connections-temporality-creation (and becoming), rather than a reading that thinks it bounded and settled, discrete in itself, and 'objective' analysis and evaluation.

What I am suggesting, then, is that the social policy field, inasmuch as it is concerned with selfhood, has come to be dominated by a focus on this as primarily concerning one's particular 'social identity'. Here one links oneself (or is linked) to particular named/pre-defined groups or categories and this creates particular striations or grooves that tell us something about how we can be/act. 'Social identity' in the field of social policy adheres to, and endorses, the humanist subject. Further, social policy appears to rely on social identity(ies) as not only a basic unit of analysis but also as a way of understanding what politics is and how it can happen – social

identity is a *condition, or mediator for*, political action, without which critical ‘political action’ seems not very possible. Selfhood not linked to particular social identities is somewhat ‘relegated’ in social policy, to the less- or non-political (or purely psychological), and/or sometimes the abstract and theoretical<sup>13</sup>. In addition, social policy is *selective* and *particular* in the social identities it assigns/responds to (creates and reflects) – for example, ‘users’ appear to be (able to be) one set of things, and workers quite another. There is an echo here of Celia Kitzinger’s insight at the beginning of my Introduction: “identity....is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be” (1989, p.82). In deploying its (differential) ‘social identity/ies’ narrative and striated patterning for self, there is significance for exploring and expanding (or not) spaces for the (critical) selfhood of social professionals that might not fit these patterns. In developing the lines of thought the possibilities (or not) for a differently produced selfhood are a primary concern in my research. This is less a focus on what social identity *is*, more one on *what it does*, and *how useful it is* (or not), and for political effects. In part, then, this is a working-towards examining the *conditions* that allow for the disciplinary constitution of (self as) social identity in social policy. My intention is therefore not so much to *advance* or attempt to *resolve* the specific theoretical arguments beyond those existing, but de/re/construction - to examine the demarcations and limits of social identity (in critical social policy), and to suggest a shift of focus beyond these limits, that might be effected by the introduction of the posthuman, in relation. The posthuman subject (in relation with the humanist) in social policy is destabilising, and begins to prise apart the ties that bind social policy with social identity, to defamiliarise in terms of what we know and can be.

### 3.2 SOCIAL POLICY TOWARDS ‘THE POSTMODERN’

A disciplinary territory of social policy throws light on what might be more or less possible (for self) in an ‘assemblage’ because “substantive topics are...given shape in the disciplines” (McCall, 2005, p.1784). That is, social policy as a field of study is part

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<sup>13</sup> Abstract/theoretical accounts are, of course, particularly evident where social policy formulations overlap with sociological/social theoretical concerns and orientations, rather than with the applied/practical.

of the assemblage, it already 'acts', and is productive, of self, and this has a number of strands.

Social policy as *study* is intrinsically linked to political action in 'the real world' - whilst it draws upon ideas and methods from interlinked 'social sciences'<sup>14</sup> its own emergence at the end of the nineteenth/early twentieth century was connected to the actual promotion of social reform as well as to the study of its effects (Alcock, 2012). This is part of its appeal as, in addition to my own (theoretical-methodological) – relational, performative - stance, social policy is a field of study that, likewise, *builds in* engagement with 'the real', with practice, with what happens. Social policy's social administrative and empirically-based history includes, famously, Charles Booth's 'poverty map' of London in 1889 and, in the same year, Seebohm Rowntree's first study of poverty that was conducted in York and published as *Poverty: a study of town life* (Glennerster et al, 2004). These were drawn on widely in actual social campaigning through organisations such as The Fabian Society and linked to the emerging Labour Party, and a class – left-right - politics. Such empirical work, and associated political campaigns can also be associated with the emergence of 'the big five' in British post-war welfare history: social insurance; health; education; housing; and social services; this locates social policy as connected to practical concerns and ways of organising in the world and, in particular, as founded in attention to (class) inequalities.

This post-war welfare settlement in Britain was predicated on a belief in universalism, that the welfare state could be a mitigation in the face of the 'hard edges', and the risks that all faced, in capitalism. It enshrined a 'bureau-professionalism' which suggested particular *social relations* for welfare, and where occupational identities were bound up with organisational structures and cultures (Newman and Clarke 1994). That is, the impartial administration of welfare goods via a *cadre* of experts within a public service ethos is suggestive of a selfhood of

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<sup>14</sup> There is considerable debate about the status of social policy as a *discipline*, with some seeing it as a sub-discipline of sociology and many seeing it at least in conjunction with, or overlapping, several other social sciences, that is, as an *interdisciplinary field* (see Erskine 2003; also Alcock, 2012).

professionals within this frame – one benignly dispensing diagnoses or judgements and services (on behalf of the national family) based on valued, specialised knowledge. Therefore attendant sets of welfare ‘users’ are passive and dependent in this frame (Hughes, 1998) as professionals go about their important business.

Later, this gave way to the emergence of what has been termed a *critical* social policy after the fracturing of the so-called (Keynesian) ‘post-war welfare consensus’ alongside global economic crisis (in the early 70s) and challenges to the nation state, the ‘re-discovery of poverty’, demographic change, and the rise of new social movements (from the 60s onwards). No longer was it adequate to reform and refine what existed (within a dominant social democratic frame<sup>15</sup>): the ideological basis of welfare policy and practice, its ‘false universalism’ and modes of organizing - “mass/universal, state provided, bureaucratically run, and professionally-delivered” (Williams, 1999, p.669) were ‘surfaced’. These elements in welfare organisation and delivery came under sustained and productive critique, notably by feminists and, gradually, via the critiques of others in emerging new social movements. These critiques can be linked to largely left-wing (but not necessarily class-based, or at least not reducible to class) articulations and assertions of *active welfare subjects* organizing (on the basis of their *collective experience* and *social identities*) in an expanded democratic organization of welfare. No longer were users of welfare to be passive and dependent, they were to be active in defining their own needs, in organising, and in demanding recognition and redistribution (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) along multiple axes - of class, race, gender, disability and so on. The challenge to social policy analysts/theorists, then, was to produce work that could account for and incorporate these myriad ‘grassroots’ activist perspectives.

However, critique did not only emerge from those organizing on the basis of inequalities of gender, race, disability, sexuality and age (and, later, from a myriad of ‘user’ groups); a different kind of analysis emerged from a newly articulated

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<sup>15</sup> Of course, ‘social democracy’ is a broad church: the post-war period to the 70s was, however, one where both main political parties in England sought to utilise social policy as ameliorating the ‘rough edges’ of capitalism in a mixed economy of welfare and as, broadly, ‘a good thing’.

neoliberalism, and was linked to the rise of the New Right. This involved a *consumerisation* and *individualization* of the welfare subject in a neoliberal-capitalist economic mode, and for only a residual welfare state. The challenge to social policy analysts/theorists, then, was to produce work that could account for and incorporate myriad 'grassroots' activist perspectives *alongside* neo-liberalising policy that posited not collective responsibility and solutions, but individual ones. To what extent could the "the progressive critiques....developed from the new forms of political collectivities on the left" (Williams, 1999, p.669) and their (re)constitution of the active welfare subject *be harnessed*, and possibly (re)shape the policy landscape?

For those social policy theorists 'on the left' the new social (and cultural) identities (of feminism, anti-racism, lesbian and gay activism, and the disabled people's movement) were a challenge to traditional class-based (neo)Marxist and political economy accounts and their associated 'metanarratives' (Lyotard, 1984). What were new identities were seen as fragmenting and fracturing possibilities for class-based action. This idea of what is 'real' social reform in the existing critical social policy (the weakening or overthrow of capitalism) increased a resistance to (broadly) postmodernism as a condition of contemporary life (Fitzpatrick, 2012). So, whilst wider social theoretical explorations mushroomed to examine and explain new identities and their impact in welfare, these were not (at least initially) taken up widely in social policy – Fitzpatrick summarises: "By the time social policy took an interest in postmodernism, the latter had already nurtured the intellectual soil upon which the former depended" (2012, p.97).

Perhaps more than for other social sciences (or at least in particular ways), social policy's ambivalence towards emergent identities and new forms of collective organising meant, at best, a zig-zagging towards the postmodern embrace in the face of orientations which worked to defend 'class politics' against the so-called relativism (Hunter, 2003) and depoliticizing effects, of 'identity politics'. After all, if one was to embrace weakened *class* identities (in the name of being a woman, disabled or black for example), was this not also to play into the hands of (global) forces promoting neo-liberal agendas?

Part of the problem for a largely applied social science like social policy also appears to have been particular poststructuralist discursive '(dis)appearances' where no 'stable base' beyond a play of language appeared to *disavow* real people going about real lives. For a 'discipline' so integrally founded on, and concerned with, real lives and progressive political action (defined largely in class terms), the perceived linguistic reductions of the poststructural (which, by no means, stood for all the possibilities opened up) were therefore problematic, "representing the capitulation to cultural criticism in place of analysis of the material roots of oppression" (Heyes, 2012, n.p.).

However, postmodern explorations that are seen to be less dependent upon what are coined as linguistic reductions (for example, Foucauldian power/knowledge) have come to have considerable purchase within academic social policy literature – that is, solutions have been sought that can be seen as "compatible with the redistributive aims of social policy" (Hunter, 2003, p.325). In addition, 'late modernity' theorists (at least *influenced* by postmodernism's challenges) such as Beck's 'risk society' (1992) and the work of Anthony Giddens, have come to be influential, and notably so for what was the New Labour project.

However, it is arguably 'activism', and the new identities that were forged, that have been extremely influential in this period for (the study of) social policy in the postmodern. Catherine McDonald (2007) suggests that the rise of 'service user movements' have brought both the most destabilising, but also the most interesting, set of challenges to social policy and its scholarship. Fiona Williams argues that the "political energies in civil society" via the activities of social movement and (welfare) user groups have provided "as profound a political critique of the post-war welfare state as those from the New Right and New Labour" (Williams, 1999, p.668). There are also the lively social theoretical debates between Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003), partly drawing on the work of the moral philosopher Charles Taylor, about 'redistribution' versus 'recognition' (that might be termed socio-economic and social-cultural aspects of injustice respectively) – these are applied in some social

policy/welfare analyses<sup>16</sup> and are testament to the import of the debates and the significance of moving beyond strictly structuralist/neo-Marxist perspectives. This is where 'social identity' enters the picture as central, as linked to (political) categories, and as an analytical tool.

Social policy has spawned a variety of possible identifications, though not without contention, that variously provide possibilities or constraints for the emergence of (something called) self. This is to be working on the 'structure-discourse-agency' boundary. It also draws our attention to the extent to which identification is forged via collective internal definition or produced via structural and/or (Foucauldian) disciplinary/governmental power (Jenkins, 2014; Rose, 1989; Rose et al, 2006). Policy discourses both "define all sorts of....identities" and are "deeply implicated in creating and sustaining both positively and negatively valued identities" (McDonald, 2007, p.1) – here is our 'surveillance' axis, with which social policy is tied up. Likewise, in academic (and professional) social policy, categorizations (and/or collective identifications) are the stock-in-trade of its social science - "vital building blocks in the conceptual frameworks of sociology and social anthropology...Without some ways of talking about them, we can't think sociologically about anything" (Jenkins, 2014, p.105). Alternatively, new sources of activism can be seen as generative of (a diversification of) social identities, that name a shared *experience* and expertise for, and in, their own image. Here, "social identity therefore takes on the form of a mediating concept useful to explaining aspects of state structures and subject's agency" (Hunter, 2003, p325-6; see also Hall, 1996). We can talk, then, about the extent to which people – via categorizations or espoused social identities - are positioned as objects or subjects (Williams' *active welfare subjects*) in our social policy analyses, in surveillance or appearance.

But I am not sure of all of this. I cannot disavow the collective energies, liberatory instincts, and diverse/multiple achievements of at least five decades of social movements and user groups in welfare (locally, nationally and globally) who have

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<sup>16</sup> In social work, aspects of the debate have been exercised via the *British Journal of Social Work*, notably Houston (2008,2009), Garrett (2010) and Webb (2010).

organised around 'identity' whether this is black and minority ethnic groups, women, disabled people, lesbians and gay men, and others (including intersectional identities such as black women) and that, as McNay notes (and I agree), are founded in "deeply felt injuries of misrecognition" (2010, p.512). And I have long since moved on (if I was ever there) from concerns about 'revisionism' or the weakening of class analysis. But, over several years, I have found myself increasingly (at least trying to) *resist* the categorizations/identifications *per se* (and the language that comes along), and that purport to *do*, well, lots of things, like *organize (my) experience* and *name (my-)self* in a kind of shorthand, and that also *confer a political self-sense* (related to something called 'identity') and linked to (actual or perceived) group interests of which I am (or am perceived to be) a part. They also help to 'produce' or 'lever' particular emergences of self in the social professionals I work with, secured in their parameters, and the social identities deployed routinely in, and by, those I teach, have raised questions, and troubled me in a variety of ways. These are not just about the classical critiques of essentialism, and the reification or 'fixing' of group identities/difference that comes with (a categorizing) identity politics (and even, to some extent, with simply 'naming'), where these operate as a kind of foreclosure<sup>17</sup>. A new-wariness is, likewise, not just because of a commodification of identities in neo-liberalism specifically or, in more general terms, because of disciplinary/control features in society, that commodify or (ab)use active collective identities for different purposes. For example, as I finalise this chapter, one of the (perfect storm?) aspects of the recent 'Trojan Horse' OFSTED 'investigation' into some Birmingham schools involved the signifier 'Muslim community' and I am aware of *what this is (or can be) made to mean/produce* in particular events/discourses<sup>18</sup> (of the dominant).

My concerns are, only in part, all of the above but, I think, more than this - they are about 'identity' itself, as an attachment to a kind-of *abstraction*, and identity as

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<sup>17</sup> Very good reviews of 'identity politics' for sociology and philosophy respectively, are provided by Bernstein (2005) and Heyes (2012).

<sup>18</sup> For example, where 'extremism' can be so easily attached to one pole and not another. This commodification point also reminds me of the latter-day apparent formal 'embrace' of 'the gay community' in the UK via that most traditional of institutions - marriage.

having an “inbuilt logic of recognition of sameness and dualistic relocation of otherness” (Braidotti, 2005, n.p.), and identity as *the mediator* of political action, and (here) with (the study of) social policy as its handmaiden. The questions have arisen, as explained, in relation to whether class is the main organising category, and the extent to which this is opened up by a proliferation of other identities. In posthumanism the categories themselves are under examination. This is about what is lost in ‘social identity’ formulations and the limits that they prescribe - *for both ‘selfhood’ and for ‘politics’*. In being caught up in uncertain and ambivalent shifts to postmodern formulations (or not), and focusing on how to *resolve* the tensions (both for social change and for social policy analysis), the terms of the debate have, nonetheless, remained the same. Social policy tells a particular ‘story’ – selfhood here reproduces and reiterates the humanist subject via its categorisations; other (different) possibilities are lost in its tightening grip. I want to explain this via a more detailed consideration of the key social policy/social identity debates and the issues these raise, and then move to outlining different possible formulations.

### 3.3 CATEGORICAL, ONTOLOGICAL AND RELATIONAL SOCIAL IDENTITIES

The direction of travel in developing conceptualisations about social identity in social policy can be traced through ‘categorical’, ‘ontological’ and ‘relational’ analyses<sup>19</sup>.

In his influential article in the *Journal of Social Policy*, David Taylor (1998) examines the concept of social identity for social policy in the context of postmodern shifts; his

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Intersectional’ analyses could also be added here – and they are important – but they emerge via different avenues, rather than strictly via a (critical) social policy (though this draws upon insights of intersectionality so critical social policy approaches and intersectionality are far from mutually exclusive). Intersectionality is about understanding, and theorizing, multiple, simultaneous social inequalities, such as gender and ethnicity (see, for example, Crenshaw, 1991, McCall, 2005, Walby 2007) where simply ‘adding up’ the inequalities is seen as inadequate because of their mutual constitution – they change each other. ‘Intersectionality’ as a concept is seen as avoiding some of the essentialism that might be associated with a notion of ‘identity politics’). In promoting intersectional theorising Walby writes, for example, “the major alternative theorisation within postmodern paradigm has a tendency to fragmentation and to micro or cultural reductionism especially in the use of the concept of identity” (p.450). Puar (2013) notes that “Numerous theorists consider intersectionality the dominant paradigm through which feminist theory has analysed difference” (p.49) and as “a feminist intervention to disrupt whiteness” (p.52) but she also notes its different, and later, genesis in European feminist theorising and where it is regarded now as ‘policy-friendly’ and evident in UN and, latterly, EU formulations (see for example, Fernandez de Vega et al, 2008).

work was subsequently extended, notably by Fiona Williams (for example, 1999, 2000) and Shona Hunter (2002, 2003, 2005)<sup>20</sup> via mainstream social policy journals, conferences (and also, in part, by an ESRC-funded interdisciplinary research group (CAVA) on 'Care, Values and the Future of Welfare'<sup>21</sup>). There is also a very extensive literature beyond this in social policy where actual concepts of social identity are routinely *put to work* – arguably, as Bernstein puts it, where there are “too many protagonists and not enough analysts” (2005, p.48).

Taylor draws attention to the centrality of the concept of social identity for social policy and in relation to the rise of new social movement activism. As in my outlining of the key issues, he links his discussion to social policy's uncertainty about postmodernism, where he says he “attempts to transcend” the debates, arguing that “when combined with an analysis of social relations, [these] *need not undermine a focus on structural inequalities*” (Taylor, 1998, p.329, emphasis added). In taking on board some facets of postmodern analysis, Taylor argues that social identity is central but under-theorised for social policy; his intention is to expand conceptualisations. He proposes that (welfare subject) identities should be seen as both *categorical* and *ontological*. In the former, identity is related to a variety of social categories that have been variously assigned and constructed but are also where groups have been able to surface their own, positive (re)presentations of identity, self, and experience. These are inspired and underpinned by the activities and campaigning of (old and) new social movements (for example, those organising around class, gender, race, sexuality, disability and age) who have challenged both the subject positions assigned them, and created and claimed new identities

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<sup>20</sup> These authors' work is not *in direct response* to David Taylor's and, certainly in the case of Williams, has its own substantial histories and trajectories. Williams' *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction* (1989) was seminal in this respect and, for the first time, involved a detailed and systematic analysis of race and gender (as well as class) in social policy theory and practice; it has become something of a classic and is still in print - it shows up consistently on social policy undergraduate and postgraduate reading lists. See also Williams' work subsequent to this with its emphasis on social movement and user group activism, including Williams (1992, 1996, 1998). The reason for starting with Taylor here, however, is because of his naming, and centralising, of 'social identity' concepts whereas Williams' is a re-working and re-framing of traditional social policy analysis as a whole.

<sup>21</sup> CAVA) ran between 1999 and 2004. I had some early involvement with discussions in the lead up to this group as, between 1996 and 1998 I was a Research Officer in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds working directly to Professor Fiona Williams.

(Williams 1999), that is, in terms of 'sameness'. Conversely, the *ontological* identity outlined by Taylor refers to the uniqueness of the individual and the attempt to form a coherent sense of self from fragmented experiences and concerns (in terms of 'difference').

For Taylor the problem arises when categorical forms of identity subsume the ontological as this creates fixity in group identities and therefore cannot deal with the complexities and inter-relatedness of both individual and social (and of the inter-relatedness between different 'oppressions') – "identity is both an historical process and an individual project" (Taylor, 1998, p.346). In Taylor's analysis then, the humanist subject is retained both in its own (ontological) personal, separate and unique identity and also in the collective categorical identity of groups to which it might attach itself (or be attached.) Further, by seeing sameness (categorical identity) and difference (ontological identity) along the same axis, Taylor suggests that it is therefore impossible to see the development and operation of group (categorical) identities as separate from individual ones, that is, they are interdependent and are formed in relation to one another (and as a site where subject positions are resisted/reproduced and/or resignified). What this then allows us to begin to understand and analyse is a *fluidity* of identities operating in different times/spaces, and in different political, economic, social and ideological conditions, but all within a humanist realm. If this is quite a limited extension to wards an acknowledgement of changing and fluid/multiple identities it perhaps indicates some of the strength of resistance to postmodern analyses, as indicated.

Fiona Williams' (2000) conceptual map for CAVA builds on her own long-standing concern with efforts to resolve *universal* and *particular* 'claims' in welfare. The question here is: how can we develop universal systems of social policy provision that, at the same time, respond to a *diversity of particular* needs of different social groups? This is possibly *the* key question that critical social policy analysis has sought to address in the last fifty years and as the 'post-war welfare settlement' has unravelled; it is, of course, closely aligned with the shifts to postmodern theorising that are outlined above. Williams has consistently approached this, and related

questions, via detailed considerations of 'race', gender and other dimensions of inequality and difference *alongside* (but not reduced to) a continuing and pervasive structural (class) analysis. In this, she has been particularly concerned to surface and examine diverse social movement and user group activism to shed light (see, for example, Williams 1992, 1996, 1998, 1999) and to move away from a problematic, traditional subject in critical social policy – that of the “white, British, male, able-bodied worker/father/husband” (Clarke et al. 1998, p.385) rooted in one-dimensional structural accounts. Whilst her CAVA conceptual map opens out multi-layered and interacting themes for the ESRC research group, her particular contribution to debates about social identity in social policy here is to draw attention to a distinctive *relational* social identity.

Whilst, as she acknowledges, Taylor's ontological-categorical axis for social identity poses two poles operating *in relation to* each other, his 'ontological' is essentially concerned with articulating an internal/private/core self (as *different* from others, a unique self), in relation to collective/social identities (as *sameness with* others in the same 'group'). An understanding of a specifically *relational social identity* is seen as an extension to Taylor's ontological understanding via our relationships with close others; importantly this can include, for example, 'care' relationships intrinsic to 'welfare' formulations (for example, between parent and child, teacher and student, disabled person and carer and so on). Williams argues this is a broader platform (of a wider 'subjectivity' beyond the 'identity' considerations outlined by Taylor) and that it incorporates some aspects of the unconscious (the psychoanalytic alongside the social). She argues that this relational dimension for understanding social identity breaks down an unhelpful public-private dichotomy in social policy analysis by emphasising the localised/personal nature of aspects of identity-in-relation as important to public negotiations and claims in welfare (and particularly for the notion of 'care'); Williams' work here takes us into greater *complexity* in terms of identity and its relationship to social policy. **At the same time, she places a greater concentration on internal, core attributes and qualities of the human subject.**

What it is possible to see through the work of Taylor and Williams is, then, a number of considered, very gradual moves, that begin to take apart or loosen the ties of traditional political economy approaches in social policy **that loosen class identities**, through a lens of social identity(ies). Shona Hunter's (2002, 2003) contribution follows on from Taylor and Williams, and works to extend the analysis further. In her 2002 paper she represents (the Taylor-Williams) categorical, ontological and relational aspects of identity in tabular form, as below:

*Table 2*

Three analytically distinct elements of social identity.

	<b>Ontological</b>	<b>Categorical</b>	<b>Relational</b>
<b>Expression of:</b>	Coherent, unique self	Belonging on the basis of social relations of difference/sameness	Belonging through close relationships with others
<b>Context for construction:</b>	Private	Public	Local, informal
<b>Agency</b>	Individual	Collective	Relational (individual and collective)
<b>Principles for identification</b>	Recognition Difference	Recognition Sameness	Recognition Relationship

(reproduced from Hunter, 2002)

This is a useful summary. The primary extension that Hunter (2003) makes is via the observation that considerations of social identity in social policy focus at the 'grassroots' level (on those organising around new social movements and user groups in welfare)<sup>22</sup>. Crucially, on the other hand, 'professionals' or those who work in welfare settings are generally not part of the social identity/social policy debate – professionals are simply associated with the rather amorphous 'policy discourse' and

<sup>22</sup> This focus is part of a 'redressing of balance' approach (sometimes called 'moral reordering') that goes on in a critical social policy; here it seeks to critique assigned, 'abnormal' identities of claimants and users, and seeks to surface and expand positive (re)presentations by those subaltern voices themselves. This can also be linked to the trend to encourage user involvement/participation in both policy making and social policy research (Hunter, 2003).

so discussed “*only* in terms of their status as welfare professionals, ignoring their position in other forms of social relations” (p.333, emphasis in original). This not only creates a dichotomy between ‘users’ and ‘professionals’ (as opposed to, say, some degree of interdependence) it creates “automatons” (p.331) of service providers, removing their *social identities* from (analytical) view, placing them in the box of ‘professional’. Here, “their principal role is perceived as the maintenance of the status quo in terms of social policy responses to welfare constituents’ needs” (p.322). Users are one thing (multiple and fragmented social identities) and service providers another - part of the ‘discursive’ and disciplinary policy landscape, operating as part of the surveillance of users, and dividing up and fragmenting the landscape and possibilities for the emergence of self.

Here is, I think, partly a hangover from traditional, class-based accounts where ‘professional experts’ are simply the first targets of (collective) resistance in a capitalist welfare state; as Hunter comments, this “seems a wholly insufficient basis on which to view professional involvement in welfare” (p.331). In this critical social policy formulation service providers/professionals seem to become, simply, instruments of the (capitalist) state. Hunter further suggests that this positioning of professionals (outside the ‘social identities’ landscape) also works to restrict their capacity for action. The alternative, of course, under a revitalised New Right analysis, is that professionals simply act in their own interests (as part of a wider ‘enemy within’ discourse). Either positioning (of professionals) is problematic and *disappears* professionals as emergent in the practice landscape making them subject to the formulations of others (critical social policy/the New Right)<sup>23</sup>.

Hunter’s solution to what she calls this ‘false dichotomy’ between service users and providers is to argue for an extension to a relational understanding of social identity that can incorporate both service users and service providers, and she has pursued this in subsequent work, drawing on (particularly Kleinian) psychoanalytic insights

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<sup>23</sup> Not least, it also fails to acknowledge that many (most) professionals/services providers are also, themselves, ‘users’ or ‘welfare subjects’ in their own right, for example, as parents, carers and/or claimants and also, more generally, as women, disabled people, black or minority ethnic people, lesbians and gay men, and so on. Likewise, it neglects historical and current professional involvement *alongside* users.

and utilising psychosocial methodological frameworks in examinations of, for example, social work (see, for example, Hunter, 2005). In these, recognition and *connection* come under the lens (including connections across different social identities) and it is the *interdependence* in relationships between service providers and users that comes under scrutiny for formulations of social identities of both parties. These formulations also promote more localised/situated understandings of identity. Once again, there is an inching forwards in the analysis here, towards understandings of fluid relationality as productive and linked to fragmented/multiple identities. At the same time, the humanist subject, in different forms remains central to what self is.

### 3.4 READING SOCIAL POLICY'S DESIRES

What does this extended overview *do* then, and how can it inform an understanding of the selfhood of social professionals? First of all, it provides limits, parameters on what can be thought about (social) professional selfhood. 'Professionals' can not be thought in quite the same way as users, where the instinct in critical social policy is to divide these up into social (or hybrid/intersectional) identity categories still normatively organised around gender, 'race', (dis)ability, sexuality and age. Whilst these may be useful for analytical purposes, as *mediating* categories for the idea of selfhood they may be clumsy and distorting, assuming too much (and this includes all the criticisms of 'identity politics' relating to their essentialist or reductionist tendencies). The selfhood of those who work in children's services is, however, not in the main, placed here – this is located in, and secured to, notions of 'the professional' and professional practice where this can be, at best, *in relation to* users. Shona Hunter's moves do attempt to break down something of a dichotomy but then they link this (inter)relational selfhood and to the importance of a kind of *interpersonal* production that, however, relies on (internal) operations and psychoanalytical insights, rather than on any political self-sense.

Secondly, it is important to note that, of course, being a 'professional' has become important as a social identity, but it *is*, again, a *categorical* identity where particular,

named groups (social workers, teachers, youth workers) are subsumed under the particular umbrella of a professional grouping. This works to a 'logic of sameness' (where social workers are this, and teachers are that, and so on), and this logic (must) relocate 'others' who are 'different', in reifying and foreclosing moves. **This is individualisation, and separation, of the humanist subject from other things in the world, rather as an effect of particular (identity, category) grids or 'tramlines' laid down.**

Thirdly, all this is linked to power; Hunter's insight that professionals are rarely 'categorised' in social policy in the same ways as users exposes not merely a coincidence, for 'users' (and whatever their posited 'social identity') have not been powerful figures in formal social policy and welfare configurations. When asked to place one-self in 'welfare workings' (for example in children's services) would one prefer the signifier of a (professional) social worker or health care professional, or a woman, or a young person, or a lesbian? Actually, what the hiatus of workforce change in children's services has produced in social policy terms is an instinct and systematic attempts to *shore up* something called 'professional status', and 'recognition claims' become part of maintaining this *status quo*. Time and time again, 'professionalising projects' are brought forward, this at least applies to social work (for example, Healy and Meagher, 2004), youth work (for example, Moore, 2005) and education (for example, Leaton Gray and Denley, 2005) with each group claiming the definition of itself as a 'marginal profession' and proposing strategies to achieve traditional markers (traits) like (self) regulation but, as importantly and explicitly, *to improve the status of the profession*. It is not clear how this relates to improvements in the lives of children and families.

Being a professional is, then, highly political, and the scramble for this status and identity exposes somewhat the tension with others in society in a quest for social rewards (status, money, power) where inequalities are justified and maintained partly through the existence of a 'professional class', and its occupational control and closure (for example, professions as 'gatekeepers' to inclusion), and so where professionalism is also an ideological standpoint (Larson, 1977). The recent *Munro*

*Review of Child Protection* (Munro, 2011) is only the latest example; this has been widely interpreted as positive for (underpinning) ‘the status of social workers’. But, in return for various measures to enhance the status of the social work profession (for example the establishment of a ‘National College’ for social work, and the highlighting of expertise as a defining feature of the social work profession), the review arguably ‘buys in’ to marketised and managerialised welfare in which users are also (remain) at the sharp end, simply producing what Rajan-Ranking and Beresford (2011) name a “more efficient, less bureaucratised *system of procedures*”, where “the problematics of bureaucratised and managerial social work practice remain unchallenged” and:

*what we have is a manager’s guide to good practice, rather than a critical reflection on the social basis of child protection, as a concern for everyone living in a ‘good society’* (Rajan-Rankin and Beresford, 2011)

So, social policy framings of ‘users’ (and their social identities) and ‘professionals’ (generally or as involving specific occupational identities) are, again, not merely neutral, but become entangled with relations of power, and as ‘professionals’ and their occupational professional bodies seek to maintain or enhance status.

There is a longer story here of course, of attempts to ‘rework’ the idea of the professional (proposing more palatable ‘activist’, ‘transformative’ or ‘democratic’ professionals) and also about attacks on professionals from New Right formulations (and some of this story is told in later chapters). But I remain sceptical about whether ‘professional identity’ is the framework or discourse within which a resistant or re-formed (transformative) self can emerge. ‘Professional’ is too loaded an idea and this loadedness has been writ large, and frequently on display, in children’s services attempts at better interprofessional practice and integration, and as individual services and professional groupings vie for status/power (see chapter 4), rather than organising for difference and interdependence both within and across professional groupings (see Wistow, 2012).

However, my overall point here is not so much about the content of these debates (their rightness/wrongness) but more about *categories themselves*, about what such

*categories* (and their apparent necessity and stranglehold in the study of social policy) *do* to selfhood, how they delineate, foreclose, reduce and reify, in the case of those who work in children's services, to a form of *professional* identity politics (and as, at least partly, separated from the categories available to 'users') and divide up the landscape so that being/behaving in-category becomes somehow desirable (and can be captured in social policy analysis). In the same vein, Braidotti claims that Deleuze and Guattari's entire philosophical enterprise can be seen as constituting an attack on identity: "Not on any one identity, but on the very concept of identity" (2005, n.p.) because of what it does.

In addition, particular forms of politics are also foregrounded in this striated landscape of 'selfhood' in social policy. There is a clear delineation in terms of the political action that can be produced and the story that is told. The particular 'story' that critical social policy tells us to this point can be summarised as follows:

*Social change/politics happens via the collective actions of those who experience (a variety of structural/cultural) inequalities that can be situated/localised and/or evident in a wider context. Organising collectively around (similar experiences linked to) particular social identities and in user groups generates critical consciousness/critique and collective political agency, in order that claims in welfare can be formulated. Such identities, which do not replace our own core selves (these continue to exist and operate including in relation to the development of our social/political identities) can also be built through relationship/connection to close others so that a variability and diversity of claims can be expected to exist; in this way others (perhaps outside our own social identity, or other social identity 'categories' and perhaps professionals) can also work alongside us in alliance or coalition.*

That is, as table 3 (above) indicates, the possibilities for a critical selfhood exist primarily in relation to collective organising (in social identities/categories) – via 'categorical' identifications - and as far as links can be built with others in *relational* social identities. (And, on the other hand, Hunter's (and Taylor's) ontological

selfhood largely builds in a core, unique self whereby politics may be largely irrelevant (although more generally might seek a more human(ist) world based on integrity and authenticity in human relationships.)

My problem is not so much that I do not recognise this account – indeed, I do – it has generated a positive plethora of critical social policy literature, from the comfortable appropriation of identity categories (“the experience of X,Y,Z”) through to the scrupulously differentiated. And I am both surprised, and tired, by the account: surprised because, mired in the problems of a philosophical/paradigmatic shift, it moves *so little* from a ‘standard’ critical theoretical frame; tired, because it is so weighed down by this and because I also recognise *loss* – because we can *no longer* “read history as a story of progress towards emancipation” (Lather, 2008, p.224), as this story tries to (continue to) do (via collective political action). So, of course, I recognise the account, I just cannot recognise its possibilities (any more). This is more than simply to ask - and where has this story got us in terms of social justice and equality? (though it *is* to ask this too). What critical social policy does is to set the terms of a debate that affords questions of social identity a particular normative legitimacy in its ‘way of thinking’; its ‘disciplinary mode’ sets a system of coordinates, of orientations. Yes, there are progressions which move step by step to ever-refined notions of social identity, but where these can never fall far from the tree – **they are contained within the purview of a humanist world.** Indeed, these are arboreal movements and that do not suppose critical social policy might also have motivations, desires, (historical) contexts, relations of power - an assemblage of its own (wherein certain features become naturalized) – and that do not allow social identity to be its so much more.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1994/1968) suggests that the image of good-natured thinking (traditional images of thought) need to be reworked, that thinking itself is creative, desirous and combative and the task is more than simply a shift in concepts (content) as this is still to be locked into a traditional image of thought that assumes conceptual shifts shift thinking; and this still assumes rational argument and the ethos of critique in social policy as the mode of thinking (the image of thought).

Deleuze defends thought as an involuntary activity (not necessarily tied to the application of method) and as the effect of outside forces and elements: “something in the world forces us to think” (Deleuze, 1994/1968, p.139), and that this thinking is integrally linked to desire, affect, power - a force, something bigger than ‘us’. Thus, whilst a critical social policy has an ethos of critique, its (own) image of thought works to its own desires, (re)producing itself. I have suggested that these might involve, for example, desires to hold onto collective political agency (linked to an ambivalent attachment to the postmodern), and attachments to the development of analytical units (categorisations) that support this, and as they become ever more refined – critical social policy’s image of thought *depends upon this*.

Indeed, the critical social policy literature on social identity (and that of intersectionality) consistently and repeatedly asserts the need for analytical categories through which to do its work, sometimes not even going so far as to treat it as problematic (rather as indispensable). For example, Walby (2007) outlines five approaches to intersectionality including ‘anticategorical complexity’ (drawn from McCall, 2005). She explains that in this approach “destabilisation of group categories” (Walby, 2007, p.352) became the aim of some forms of analysis because they are seen as never being able to adequately represent and as “potentially pernicious in their potential for false sedimentation of these categories in practice”(p.352) (as I have broadly been arguing). She cites Braidotti’s border-crossing ‘nomad’ image as one example and then simply deals with the approach as a whole by commenting: “such radical deconstruction and destabilization of categories makes substantive analysis, which requires distinctions between categories, rather hard...”(Walby, 2007, p.352). In a later article (Walby et al, 2012), again, there is this:

*The anti-categorical approach is ‘based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories’. This approach considers the stabilization of categories to be problematic in essentializing and reifying the social relations that the analyst may be seeking to change. It thus prioritises fluidity over stability of categories. **This is problematic in that it makes practical analysis difficult.***

(Walby et al, 2012, p.227, emphasis added)

Here are acknowledgements of social policy's need, itself, for *categories* (of social identity); they have utility, and for the story it wants to tell about (self and) social identity, so ever-more refined and differentiated categories are desirable. This may be the 'tail wagging the dog' somewhat, as it helps to contain what can be thought even while self might overflow.

Hence, Deleuze and Guattari claim that identity functions as a tool of the State (1987, p.361); in my exploration, identity "as a paradigm for social analysis" (Watson, 2008, p.198) functions (as part of this bigger picture) as a tool of social policy. If we wanted to tell a different story, we would need a different social policy, *without such reliance on social identity* (and its categories). And, if we want self to involve an expansive political selfhood we need to move beyond social identities that deal with difference as rooted in *categories of (imagined, so-called and foreclosed) samenesses* that produce *reduced collectivities*; this is:

*...a political way of life that is not merely a fractious collection of sovereign cultural identities, but [one that] dispenses sovereignty...into new forms of political and social coexistence.* (Butler, 2007, n.p.)

Even Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge that identity is sometimes necessary to pursue a politics (1987/1980, p.276) and, as I have also acknowledged, the liberatory political activism of multiple 'identity groups' (of which I have been a part, many times) has served a positive (even necessary) function. But this, and the story that critical social policy largely perpetuates, is that this is (all that is) politics – again, Arendt's "fractious collection" of identities (in which I include 'professional identities') serve as interest groups, and involve 'othering' – separations not connections. What the parameters set in such circumstances *do* is to marginalize other forms of politics and other forms of relating, as identity (as mediator, abstraction, attachment, reduction, essentialiser) subsumes or overshadows other possibilities that might stand outside or beyond its grids, and the possibilities for a *much more direct politics* between people and the state (whatever manifestation this involves), and between people and the marketplaces of global capitalism (J. Watson, 2008, p.198). This requires a model of belonging *founded in difference not sameness (identity)*, but in connection not separation, and foregrounds abundant

political relationships in all their multiplicity, as they happen, and are made in their doing and *in being* (selfhood). If we want an expansive political selfhood for children's services professionals we might, for example, understand selfhood as about being/doing in the day-to-day in public settings, as (in every situation) *civic actors in organisational contexts*, and this as important as so-called 'collective political action'. This is not a micropolitics (of resistance) in the traditionally understood sense because it is *not* linked to particular shared identities, categories or analyses (outside of oneself), but to being-itself as politics. This is not about a politics *via* a particular 'professional' affiliation or as collective political action happening (or not) via user groups and social movements, but about an expansive politics of being/doing in the day-to-day, the here-and-now, based on difference and interdependence. If we want an expansive politics of self, we need a different version of politics (and what it means to operate in public spaces) than that foregrounded and fixed and prescribed in the humanist subject of social policy's desires.

## Chapter 4

### VICTORIA CLIMBIÉ AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

*Constituting the social professional in the development of children's services*

*In a control-based system nothing's left alone for long*  
(Deleuze, 1995/1990, p.175)

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the formulations of selfhood in critical social policy and what these do (and do not do) for thinking and being (selfhood). Social policy pre-figures the humanist subject, particularly via its entanglement with, and enshrining of, (categories of) social identity. This striates or divides the landscape for self and does groundwork for how (professional) selfhood emerges in children's services. Here I move to focus directly on children's services policy and practice, in an account oriented around unfolding *events* in its formation. This is to be attentive to performative aspects of policy and implementation in what they do.

Every local authority in England now has (a version of) its own 'children's services', subject to regular inspections by Ofsted<sup>24</sup>. Despite this, it is in some ways possible to already talk about the *legacy* of children's services – its project moves on, and *intensifies* (see chapter 5), and notably so subsequent to the 2010 election of the (Conservative-led) Coalition government. In this sense, 'children's services' is

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<sup>24</sup> Inspections are carried out under Section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act, 2006.

already *historical*. Deleuze distinguishes between history and events (or becoming or appearance) by suggesting that history is not “experimental, it’s just the set of more or less negative preconditions that make it possible to experiment with something beyond history” (Deleuze, 1995/1990, p.170). Despite aversion to a history that is “intended to intimidate any creation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994/1991, p.83), Lundy comments that almost all Deleuze’s references to history, as above, occur in a context of becoming, and, in this sense, his philosophy “provides us with ....creativity as *historical creativity*” (2012, p.2, emphasis in original), that is, history/becoming in “productive relation” (p.184). The (pre)conditions (and folding, and crumpling) of history contain, then, important seeds, for now and for what is to come, involving both history *and* becoming, as “without history, becoming would remain indeterminate and unconditioned” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994/1991).

This chapter identifies (or disentangles) the (historical and current) ‘preconditions’, specifically, the role of policy and practice for self in children’s services. Selfhood is not produced in isolation from context and my (widely held) assumption is that the policy and practice environment has a profound effect on the selfhood of professionals, that this is not a neutral process, and involves the use of power structured into social relations, that is, in surveillance (although this is not *all* that self is). The chapter provides an account of key activities in the progress and development of a children’s services project in England – with an emphasis on *its doings* as well as in relation to its discursive formulations.

The chapter is organised around the Climbié Inquiry itself (Laming, 2003), integrating services, tools for research, evidence and monitoring, and workforce reform. Whilst specific examples are used, this is a schematic or topological mapping across children’s services, rather than an examination of micro-level workings at the profession/occupation, or sector-specific level<sup>25</sup>; nor do I make central the (differential) impact of reforms for users and for outcomes. Rather than a full review, then, this is an account of developments that orients towards social

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<sup>25</sup> For a good example of an examination of micro-level impact in relation to interagency work see Watson (2012)

professionals (rather than outcomes for children, young people and families) that begins to highlight some of the implications for self. The next chapter moves on to analysis in terms of the specific impact, *and for constitutions*, of that self.

In mapping the broad contours I draw on a selection of policy and practice literature, my own experiences over the last decade (from within a small university) working with professionals, children's services organizations and stakeholders, and my research conversations with a small number of professionals/managers in practice. This is, again, an attempt to move beyond purely a "discourse determinism" (Watson, 2012, p.156), and the mapping-presentation might be thought of as a kind of (rhizomatic. flattened) "narrative collage" (Denzin, 2001, p.29) in its writing, where 'voice' is (thought and) presented "within the entanglement it immediately becomes and continues to become as it joins other enactments, other assemblages" (Mazzei, 2013, p.737). This is a continuing attempt to de-centre the subject, or at least to produce an account where 'a subject' is *part of the mix* rather than (humanistically) centred via their 'experience' **(even as the humanist subject is (re)produced in policy and practice in children's services)** - a 'plugging in' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012), for a researcher-data-participants-theory-analysis (Mazzei, 2013). In entanglement, all these things are be-coming together.

## 4.2 THE VICTORIA CLIMBIÉ INQUIRY

Like many others, I begin the story of the establishment of children's services with *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report* (Laming, 2003)<sup>26</sup>. This, which was the first of its kind to include all three of local authorities, health services and the police within its remit, catapulted social professionals into an unprecedented period of reform – for the 'transformation' of services for children, young people and families. The damning critique within the Climbié report produced 108 recommendations and led

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<sup>26</sup> Although this is widely regarded as a somewhat seminal moment, it is important to note that the kinds of 'solutions' proposed in the development of children's services have had much wider purchase as a general direction of travel, at least in the West. At European level, however, England has been regarded as something of an 'outlier' in its preparedness to adopt more radically neo-liberal trajectories.

to the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfES,2004) and, ultimately, to the Children Act, 2004. The Green and White Papers, and statute itself, was to go well beyond simply strengthening responses to child abuse - the *Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007) aim was "to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up" (2007, p.3). Whilst the changes actually developed some previous reforms by the same government attempting to address wider questions of risk to, and the protection of, children (Parton 2006; Collett, 2010) it was hard to avoid a conclusion that it was the Victoria Climbié moment that triggered, or at least accelerated, wholesale reform.

The powerful 'safeguarding' discourse, the graphic and widely publicized accounts of what had happened to an 8-year old Victoria, and the multiple failures of individual professionals recorded in the *Climbié Inquiry Report* (Laming, 2003) led, as in many other reported cases of child deaths, to "a kind of stunned collective incredulity" (Watson, 2012, p.154) particularly evident in media reporting<sup>27</sup>. That social workers competence (in particular) was questioned was not new or surprising, and a search for 'villains' arguably does not involve a level playing field (in striated and hierarchical 'professional' formulations where social work is arguably marginalized *vis a vis* more traditional professions), nor careful attention to complexities inherent to structures and organizations (Watson, 2012), and important contextual factors. For example, in a re-examination of the Climbié Inquiry evidence, Y.Taylor (2008) exposes some of the ways a particular 'story' was constructed through the 'coding' of the 'data' (which was the individual testimony given to the Inquiry). In this, Taylor shows how contextual factors are minimized, or disappear, resulting in a highlighting of individual and organizational responsibility. Not only this, Taylor shows how subtleties in process and evidence heard by the Inquiry was also lost, notably in the differential status, dignity and reliability afforded, say, consultant paediatricians as

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<sup>27</sup> To give just one example, Alasdair Palmer (2001) reporting on the Climbié Inquiry and writing in *The Telegraph* - not a paper known for sensationalist reporting and florid language - included the following in his article: "just as incredible, and almost as repulsive, is the extraordinary incompetence, blindness and stupidity of the professionals who were supposed to be protecting Victoria" and "a picture of stunning and shocking disorganisation and incompetence" and "The only resource in genuinely short supply in Haringey social services department was common sense"; instead there was "the kind of invisible arrogance and stubborn stupidity evidenced by some of its workers and managers".

opposed to inexperienced social workers – this is Taylor’s ‘tip of the iceberg’ metaphor in relation to the resulting Inquiry Report.

From a socio-legal perspective, Masson (2006) constructs an alternative account of the life of Victoria Climbié highlighting some of the issues outside of the terms of reference of the Inquiry, including parental responsibility, child trafficking and immigration/emigration service failures, the role of the criminal law and the inadequacy of the wider legal framework for providing family support services. She comments “the exclusion of these wider issues of prevention, focused all attention on the failure of the local state” (p.1), and claims her analysis:

*....illustrates the importance of the wider legal and social context within which child protection failures occur....inquiries which focus on the actions of individuals can only ever provide a partial and incomplete view of what went wrong.....a poor foundation for understanding practice generally or for reform*  
(Masson, 2006, p.241)

From a critical therapeutic (psychodynamic) position, Cooper (2005) contrasts the clearly emotionally harrowing nature of Inquiry evidence heard, and as expressed in the body of the Inquiry Report, with its anodyne recommendations – “by the end of the report, we are offered the same kind of terse, lifeless, abstract series of recommendations that has flowed from every other similar exercise” (p.5). Cooper explains this “dismembered document” (p.4) through the difficulties of engaging, and staying engaged, with the emotional realities and practice dynamics of child protection work and that “this trend finds expression in discourses of performance, behaviour and professional competence, rather than explanation, interpretation and understanding” (p.2). He claims this means a lack of connection between policy discourse and “the intensive aspects of practice” (p.9).

From a social policy perspective, Rustin (2004) identifies a series of difficulties with the extrapolation of one case to wholesale (national) review – should one case be used to reform whole systems that might otherwise be working well? - and with connecting the failures of individuals and larger institutional structures via “rules and procedures, compliance with which is to be enforced by a hierarchical management structure....[in] an essentially bureaucratic model of organization” (p.15). And

Garrett (2006) and Daniel et al (2005) critique the insignificance afforded, respectively, to 'race' and gender analyses in the Laming Report (2003) and in *Every Child Matters* (DCSF, 2003).

Despite these later 'unpickings' of the Inquiry and Report itself (which were, anyway, largely only available in academic journals) at the outset of the children's services project the selfhood of social professionals was premised at the very least on its inadequacies, where the term 'professional' could barely be applied. As Palmer (2001) wrote: "The only people who were able to recognize that something was horribly wrong with Victoria were those not trained and paid to do so: a taxi-driver, a babysitter, a nurse." Individual professional deficits and failures were writ large. A decade on it is widely acknowledged that, at the least, the individual social workers involved were largely offered up as a "sacrifice" to the Inquiry by employers, in order to avoid their "owning up to" systemic failures (Mandelstam, 2013, p.237)<sup>28</sup>. Despite 'wicked' social problems and the complexities of practice (Ball and Junemann, 2012; Watson and Forbes, 2012) the Inquiry ultimately confirmed for many a (narrow) model of accountability as settling in individuals. At the same time, a different message was conveyed via the Inquiry recommendations and in what was to follow – the whole system, and all those in it, needed re-forming.

So, whilst (certain) individuals could be sacked (and vilified), all were to be made complicit. The 'failures' (and shame), as associated with the specifics of Victoria Climbié and what had happened to her, provided a powerful justifier – it arguably tempered (even de-legitimised) challenges emerging from professional bodies and others seen to be implicated. 'Stakeholders' were thus required to demonstrate compliance and a degree of *mea culpa*, which prefaced many responses. 'Sign up' to a new agenda would not be optional; even questioning it might have been a

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<sup>28</sup> Two social workers were sacked in Nov 2002 for gross misconduct; one of these, the frontline social worker Lisa Arthurworrey, won the right to practise again as a social worker in 2010 following a period placed on the Protection of Children Act list (a highly controversial move in relation to someone who had not actually abused a child), and protracted regulatory body hearings and final appeal at the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (McGregor, 2010). The registration was subject to certain conditions for 'the protection of the public' including psychiatric assessments, and not being employed through an agency (McGregor, 2013). Later in 2013 Arthurworrey submitted an application to voluntarily remove herself from social work registration (McGregor, 2013a).

potential signifier of a practitioner lacking the required commitment to keeping children safe which had been placed so in doubt – *Every Child Matters* was “an inescapable moral imperative” (Hoyle, 2008 n.p.) and, for example, social workers were “a currently distrusted profession” (Sinclair and Corden, 2005, p.2). The workings of power were hidden in such a context, the possibility of critical questioning in doubt. In my own research conversations, one research participant captured a certain attitude towards ‘children’s services’ when she typified it as:

*Children’s services have always been deemed to be a thorn in the side really, and the, kind of, message strategically speaking is that ‘you’re like a load of kids’....[ ]...it’s the way that **everybody** behaves. And they just need sorting out. It’s an over-generalisation.*

(Senior Practitioner, Health Services)

The requirement in becoming, in a self-constitution for new practice arrangements was to make oneself malleable, recognise one’s lack/deficit, and be-come responsible (and this would be ensured by the scripted new arrangements imposed externally, for practice). Later, in opening up delivery of a commissioned Masters programme for senior managers in one Children’s Trust (2008), a participant (student) demonstrated the absolutely ‘on message’ possibilities, and ownership of the task at hand, what the requirements for self were:

*I’ve come to find out about theories and models, for ideas about ‘what works’, to do better interprofessional practice, in improving outcomes for children*

(student on MA Professional Practice, 2008, quoted with permission)

There were nods around the room. This might be called “a successful articulation or ‘chaining’ of the subject into the flow of the discourse” (Hall 1996, p.19) or a Foucauldian concern with self governance. There may always be ‘spillovers’ however, becomings that do not fit. Privately, with some alarm, another student sought me out at lunchtime the same day to say:

*You do realise that it’s very political and controversial what you’re doing, don’t you; you’ve got some very powerful people round the room y’know, I was worried you might not know....*

(student on MA Professional Practice, 2008, quoted with permission)

Here, the contestation integral to 'bureaucratic politics' was expressed covertly, *beyond* the confines of dominant discourse and outside of a more public contestation. On the public aspect of debate (politics), Arendt comments: "...the end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective." (1999/1958, p.58). That is, whilst the becoming self could be chained to the dominant discourse what might be lost would be the politics of public debate (Arendt's 'freedom'), (a protection of) difference, and *expansive* becomings.

#### 4.3 INTEGRATING SERVICES

Under the new policy discourse, the challenge was a (demand to) rewrite and redraw the lexicon and landscape for practice, with the goal of thinking and practising in different ways, to produce 'better outcomes' for children. The five *Every Child Matters* (ECM) outcomes of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and economic well being, provided a framework which was widely supported by agencies and stakeholders (Williams, 2004; Straker and Foster, 2009). Multi-agency developments were at the heart of reform and, it was said, required significant *structural* reorganisations across and within agencies – children's services were to be 'integrated'. If the failure to prevent the death of Victoria Climbié was the primary result of individuals in different parts of 'welfare' failing to work together then the solution was that they would now be compelled to. Oliver and Mooney (2010) acknowledged: "Moving towards integrated working entails a radical change in organizational structures, working processes and cultures" (p.8) (see also C4EO, 2011; Hargreaves et al, 2010; Parton, 2004).

The changes introduced – and driven through via structural reorganisations - included multiple policy shifts, rafts of new practice guidance, target/outcome oriented practice goals, the introduction of new (common and mandated) tools,

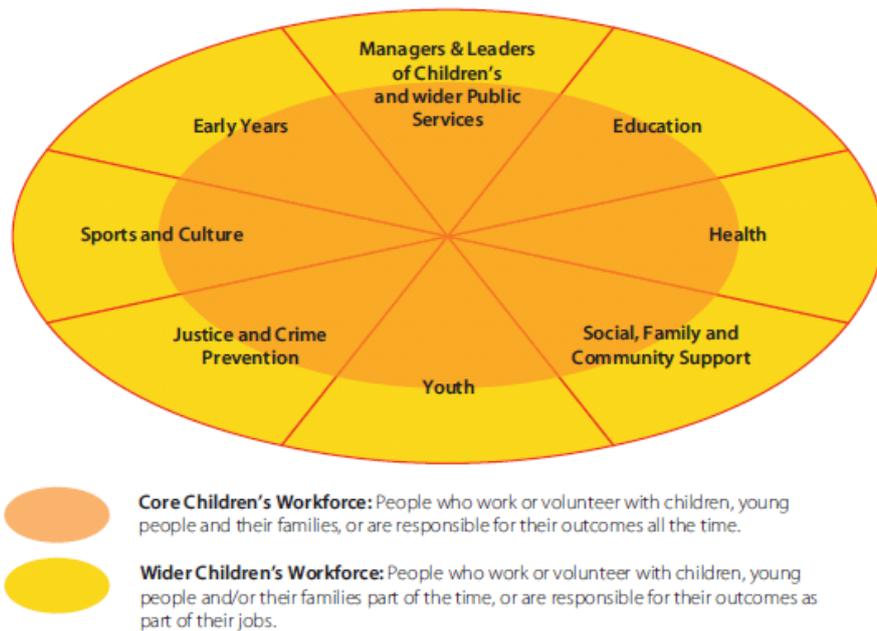
budget sharing, a new language for practice, new (required) protocols (for information sharing), changing job roles (and conditions of work), and the creation of new ones (such as the 'lead professional'). These changes were required both *across* the new 'children's workforce' and also impacted (differentially) *within* the different sectors or professions that make it (and for the re-constitution of self). The Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008a) claimed two million workers in the affected workforce, trained in up to 60 separate 'professions', although detailed workforce information in some sectors was, and remains, patchy at best (CWDC, NCSL and TDA, 2008)<sup>29</sup>. Thus, many different professional groupings were brought together under the rubric of children's services and as part of the new children's workforce, as shown over, in *Figure 1* (one of a variety of different ways in which the workforce has been portrayed) (DCSF, 2008). The new integrated arrangements were (ambitiously but simplistically) represented by what became known as 'the onion diagram' (see *Figure 2*, over). In both *Figures 1* and *2* it is not clear if, or how, one could ever stand outside of the picture, everyone is apparently encircled in both and wholly directed towards pre-defined outcomes. In the onion diagram, it is assumed that each layer exerts influence inwards on the immediately adjacent layer directing whole system attention in a nested arrangement of functional structures and processes producing outcomes at the centre for (notably, rather than with) the end user/consumer; this is a complexity reduction<sup>30</sup> model that appears to largely dispense with the people in it, involving:

*....expert systems as vehicles for an evidence-based response to multiple problems.....associated with an increasingly technocratic culture in children's services, which may be restricting professional expertise*  
(Hood, 2014, p.27)

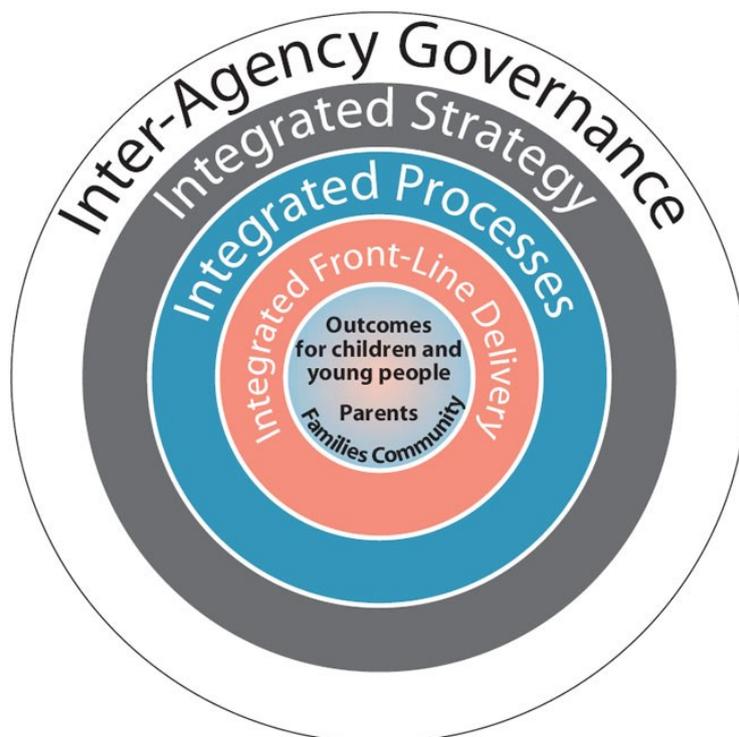
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<sup>29</sup> Information about the workforce in schools is reported as reasonably comprehensive but in social care and early years (despite multiple initiatives in the latter) there remain significant gaps and difficulties with reliable data collection (CWDC, NCSL and TDA, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> This is perhaps as opposed to an ongoing responsiveness in 'becoming-with' children and families.



*Figure 1*  
The Children's Workforce (DCSF 2008)



*Figure 2*  
The 'onion' diagram (DfES 2004)

Nationally, a Children’s Commissioner for England was appointed. Local Directors of Children’s Services were statutorily required so that there would be both strategic and operational ‘join up’ of (statutory education and social care) services, including a statutory framework for local interagency arrangements for safeguarding children, and the development of extended schools. These were all to sit under integrated governance arrangements, in new Children’s Trusts (Audit Commission, 2008) within local authority areas that were to incorporate all services to children, young people and families (including health services and the third, and private, sectors). As far as vertical government tools to implement integration and collaborative working go, utilising fulsome statutory/mandatory regulation is of the highly authoritative version, rather than a possible emphasis on information or incentivisation strategies (Moseley, 2008), though a great deal did follow statute and mandatory guidance in terms of capacity building across the sector, though strictly within the given paradigm for the new practice. Coupled with the Climbié ‘crisis’, however, it would be surprising if the approach did not feel, in part, somewhat punitive and at least something where dissent would be difficult, and requiring full and active co-operation. There did, indeed, seem to be a high level of sign-up, commitment and energy achieved, and emerging from within the new arrangements. Two research participants commented thus about this period<sup>31</sup>:

*I started with a brand new team, with a brand new government mandate to go out and change the world and change how we did things, y’know, it was exciting, exciting within my team – very scary and challenging for the services we were working for because ‘we’re used to doing things our way of doing it’, but within my team, we felt empowered.*

*We felt like we were trailblazing and we felt like we could see, and I guess we thought, then, because people knew, and they namechecked it, that we were in it for the long haul because people knew that early intervention takes lots and lots of years in order to reap the rewards. So, we, I think, the whole programme we were excited about.*

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<sup>31</sup> Research participants were not directly or specifically asked about their responses to new children’s services arrangements a decade ago, but in asking the more general question about what they thought about practice, how it had been for them, these specific comments were made.

The new and detailed mandates from government involved local level design of new arrangements; the level and scope of organizational (re)structuring activities within local authority areas to achieve the new requirements was, indeed, profound. Local understanding and interpretation of integrated services varied – for example, at delivery point was this to mean, simply, multi-agency teams (with or without co-location), or was it a driver to more generically focused workers (and the loosening of particular professional ties) (Anning et al 2006; Straker and Foster 2009); or, did it mean the creation of new and specific (integrated services) job roles? And how could this be linked to the required outcomes, and safeguarding exactly?

The classificatory ‘regimes’ and terms relating to ‘integrated working’ are multifarious as evident in Atkinson et al, 2007, Robinson et al, 2008, and Anning et al, 2006). These authors take different approaches, the first being a review on the literature on the *implications* of multi-agency working, the second a direct review of theories and models for integrated working, and the last an early study of actual different models in practice in children’s services. All authors deal with multiple (terms and) arrangements; Robinson et al (2008) demonstrate the sheer proliferation of approaches, models and the complexity of ‘integration’. In conceptual terms the terrain is deeply unstable and uncertain suggesting (especially) ‘standard tools’ produced might have little purchase for local and particular practice settings<sup>32</sup> in their complexity.

If the ‘vision’ was sweeping and aspirational in relation to what children and young people could expect, then the comprehensive delegation of accountability and delivery to the local state (and partners in the Children’s Trust) made them responsible for:

*organising themselves to 'deliver' the most complex 'whole system change' in a generation – whilst continuing to display an inability or unwillingness to acknowledge, or develop effective national solutions for, the structural and*

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<sup>32</sup> Some suggest that local-level contexts and practice are, themselves, what drives integrated working, that is, it is situation-specific and ‘bottom-up’, rather than the other way round (for example, Frost and Robinson, 2007); others that we should move away from the idea that integrated working is the best model for practice because other factors provide evidence of better outcomes such as positive organizational climate or better/different *professional practices* (Frost, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford, 2009) – this latter can also be seen as part of debates that *shore up* ‘professionalism’ as a mode of being (in the face of critiques of this).

*systemic problems from which negative outcomes can emerge for children and young people.* (Hoyle (2008 n.p.)

Here, David Hoyle draws attention to arrangements that deflect attention away from the structural, constitutive precursors/elements associated with children's well-being, in which government (rather than the local state, and individual workers) plays a major role. The abdication to Children's Trusts, whilst highly prescriptive and regulated at the centre, was also seen as a boon to continuing government rhetoric and sound-bite politics, that could deflect and disperse blame (Hoyle, 2010).

It was, at best, unclear, given the problematic of extrapolation from one case, the overall ambiguous nature of the evidence on collaborative working (Oliver and Mooney, 2010; Atkinson et al 2007), significant gaps in workforce information, and the sheer complexity and scale of the changes, how *simply mandating the attainment of clear goals under condition of statute* might work. Moseley, (2008), for one, notes how conditions of ignorance or uncertainty (and this could not be otherwise given what was being attempted) alongside such mandates are potentially likely to lead to inappropriate or flawed goals and other problematic practices; for example, one research participant commented in relation to data:

*There were some issues internally – y'know, a lot of that is about people's ideas about data collection, monitoring, outputs, and outcomes and I think that those were ...[we]..always felt we were not necessarily collecting the right data, in the right ways, for the right reasons.... we ended up collecting a lot of pointless dross really...and it took up a lot of time*  
(research participant)

Not least, the new agenda also 'mapped onto', or 'played out' through and with, already existing discourses (including the Climbié narrative) and hierarchies for practice; this was particularly notable in relation to the professional status (and 'silos') of different worker groupings, and to statutory, private and third sector relationships. It was clear that what was 'common' (along with the requirement for compliance) was what mattered in the new agenda, and this meant a degree of reduction and standardization (common language, common tools and so on) which cut across not only, simply, existing ways of doing things, but also what was a range

of professional ontologies (White et al, 2009; Yardley, 2014). These were disrupted via the top-down impositions with the attempt to shoehorn them through narrower standardized practices (*cross-profession*) in a discourse of deficit; this helped to generate much ontological insecurity and resistance, and operated in tension with the need to demonstrate compliance to the new agenda. Commitment to individual 'professional identities' remained strong with many different professionals feeling it was theirs under (most) threat. Later, the *Munro Review of Child Protection* (Munro, 2011) criticized standardization for its constraining, rather than enabling, effects and its impact on the professional sense of social workers; the effect on (weakening) professional identity also emerged in research conversations:

*Professional identity [...] really gets chipped away at [...] over a period of time, and you remove all that professional stuff and all that growth into a kind of boxed down, minimalised, invalidated process really.*

(Senior practitioner, statutory, health services)

Constituting self here involved profound ontological insecurities in the negotiation of territory.

However, some services/sectors were more implicated and/or more central, than others – schools, for example, did not have a duty to cooperate under the legislation, and in 2008, despite some good practice, the Audit Commission (2008) reported many had not engaged (see also Deakin and Kelly, 2006). There are numerous contextualized forms of integrated working in terms of structures and processes (Stuart, 2012) and particular local conditions really matter; changes played out in multiple ways, not just geographically, but also for specific workforces, and in relation to a variety of other factors such as a local history of collaboration (Percy-Smith, 2006). In both capturing a sense of professional hierarchy and the influence of local conditions, one research participant commented:

*....y'know, as you were asking I was thinking about social workers – [they] got lost first as individuals. That's my experience of my colleagues y'know. I can remember all that stuff about when they were going to court and they.... and then [county] did all that stuff about saying they weren't allowed to give individual statements so it was all about, they had to get statements signed by the legal department, they weren't allowed to speak in their own right, as professionals, and on behalf of the child, it was horrific.*

(Senior Practitioner, statutory, health services)

And similarly, on local conditions, one research participant talked about her local (geographical) area:

*Why does it work? [Area] is often held up as a beacon of good practice in this way - very, very often. And people traipse up from [County town] going 'what's different here, what's going on'?*

(Chief Executive, social enterprise, social work)

Constituting self, then, involves productions locally (in relation) and possibilities are, in part, particular, even in the context of top-down, standardised moves and a widespread decoupling of professional sense and a becoming in insecurity.

#### 4.4 TOOLS FOR RESEARCH, EVIDENCE AND MONITORING

The attempt at complexity reduction via the trope of integrated working produced, at the level of practice, well, a *mushrooming* of complexity (although I know many 'professionals' who would simply call this chaos) – complexity reduction efforts became, themselves, *part of* the complexity itself (of dealing with the real at the same time?). However, the new way of working was also to be profoundly evidence-based - the new government-funded national Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children's and Young People's Services (C4EO) was a classic example of the government 'brand' in its title alone – in mission terms, it:

*....identifies and coordinates local, regional and national evidence of 'what works', to create a single and comprehensive picture of effective practice in delivering children's services. Using this information, C4EO offers support to local authorities and their Children's Trust partners.... to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.*

([www.c4EO.org.uk](http://www.c4EO.org.uk))

In this way, 'excellence', 'outcomes', 'what works' and 'best practice' would be assured and were at the core of the rhetoric for children's services and services (and their workers) were to be constructed/subjected in this image. Rather than being

associated with people, however, the outcomes agenda was mediated and understood through systems and structures and “quasi-industrial practices” (Ince 2010, p.1) which would re-form those operating them:

*Monitoring is given great importance. Supervision is not a matter of enabling a responsible professional to reflect on difficult and troubling situations. Rather it is a matter of quality control and authoritative action. Supervisors are to check that agreed actions have been completed by specified times. They are to read properly completed files based on meticulous recording and checks on all possible sources of information. They read records and sign off cases.....The chief executives of trusts are to put numerous procedures in place.....Discretion is reduced.*

(Sinclair and Corden, 2005, p.18)

The ‘evidence’ of evidence-based/‘what works’ practice, emerges from a positivist and techno-rational frame. By this I mean that what is valued is research conducted within a scientised frame and oriented towards the specified/pre-determined outcomes of government policy. This links powerfully with a managerialist, top-down approach to children’s services development to help construct very narrow and instrumentalised routes to practice change, paradoxically operating alongside a broad and complex practice undergoing massive structural and cultural upheaval. For example, the *Journal of Children’s Services* (established in 2006) reflects the remit with a consistent focus on positivistic, quantitatively-oriented contributions and *The Association of Directors of Children’s Services* (ADCS) (established in 2007) is very clear in its research guidelines that, for approval, this instrumental frame is the preferred one (research projects should be related to improving outcomes and “improved evidence-based practice” (ADCS 2010, p.1), with a preference stated for “well constructed questionnaires” (*ibid* p.2) and negatives associated with interview schedules that might “need lengthy narrative answers” (*ibid*, p.3). Inevitably, as part of this discourse, *behavioural* interventions are regarded as effective for dealing with complex social problems (Churchill, 2011). Oancea and Pring note:

*The problems seem to stem not from one particular model or design as such, but from the policy-driven filtering of evidence on technical grounds, the hierarchies of knowledge on which this filtering draws, and the standard setting exercises that narrow the contribution of research to policy and practice to a purely instrumental role. (2008, p.19)*

This is echoed by Reder and Duncan's (2004) and Sinclair and Corden's (2005) critique of the preoccupation with procedures, and reforms to the structure and organization of services; they identify concomitant dangers of overbureaucratic implementation. Williams (2004) links this to the economic and neo-liberal basis of the legislative thrust (particularly highlighting an emphasis on "achieving" rather than "enjoying" in relation to one of the five outcomes), arguing that *Every Child Matters* fails to be clear about its vision and values; she also questions the meaning of (and lack of attention to) respect for children, and the place of trust in relationships between parents and the state. Garrett (2006; 2009), White, Hall and Peckover (2009), and Hoyle (2010) critique the introduction of new technologies and tools in the 'surveillance' of children and families, in particular in relation to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) tool, and ContactPoint (a national, information sharing database on all children and young people) introduced under new arrangements.

In a detailed critique, Ince (2010), a computer scientist, analyses the failure of one of the new, mandatory tools of the new children's workforce, that of the Integrated Children's System (ICS), through a detailed examination of the process of its development and implementation. Noting that the Climbié Inquiry report had failed to acknowledge just how far those professionals involved appeared to have been poorly supported by IT and poor management/administration of this (preferring instead to broadly attribute the death of a child to individual mistakes/incompetence and mismanagement), he infers that lack of attention to this led to inappropriate IT 'solutions'. That the ICS system was rolled out across the country and not rejected earlier, or "technical morticians" called in (2010, p.2) is a matter of comment; for Ince this is significant because it is a rare example of this *not* happening – perhaps it reflects a picture of a workforce pushed back on its heels, and lacking confidence in the face of the safeguarding discourse rollercoaster constructed through government and media discourses requiring, simply and at least in the first instance, simple compliance, not questioning – it could not be the IT that was wrong, it was bound to be the professionals.

Ince captures a number of assumptions upon which the new ICS system was based, and the issues this raises which, for him, are all problematic and, I also suggest, are illustrative of the technical-rational-performative assumptions and discourses in play alongside the deficit-failure-safeguarding one, and to which a variety of services and individual professionals were subject, and becoming-with:

*[T]he use of software to impose on professionals a set of quasi-industrial practices; the idea that computer code is always better than well-designed manual processes and can replace them; that life-critical systems are not just confined to areas such as nuclear control, medicine and avionics; that computer code can replace good managerial practice; that software technologies normally used for the development of industrial systems such as those deployed in retail, banking and customer relationship management applications can be used for human-centred applications; ....that when a system is used by large numbers of distributed user groups that a one-size-fits-all approach should be preferred.....;....that, in a human-centred system where unstructured data dominates structured data in both importance and quantity, it is the latter that should drive technological decisions*

(Ince, 2010, p.2)

Ince's analysis is convincing in exposing the lack of fit between the ICS (standardizing) system, the exigencies and 'interruptions' of (in this case) social work day to day realities, and the inappropriate application of industrially based solutions; he demonstrates how up to 80% of a social worker's workload might be taken up with 'servicing' the system's requirements for 'effective' case management. He describes a data/monitoring-driven approach which, arguably, 'removes' social workers from the field of play other than as instruments (everywhere and nowhere) requiring them to constitute themselves as coders of children, young people and families in all their complexities. Ince says the system represents a "technological shackling" (p.2) and a 'chiasmus', explaining:

*The term 'chiasmus' is due to McLuhan who defined it as the reversal of process caused by increasing its speed, size or scope – every process pushed far enough tends to reverse or 'flip' suddenly*

(Ince, 2010, p.11, footnote).

The system constructed data management (rather than work with families) as paramount in social work (despite the stated intentions of the Climbié Inquiry) and,

in so doing, instrumentalises and de-humanises both users and professionals and centralizes a narrow accountability “in which IT is used as a panopticon” (p.19; see also Garrett, 2004); Ince questions whether the development of ICS and its implementation treats social workers as professionals, specifically whether they are trusted and have any autonomy. As inevitable problems in the system emerged in practice, Ince also implies attempts to suppress these coming to light – for example, a reluctance to engage with a multitude of concerns collated by UNISON and based on experiences of using the new system; and the government’s own commissioned (from the University of York), highly critical, evaluation of ICS pilot implementation which was only released eighteen months after the event, under a Freedom of Information Request (Bell et al, 2007).

Ince’s (retrospective) critique is pertinent especially as someone who witnessed ongoing attempts to shoehorn (the multiples of) practice into the prescribed systems being introduced in the name of (standardized) ‘safeguarding’ – not only for the ICS, but for ContactPoint<sup>33</sup> and the Common Assessment Framework<sup>34</sup> (CAF), all with their highly complex information transfer chains. On ContactPoint Munro (2005) wrote it had “alarming potential for panopticism” providing government with an (apparently) “technically flawless means for exercising power and discipline in response to the confusion of ‘child abuse’ and the murder of children by their caregivers” ; she suggests it positions workers as ‘guards’ and ContactPoint a mechanism through which they share information with other guards. Ince and Munro together, then, construct, an image of multiple layers of surveillance, in relation to the wider population, but also of professionals themselves.

However, Peckover, White and Hall, who also document multiple problems with ContactPoint in their study, notably suggest that the strength of professional cultures and practices meant they were “not sufficiently malleable to be eroded by the introduction of an ICT system” (2008, p.379). They suggest professional perceptions about the nature of their work did not connect with their idea of what

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<sup>33</sup> ContactPoint was a national government database holding information on all young people under 18; it was heavily criticised and scrapped by the Coalition Government in 2010.

<sup>34</sup> This is a standard assessment form used by all professionals engaged in child welfare work.

'real' work was - they cite a health visitor who explained she had not used the system "because she had 'practical work to do, you know, making phone calls and getting on with the job'" (p.379); this might further suggest something in actual work practices and an understanding of self *escaping* the panoptic gaze of the new IT systems in children's services and even as the problematic constitution of self *with* the new technologies and tools of children's services emerged.

#### 4.5 WORKFORCE REFORM

This was all accompanied by an unprecedented focus on 'workforce reform' with the wide-ranging *Children's Workforce Strategy* (DfES, 2005) framing the picture and including a proposed 'single qualifications framework' and an 'indicative career framework' across early years, schools, social care, youth services, and health and proposals in each of these areas. The *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge* (CWDC, 2005, 2010) was to be applied across the sector with new reviews of all relevant national occupational standards to ensure its incorporation - "the professional learning of the Children's Workforce is a top UK government priority" (Coombs 2006, p.1). Changes were oriented to delivering the new agenda and (prescribed) outcomes, within a context of tight regulation and inspection regimes – "based on hierarchical, bureaucratic and legalistic assumptions" (Sinclair and Corden, 2005, p.18).

Initial, professional, and CPD programmes were very much part of the landscape of the workforce reform agenda in children's services through 'commissioning' (and employer engagement), and were subject to substantial investment and targeting of resources across diverse parts of the workforce, including in early years<sup>35</sup>, youth work and youth support, education, health, social work, playwork and, as significantly, for 'leaders and managers' *across* the sector as well as developed in specific occupational areas. Such investment was organised, shaped and

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<sup>35</sup> The workforce development activities in early years came through slightly different trajectories some of which preceded *Every Child Matters*. They focused on Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) (now Early Years Teachers – EYT), and there was some join-up with ECM agendas.

commissioned by the activities of “powerful bureaucracies” and “designed to monitor and control” (Ward and Eden, 2009, p.4) – and that lay close to government, such as the *Children’s Workforce Development Council* (CWDC) established in 2005 and *Training and Development Agency for Schools* (TDA). This included, for example, the development of a number of Foundation Degrees endorsed by such bodies, and also a raft of aligned competency and skills-based frameworks.

Whilst on the ground and in practice, there was a differential effect (some workers were centrally implicated whilst others were on the margins of such changes), the ripples (or waves) also spread more widely. For example, a range of organizations, including higher education institutions (particularly those ‘second tier’ universities experiencing reductions in research income and an increasingly challenging funding landscape), recognized the ‘opportunities’, reoriented and aligned their objectives, and jumped on board with the new agenda, in the name of ‘income generation’ (the internal message) and ‘employer engagement’, ‘partnership working’, and ‘transformational learning to meet outcomes’ (the external ones). The ‘industries’ of children’s services gathered momentum – we were all ‘on board’ or (albeit variously) ‘implicated’, depending on your perspective.

## Chapter 5

### SELFHOOD AND SURVEILLANCE

*Constituting selfhood in surveillance, and its intensifications in neo-liberalism*

*The poststructuralist hermeneutics of suspicion was only ever a slow interruption of the capitalist machine, pointing out its construction as reflexive and meaningless. On the flat field of post-postmodernism capitalism speeds ahead, unhindered by signifiatory concerns. The slings and arrows of deconstruction can find no purchase on this juggernaut.*

(Darby, 2013, p.735)

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter extends the account and analysis along two dimensions (or 'lines of flight'). Firstly, a posthuman (performative) understanding is brought alongside the fixed (humanist) subjects of children's services, to consider how this might serve to lever or rework an understanding of social professional selfhood. This is the humanist and posthumanist in relation, as both existing, and this is explored via a consideration of research in children's services practice. Secondly, some conceptual territory of an 'intensifying' neoliberalism, and as a mode of surveillance, is brought into connection, and as consequential, for social professional selfhood.

Research studies that include an examination of the impact on professionals of children's services policy and practice changes emerge and are intertwined with an assumption of the humanist sovereign subject. Such studies often enshrine approaches and questions foregrounding the *experience* of professionals, as residing in, and with, professionals themselves. To ask how policy/practice *constitutes* the self is a shift from questions that focus on, and investigate, *impact*. The literature is highly dominated by questions of 'impact' - on 'outcomes' primarily in relation to a range of specific measures ('attendance at Key Stage 3' for example) and more generally in relation to *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfES, 2004) five outcomes, but also sometimes about the impact on other things, such as 'professionals'. These questions foreclose; when one asks about impact on (professional) self, they assume the prior existence of the subject, *subject to that impact*. That is, (versions of) a liberal humanist subject are pre-existing - to be (imp)acted on.

In posthumanist formulations the self is not sovereign or pre-existing, it is becoming and performative; questions about do-ings and makings (constituting, producing, generated in interaction and entanglement) become important – a focus on what policy/practice activities *do and make*, and *what happens*. 'Experience' is located outside the individual self (of humanism), it is dispersed, and self appears or emerges as an outcome of interacting forces (Barad, 2007; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980; Semetsky, 2010), rather than as being grounded in individual experience or agency. These involve quite different questions from those of impact on professionals, they direct attention to the conditions and circumstances in which self can emerge.

What this means is that, whilst recognising the (profoundly 'sovereign') self-in-surveillance of children's services, I am also concerned with an emphasis beyond the standard humanist self, and beyond standard critical perspectives that are often utilised within this frame and brought to bear to critique children's services policy and practice arrangements. A consideration of the posthumanist subject moves beyond the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and more towards what Nealon calls "a toolkit for the construction of a 'hermeneutics of situation'" (2012, p.xii). This draws attention to what is happening (performativity) in the here and now and the

conditions that produce this - a self emerging in entanglement and appearance. This seeks to already call up a dynamism, a relationality, associated openings and possibilities, and movement (and the Deleuzian *fold*), a shift in emphasis with which it might be more possible to move beyond formulations of a sovereign self lost in conditions of surveillance.

So, this chapter seeks to capture both *the impact on*, and the conditions and circumstances *for enactments* (becomings, appearances) of (professional) selfhood - that is, the workings and the constitution of self that might be thought within a humanist and post-humanist subject *assemblage-for-self*.

This emphasis has not received attention previously although there has been some focus on redefinitions of the workforce and the promotion of new professional and managerial subjectivities (an identity project) and as central features of the wider management discourses of New Public Management (NPM) (du Gay, 1996; Halford and Leonard, 1999; Thomas and Davies, 2005). For example, Ladner and Nocker (2012) openly acknowledge that the role of a manager (and Ladner is a local authority manager herself) is to “develop, manage and monitor the construction of the new [children’s] workforce” and that:

*...the identity work involved in this process has been politically scripted, regulated and monitored by the previous Labour government and coordinated by local authorities across the country.*

(Ladner and Nocker 2012, p.2)

This tethers the impact of the work of managers to worker identity, with the humanist subject assumed.

In addition, the policy and practice landscape and its configurations for self does not operate in isolation. The self is multiply configured and (re)worked in neoliberalism (Foucault, 2008/1978; Rose, 1989) and this connection in the assemblage provides further mechanisms for self, both having an impact upon self, or (within a posthuman frame) as part of the generative conditions and circumstances producing self. Certainly, neoliberalism as an ideological set of ideas about economy and

society has been noted as producing particular requirements for the selfhood of social professionals, where policy 'reforms' and 'technologies' are "not simply vehicles for the technical and structural change of organisations" (Ball, 2003, p.217). In the second half of this chapter I summarise the current context for children's services in neo-liberalism, and as one involving the *intensification* of surveillance in neoliberalism. This runs counter to the idea that the UK Coalition government simply deprioritised children's services developments in its ravaging of 'the public sector' in austerity. The issue is, *what* has intensified? This word is deliberately chosen and drawn from Nealon's (2012) book on *Post-Postmodernism* where this is: *an "intensification and mutation within postmodernism"* (p.ix) and where the author argues that:

*Capitalism itself is the thing that's intensified most radically....The late capitalism of....the tail end of the cold war...has since intensified into the 'just-in-time' (which is to say all-the-time) capitalism of our neo-liberal era.*  
(Nealon, 2012, p.x-xi)

Capitalist neoliberalism escalates and accelerates; the question is, whether anything can be made productive and creative from this, **via posthuman leverage.**

## 5.2 CONSTITUTING SELF IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The account in the previous chapter (in the *doing*) of the Climbié Inquiry, the integration of services, and so on, begins to highlight generative and constitutive elements for selfhood. If one's lens is to focus on a non-sovereign (post-humanist) self, the question is about what is (and can be) *done* and *produced* by and through (children's services) activities/discourses with the self as part of this mix – self constituted as part of an entangled becoming. Reporting impact on professionals is not the same as trying to get at *doings in action* **and the simultaneous appearance of self. This question, generated via a performative, posthuman understanding** immediately introduces more dynamism, relationality, perhaps more space and possibilities, and complexity, into what is happening. Questions about 'impact on' 'professionals' are more static and imply a pre-existing self (and indeed, divisions

between subject/object and so on), where versions of the neo-liberal subject – in this case as often secured to particular professional identities - are built in.

However, a number of studies on children's services do identify a range of 'impacts' on professionals (although these, it should be noted, are often relegated or of secondary concern, not always thought relevant in the highly dominating agenda of examining impact on *outcomes* for children and families). These studies do have some relevance and whilst reporting 'impact on' professionals is not the same as trying to get at *doings in action* (and self-becoming), the findings might be utilised to support more dynamic (entangled) interpretations.

In their CWDC-commissioned review of integrated working, Oliver and Mooney (2010) claim some positive impacts on professionals including that the work is more rewarding and stimulating and that professionals have better knowledge about other services and professional roles; improved opportunities for career development are also reported. Similar studies and findings are cited in the earlier Atkinson et al (2007) review of multi-agency working (for example, via studies in specific projects or sectors, such as Abbot et al, 2005; Moran et al, 2006) although these authors acknowledge that much literature focuses on *intended rather than actual*, benefits of multi-agency working.

However, negative impacts on professional *identity(ies)*, *status* and *conditions of work/working practices* are widely reported, including problems of 'role demarcation' and relationships. **Whilst framed in terms of impacts on self (with a built in assumption of the pre-existing sovereign self) such 'impacts' might also suggest that selfhood itself may be questionable, or not entirely unproblematic.**

Abbot et al (2005) report confusion and uncertainty regarding professional roles, a negative impact on professional status, and undermining of specialist expertise. Moran et al (2006) report power struggles and low morale (from role ambiguities), claiming professional image, hierarchies and identity all as significant challenges to multi-agency work; similar issues are reported by Lessard et al (2006) and Frost and Lloyd (2006).

Struggles over status levels between different professionals, and statutory and voluntary sector organisations, threaten multi-agency relationships (Anning et al, 2005; Healey, 2004) with 'turf issues' prevalent (Johnson et al, 2003); different professional ontologies are also problematic, for example in relation to the different beliefs of different professional groupings regarding particular problems such as youth offending (Robinson and Cottrell, 2005). Overall, Oliver and Mooney (2010) and Atkinson et al (2007) highlight the potentials for integrated working to produce confusion about professional identities:

*The development of a 'one workforce' model represents a radical challenge to the traditional model, in which services such as education and social services tended to be dominated by a single and related profession with its own professional identity* (Oliver and Mooney, 2010, p.27)

The term 'role boundaries' already delineates particular and assumed spaces (to be defended), rather than emphasising possible and different ways of connecting. In terms of working relationships and practices the importance of trust and mutual respect is persistently cited (for example, Percy-Smith, 2006; Sloper, 2004; Carpenter et al 2005; Allnock et al 2006) and the necessity for cultural change in different sectors of health, education and social services/care (Healey 2004) where conflicting professional and agency cultures are a major challenge; there are difficulties evident in communication at all levels of multi-agency working. Reder and Duncan (2004) comment:

*...the issues of communication are far more complex than has ever been envisaged by [child abuse] inquiry panels and that their more practical recommendations (especially those focussing on procedural and technical aides to improve message transfers) only address a small part of this complexity.* (2004, p.110)

The range of impacts above often cited in summary in the catch-all 'communication' and 'professional culture' impact sections of research studies are suggestive of real difficulties in negotiating self and objects (organisations) as bounded, as sovereign; for selfhood, they suggest a formulation of humanist, individualised, bounded and sovereign selves begins to break down in relation, and cannot be sustained. Simply reporting impact on professional selfhood, then, does not really do justice, or

capture, the complexity and depth of the range of interlocking 'doings' that are imbricated on the surface of practice here (nor the spaces that might exist for other doings).

There are also impacts at the level of service/professional structures, working practices, and processes. Increased workloads and demands leading to great pressure on services are reported (Abbot et al 2005; Smith and Mogro-Wilson, 2007); and some professional roles (for example social work in health settings) are reported as being marginalized (Oliver and Mooney, 2010). The period has also seen the creation of new, 'sub-professional' roles on the back of children's services developments, such as the youth support worker, and family and parenting support practitioners who are widely perceived to have displaced and undermined 'professional' cadres of workers and legitimated loss of jobs and a drive down of wage and other conditions. And, in referring to new forms of governance emerging in children's services a research participant commented "I don't know who will own me next year" (Manager, Education support). In a 2014 small-scale study in statutory social work, Carey claims cynicism as a key response to extensive changes in the organisation and delivery of social work where a majority of reforms have increased employee responsibilities "whilst also altering and fragmenting their role", leading to "commonplace emotional responses that include anxiety, melancholy, scepticism and cynicism" (Carey, 2014, p.141) and where "the 'reifying' rhetoric of distorted and soundbite claims about participation and empowerment" foster a sense of incredulity amongst social workers.

Whilst complex, these impacts at the level of professional workforces can be seen as involving a *de-coupling* of professional identities in order to re-secure them to the children's services project which, in part, in neo-liberalism, also involves a *de-professionalising* move and a driving down of working conditions; this has led to significant ontological insecurity and uncertainty. One of my research participants (RP) captured a number of the (felt) issues and impacts, in the following exchange (I=interviewer):

RP *Like-mindedness... and a shared endeavour, a genuine goodwill – that doesn't exist in children's services*

I: *So how would you describe it?*

RP: *Hostile, communication breakdown, blame, lots of projections.....the system is drained, and struggles...[...]...critical, undermining....lots of undermining*

I: *Why do you think it is like that?*

RP: *That whole idea about internal competition, y'know, empire building....highly competitive...but, clustering, people clustering together, y'know and...*

I: *Where does that come from?*

*Probably been starved, not supported, y'know, so people try and.....fighting over a smaller and smaller pot....it's just a starved system really.*

(Senior practitioner, Health services)

In my experience, these kinds of descriptions are not uncommon. Not least, they show how policy and practice changes in children's services operate in relation with what is happening for individual self, in relation.

The developments in children's services can be seen as a bringing into sharp relief, and disrupting, an existing 'settlement' of arrangements between the state, professionals, and practice, and that cuts across these powerfully. The *striations* in the practice landscape, of professional categorisations and agency/sector boundaries, add multiple complications, additional 'barriers' and further divisions in any new and multi-agency structural groupings and *through which*, often additional, new arrangements, must pass. They certainly work against a vision of a smooth plane of practice which, despite the vision, was, and could not be, how children's services would develop, in a highly managerialised and politically and organisationally segmented and charged landscape for practice, with an increasingly neo-liberal formulation of market disciplines, of competition, and cost-savings adding more to the mix. The attempt to drive through cultural, relationship, professional identity and organisational sector changes via almost wholly structural approaches and means (Stuart, 2012) (by mandate and authority, with no additional resources) served simply to reduce complexity *on paper* rather than relate to, or work with, anything we might call (diverse and multiple) 'realities' of practice that are predicated on relational, cultural, and political complexity (and messiness), organisational agendas, professional identity and status issues, and the workings of power. Nor, for social professional selfhood does this capture the possibility of

something outside or different. The humanist, individualised subject is enshrined for social professional selfhood even as this might break down at the margins, or could be read differently.

From the account and discussion in this and the previous chapter, then, *Table 4*, over, summarises, firstly, reported impacts on social professionals (that is, from questions that foreground and assume the humanist subject) in children's services policy and practice changes. It distinguishes these from a range of considerations that emerge when one asks slightly different, posthumanistically-oriented questions about the emergence or appearance of (what might be a posthuman) self. This identifies the conditions and circumstances in an assemblage for social professional selfhood in children's services, aspects of the *habitat* with which selfhood becomes and is produced, and suggesting the ways in which self might be tethered or limited in particular ways. The table is intended to capture the different focus of (humanist) impacts, versus the (posthumanist) being/doing nature of self-constitutions in entangled becoming. Impact on self is rather a 'static', after-the-event measure; identifying the conditions with which self interacts and is produced, allows for some dynamism, suggesting self can 'play out' or emerge differently, and the possibility of spaces, for different kinds of becomings. This thus also suggests how one might *intervene* to help effect and produce different selves, beyond the humanist subject. That is, if the conditions under which self emerges can be moderated, levered or affected (perhaps by the introduction of a new connection/relation in assemblage) then the possibilities for the emergent self might shift

A recent small-scale study draws attention to the actual workings of, and conditions in which, selfhood is produced, constituted, generated. Whilst her research study

Table 4

Constituting self in surveillance in children’s services: static and becoming selves

Policy implementation activities	(Reported) Impacts on social professional selfhood	Conditions and circumstances constituting the self
<b>The Climbié Inquiry</b>	<p>Positive: Work more stimulating and rewarding</p> <p>Positive: More/better knowledge about other services</p> <p>Confusion regarding professional roles</p>	<p>Individual self as the crucial site of change; the requirement to rework self</p> <p>Understanding self as deficient and the failure of ‘professionals’</p> <p>The need to subject oneself to (more) regulation, and for ‘accountability’; an active) compliance</p>
<b>Integrating Services</b>	<p>Negative impact on professional status; ‘turf issues’</p> <p>Specialist expertise undermined</p>	<p>In a top-down regime, driven/supported by standardised, external tools</p> <p>Structural changes driving service and individual (self) change</p>
<b>Tools for research, evidence and monitoring</b>	<p>Low morale</p> <p>Problems of communication</p> <p>Increased workloads</p> <p>De-professionalisation</p>	<p>Collaboration <i>and</i> competition with other agencies</p> <p>Professional (ontological) changes to secure outcomes</p>
<b>Workforce reform</b>		<p>Self as inter- or multi-professional</p> <p>Oriented towards outcomes</p> <p>Knowledge about practice and practice interventions comes from ‘science’</p> <p>‘Case management’ via data management and IT systems</p> <p>Use of tools whose impact can be measured</p> <p>Self in relation to a defined skill and competency base</p>

with one multi-agency group over a year is not situated within something that might be called a posthumanist framework, Kaz Stuart's (2012, 2014) autoethnographic and action research methodology does capture some of the productions and processes operating in multi-agency practice, in its doings, and for those involved. Whilst indicating the multi-agency group came to present the outward signs of an 'effective' multi-professional group, she provides a detailed account of the emergence of lack of trust, of "surface behaviours that mask deep biases", and engaging "in lengthy debate that was pleasant and inclusive on the surface, but hid a layer of professional distrust and critique" (2012, n.p.). Some members of the group were "discounted and criticized", there was "a privileging of one professional discourse over another" and "hierarchies of power played out covertly, for example, in invitations to join certain group discussions outside of the official meeting forums" (2012); creative exercises "elicited tacit stereotypes" (2014, n.p.).

Stuart found it was extremely difficult not to perpetuate the culture (as researcher/leader – her own self) and/or collude with it, leading to her questioning her own "weak" leadership and capabilities. Participants acknowledged that they were still "in professional silos" (2014, n.p.) and "all the participants knew that they needed a shared multiprofessional identity, but these difficulties seemed to exist nonetheless" (2014, n.p.). The group achieved collaborative inertia. Stuart's study, whilst identifying 'professional identity' not as singular but as multiple and changing (as single professional, as professional in a body, as worker in a particular organization, as multiprofessional) and as played out alongside other "day to day" identities provides (further) evidence that professional identities are a real challenge in this work.

Stuart comments (2014) that there are no existing models for integrated working that focus on the "needs" of professionals involved in the process of delivering integrated services to meet the needs of children, young people and families. She highlights the virtual absence of attention in children's services formulations to what she identifies as the relational (agency) aspects of what happens - relationship is

“perhaps so intrinsic that it has become almost invisible, and it is absent from structural policy accounts of collaboration ” (Stuart, 2014 n.p.).

The illuminations in Stuart’s study, including a drawing of attention to the lack of recognition (beyond general exhortations to build trust) in a policy focus on structural (re)arrangements, help to capture some of the doings in practice, in showing what arrangements help to constitute and produce. This holds some resonance with my own understandings of what happens (what I have seen) and with frequently what is *working* or being made – in (so-called) ‘integration’. A research participant (Chief Executive, social work voluntary sector), in describing the positive risk-taking in one multi-agency group to engage with *difference* and for *connection* (“it was extraordinary”) talked about this in relation to her more common experience: “...so many interagency groups are so bad, so tedious” , and “the elephant in the room” of professional identity, status, organisational, sector, and power differentials playing out. Another research participant talked about how such problems sometimes play out at different levels, and over the longer term:

*There have been a couple of big inquiries locally that have brought senior people to inquiries, to the table.... to give evidence – and because we, say...we might have been the service reporting concerns.... that have led to...the inquiries. All seems to go ok and, then...a couple of months down the line you suddenly find...say...the school nurse team doesn't want to cooperate with you anymore, or ....a health visiting team, it becomes obvious....or they tell you themselves...you suddenly realise they are working against you, have been told to be less cooperative..[they]...are angry...it just filters through from higher up.*

(Senior practitioner, health services)

Others (for example Moseley, 2008) have highlighted the workings of the competitive context in which service providers operate which lead to the pursuit of strategies to promote their own organizational interests rather than working towards a dominant common interest, including a failure to share information, possessiveness over user outcomes, and projecting an image of success rather than sharing problems.

Stuart (2012, 2014) is right to highlight the sheer complexity of multi-agency groups at work and the fact that bottom up workings and local factors may be as influential as external conditions. Her interpretations, which are largely about the importance of *relational agency* and an espousing of a greater attention to issues of *communication* are less convincing for an expansive selfhood in practice, in fact they only make sense if one only concentrates on her local factors and the close policy and practice environment as opened up in this chapter. Beyond that, any improvements (in working together) might be won in the face of other existing (pre)conditions in which self is constituted; this could be a kind of endless swimming upstream (exactly the metaphor applied by one of my research participants to thinking both about the lives of users, *and of professionals*, in children's services) – policy and practice does not operate in a connection-less vacuum – there are other connections to be made.

There is politics and power here – both the politics of a neoliberal economy and the politics of self. The politics of a neo-liberal world draws attention to power, and to economic arrangements that work counter to collaboration and that produce self in surveillance. These are intensifying, and these intensifications are explored below. The politics of self is a focus on what different ideas about self can 'bring to the table', and draws attention to what might be thought and done (otherwise); that is the subject of chapter six where I extend critical posthumanist formulations (to imagine)the possibilities for self beyond and alongside the (disciplined, functional, instrumentalised, constituting) self of surveillance, operating and becoming in expansive spaces.

### 5.3 TOWARDS AUSTERITY

In the first independent review of Children's Trust arrangements, the Audit Commission (2008) stated that government had been too prescriptive and that too

much time and energy had been spent on structures and processes in a context of “organizational blueprints” (p.19) from government –

*This begs the question of how helpful the centrally-directed approach to management arrangements has been. The structural change originally proposed was not based on evidence that it was either necessary or effective.....There is a tension in mandating partnership working; the greatest benefit comes from common ownership of problems, rather than merely responding to external direction.* (Audit Commission 2008, p.65)

The report concluded there was little evidence of improved outcomes for children and young people as a result of the reforms (nor of ‘value for money’ improvements) over and above negotiated working together arrangements that had been driven locally (and that ‘working together’ in the way the reforms had envisaged, remained a work in progress). Further child deaths from fatal abuse, and attributed to ongoing individual (professional) and organizational failures, have continued, those receiving widespread coverage include Peter Connelly in 2007 (‘Baby P’) and Demi Mahon, 2008); others are less reported<sup>36</sup>. The *See the Child, Change the System* campaign<sup>37</sup>, launched June 2014, reported:

*From 2005-2011 there were 645 serious case reviews, all of which reported multiple failed opportunities where those professionals involved in the child’s life could have protected them* ([www.seethechild.org](http://www.seethechild.org), 2014)

It also cites “profound political failures”, a “lack of moral courage” and “apathetic responses” (Batmanghelidjh, 2014, n.p.) as characterizing the UK response to child abuse and neglect. There are calls for wholesale review of children’s services and integrated working.

A concentration on individual professional failures, common in formal inquiries, serves to direct attention away from other factors vital to child well-being.

A damning 2007 UNICEF report on the well-being of children and young people had already placed Britain last amongst 20 OECD countries (UNICEF, 2007); the level of inequality in Britain was an underpinning feature (Cunningham and Cunningham,

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<sup>36</sup> See the *Daily Telegraph* (2010) for a timeline of ‘social services failures’.

<sup>37</sup> This campaign was launched by Camilla Batmanghelidjh of *Kids Company*, London in June 2014 proposing an independent task force to review all children’s social care and mental health services – see [www.seethechild.org](http://www.seethechild.org)

2012). In a qualitative and comparative follow up study, Ipsos MORI and Nairn (2011) highlighted and explored materialism - a “compulsive consumption cycle” (p.72) - and inequality, as particular features of the UK environment for child well-being. Other international comparisons reveal similar pictures. For example, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child made 108 recommendations in 2008 in relation to the improvement of children’s rights in England; the Children’s Rights Alliance for England (CRAE, 2013) report, *State of Children’s Rights in England*, summarises progress made and where, despite some progress, “serious violations” remain, and overall the picture is described as “bleak”, and where:

*economic pressures have been used to justify not only a serious erosion of children’s economic and social rights, such as health, food and the right to play, but also fundamental changes to our justice system*  
(CRAE, 2013, p.1)

There is cynicism about the form of serious case reviews and inquiries in this respect, which typically do not address the bigger picture. Writing in The Guardian at the time of the Climbié Inquiry, Ian Willmore (ex-Deputy Leader at Haringey Council) says: “The “script” for this kind of Inquiry is now almost traditional. The Minister goes on TV to insist that: this must never happen again. Responsibility is pinned on a few expendable front-line staff, all conveniently sacked in advance. Criticisms are made about poor communication, with earnest recommendations about better co-ordination and possible restructuring. Council officers - all new appointments - go on TV to say that everything has changed since the case began. Everyone looks very earnest. Voices crack with compassion. Nothing essential changes.” (Willmore, 2003, n.p.)

In children’s services it is certainly arguable that resource questions had been underplayed and, more specifically, additional resources had not been made available for implementation of the new agenda in Children’s Trusts areas despite claims of a ‘social investment state’ (Lister, 2006; Churchill, 2011). Lord Laming had dismissed the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) claims that more was needed to implement reforms as “the usual kneejerk response” and as “lacking

intellectual rigour” (cited in Batty, 2003), despite the body of the original Inquiry Report having documented some evidence of a stretched resource base. Given the scale of the changes that had been progressed this was a significant (and extraordinary) omission (Sinclair and Corden, 2005). This had sent, again, a clear message that money was not (regarded as) the issue (so, poor and ineffective practice and service organization was). The commissioning environment in children’s services had certainly been established. The pooling of budgets and joint commissioning, central to integrated working and with a rather neutral, government definition of “working across agency boundaries to identify needs, specify service requirements, decide whether to purchase or provide the services and then procure or deliver them” (DfES, 2004), hid a multitude of problems on the ground about the control of budgets; joint commissioning had not made significant in-roads in the delivery of services (Audit Commission 2008).

The Conservative-Liberal Coalition government faced a different context in terms of economic landscape. Under a discourse of economic crisis and austerity there have been some ideological and political shifts to a honed, redoubling of neo-liberalism and despite the economic crisis of 2008 that might have heralded something different (Stronach and Clarke, 2012). This has brought, notably, further narrowing of targeted approaches for those multiply disadvantaged alongside further restricted conceptualisations of the problem (the Department for Education states child abuse is an extreme form of poor parenting hence the answer lies with parents and in parenting interventions) (Asmussen et al., 2012). A racialised discourse is also evident, questioning the use of (any) welfare services by non-British nationals living and working in Britain or who may come in the future and under the guise of a ‘fairness’ discourse. Whilst Churchill (2011) sees some continuity he also identifies a new stage, referring to backing for civil liberties concerns about the interference of the state which (usefully) aligns with an austerity agenda.

A changed *language* for children’s services was signalled by the incoming government - circulation of a Department for Education memo in summer 2010 indicated the language which was now to be used. For example, ‘the five outcomes’

or 'every child matters' was now to be described as 'helping children achieve more', 'targetted services' was now to become 'fairer services' (Puffett, 2010) and 'integrated working' is now to be described as 'people working better to provide better services'. This indicates subtle shifts to greater individual responsibility and to the 'big society', with a distancing from the New Labour project. The 'big society' understanding of the delivery of services and as welfare cuts are implemented, envisages a much greater role for citizens, communities, the voluntary/social enterprise sector, and the private sector, in the commission, provision and delivery of services and in making 'efficiency savings' (Churchill 2011). Certainly, further marketisation is in process very widely across welfare in an increasingly 'economistic' and 'enterprise' frame, with a transfer of (social) risks from the state to the individual.

It is clear that cost savings take precedence and influence everything else and these align with neo-liberal themes of a smaller state, individual responsibility and self-sufficiency, and residual welfare targetting only those most disadvantaged. There have been some novel twists in the discourse, for example, with what have been widely touted, by those on the left, as a series of 'divide and rule' tactics; these go beyond the classic division into the deserving and undeserving poor and have now been applied to public sector versus private sector workers, with the former faring worse in the discourse, and the lowest paid of these at the sharp end of actual cuts and wider tax and pension changes. Baxter's (2011) review of public sector professional identities somewhat shores up these divisions as well as, once again, reviving 'professional identity' as the significant discourse of resistance.

A range of legislative reform, centrally affecting children's services in England has been, or is being, implemented, including *The Localism Bill* (2011), *The Health and Social Care Bill* (2011) and *The Education Bill* (2011). The national Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) was disbanded in the 'cull of the quangos' by the incoming government with children's services workstreams either being discontinued (for example, the National Academy of Parenting Practitioners), or with responsibilities transferred, largely to the newly formed Department for Education

(under New Labour the Department for Children, Schools and Families). Some statutorily driven and delivered children's services are, across the country, under threat or have been reshaped and reformed, either through large-scale redundancies, decommissioning, and/or commissioning out, for example, youth services. Cuts are being implemented even in formal education services, social work and in early years, and with further shifts in emphasis to business models of practice, with efficiency savings and cost effectiveness to the fore (what works best for least money) (C4EO, 2011).

#### 5.4 SURVEILLANCE: INTENSIFICATIONS IN NEO-LIBERALISM

Traditionally, in liberalism, the state is associated with the roll-back of the state to allow the market to operate in freedom. In his latterly translated lectures on bioethics, Foucault (2008/1978) argues that neoliberalism should not be equated "with laissez-faire but rather with permanent vigilance, activity and intervention" (p.132) to ensure market competition. In this way, neoliberalism is not about the *absence* of government but about ensuring the state is "marketised to its core" (Gane, 2012, p.627); the state works to make competition play a "regulatory role at every moment at every point in society" (Foucault, 2008/1978, p.145) and the "general regulation of society by the market" (*ibid.*p.145). This is not surveillance based on panopticism as this positions the state as watching over the market (which means minimal supervision because it is said to be natural and self-organising). Rather the state governs *for* the market to continually ensure that competition is maintained, and as guided *by* the market so, increasingly, it watches itself so that the 'freedom' of the market penetrates into all its own workings (institutions). Inasmuch as there might be both movements operating (both a Panoptic state oversight of market freedoms, and the market as making incursions into the operations of 'public services' themselves) Jamie Peck (2010) refers to this as both 'roll-back and roll-out'. The complementary strategy that has been identified, perhaps where privatisation and the furtherance of market principles is not possible, is 'audit explosion' (Rose,

1999, p.153) with a proliferation of performance indicators and other forms of measurement producing new regimes of accountability; in education, Stephen Ball relates this to “the battle for the teacher’s soul” (Ball, 2003) but this could apply widely across children’s services. The immunity in education and children’s services to market principles has long gone, backed up by now taken-for-granted inspection regimes that, in part, focus on the capacities and practices of schools and children’s services to undertake their own self-scrutiny and self-surveillance via monitoring machinery that makes market disciplines familiar.

What this means is that the state in neo-liberalism is not simply overseeing the market (and increasingly marketised ‘public’ services) it is involved in active and intensive relationship with it that works both ways – the state protects the market and the market shapes the state and so lines are increasingly blurred between the public, and the private. Nicholas Gane (2012) proposes a fourfold typology of surveillance, an heuristic device, to understand the logic of contemporary capitalism – surveillance as discipline, as control, as interactivity, and as the promotion of competition. This draws attention to multiple, overlapping mechanisms that may be in operation in an intensifying situation and to which children’s services (and those who work in them) are subject/in relation.

According to Gane (2012) (and after Foucault), *surveillance as discipline* is based on the Panopticon. The Panopticon is a prison, with a central tower, and with circularly-arranged cells. This means a guard stationed in the tower can always see every cell – unlimited surveillance - but through an arrangement of screens is not necessarily themselves seen. This means that there is an unlimited capacity for watching, but the guard may or may not be there. Hence, those in the cells act as though they are being watched, *whether or not this is the case*. Foucault utilises the idea of the Panopticon to describe a disciplinary technique of supervision, not necessarily with a material reality, but a cultural logic and as a mode of governance.

Thus, the relationship between the state and the market can be described as one where government watches over (a free) market/marketised services, but only intervenes when something is seen to go wrong in the conduct of this. More direct

supervisory strategies of “breathing life into....introducing additional freedom through additional control and intervention” (Foucault 2008/1978, p.67) are also possible. Gane says that the discipline of the Panopticon “is tied to fixed institutional spaces” (2012, p.620) and when one considers the plethora of ‘institutions’ associated with children’s services and as market principles, such as ‘choice’, make even greater incursions (for example, via a diversifying education market of academies, free schools), the supervisory (regulatory) machinery needs to run counter to a classically neo-liberal ideology of reduced government. However, the Panopticon is relatively efficient so supervisory (observation mechanisms) are the audit trails so beloved across public services. Commissioning machinery and relationships (whether local or via national contracts) are also premised upon effective monitoring and supervision and as private sector companies increasingly take over swathes of children’s services operations the ‘arms-length’ supervisors (guards) watch over, though to interfere as little as possible with expanding market freedoms.

In *surveillance as control*, Deleuze (1995, cited in Gane 2012) argues that Foucault’s disciplinary societies were short-lived and that new forms of institution are much less to do with the confinements implied in the Panopticon. He writes:

*We’re in the midst of a breakdown of all sites of confinement – prisons, hospitals, factories, schools, the family. The family is an ‘interior’ that’s breaking down like all other interiors – educational, professional, and so on. The appropriate ministers have constantly been announcing supposedly appropriate reforms; but everyone knows these institutions are in more or less terminal decline. It’s simply a matter of keeping people busy until the new forces knocking at the door take over.*

(Deleuze, 1995, cited in Gane, 2012, p.619-620)

Deleuze’s control societies are much more mobile and flexible than the fixed spaces and forms of institutional settings in disciplinary society; they are a “mutation of capitalism” (*ibid.* p.620) and have the same dispersive logic in their operations, with mobility and speed at their heart but surveillance is at a distance. This is a “post-disciplinary model of governance which devolves power downwards from crumbling state institutions to new agencies of control that emerge from the market” (Gane,

2012, p.631), mobile and fluid entities but with continuous power often achieved through control mechanisms of ICT. Others have also noted that mobility is an “evocative keyword for the twenty-first century” (Hannam et al, 2006, p.1), with some giving it a paradigmatic status (Sheller and Urry, 2006).

This draws attention to new forms of governance, notably various forms of network governance through which Ball and Junemann (2012) claim governance by the state is stretching out and penetrating, tentacle-like, via various forms of network governance and thereby acquiring new forms of power, of “metagovernance” (Jessop, 2002, cited in Ball and Junemann, 2012, p.8). This is more than simply expanded structural and operational extensions of the market into what have traditionally been public sector operations, they are new “discursive and epistemic communities” (Ball and Junemann, 2012, p.11) and involve a mode of being, a sensibility, that enables and constrains what policy can do and how we can be. This is part of the ‘shadow state’ (Wolch, 1990) and Ball and Junemann establish how the educational state is much more “congested” as “new and a wider variety of players ‘enter’ into forms of ‘statework’” (2012, p.137). In children’s residential units, only 11% are now owned by charities with 65% in the private sector; two out of the big three foster placement providers are owned by private equity firms (Williams, 2012). Williams comments “It is very hard to pinpoint which firm owns what; their waters appear to be in perpetual motion, as they buy one another, take one another over, and offload assets” (2012, p.8), operating “through mobility and speed” (Gane, 2012, p.620).

Partially drawing on Bauman’s critique of market capitalism and his analyses of individualization, Gane’s *surveillance as interactivity* reverses the model of the observing Panopticon (whether of those confined, or via more mobile methods); in interactivity, the many watch (and interact with) the few. In this scenario, people and organisations are tied into consumerist and market-driven modes of being (for example, in terms of a concern with presentations) so look to the ‘freedoms of the market’ and media for guidance (rather than to other sources), and as willing (or perhaps as unwitting) participants. Indeed, those organisations working with children and young people are acutely aware of the importance of their ‘image’ and

'branding', for example. One research participant (senior practitioner, youth and community services) described how she was "always getting into trouble for not producing enough 'trophies' from my practice [area]" – for example, "not getting enough photos showing 'achievements' that can then go on display on the website."

Finally, Gane's *surveillance to promote competition* likewise is a 'post-Panopticon' form where the state actively seeks to rework itself in the image of the market. It is the reverse of Panopticism because the market now fully penetrates (in a kind of feedback loop) state and society, increasingly manufacturing "marketized forms of competition where previously they did not exist" (Gane, 2012, p.632) (rather than the state overseeing the operations of the market). These processes of *self-surveillance* (for example a raft of audit procedures and mechanisms) by the state on the state are essential to maintain legitimacy (in the eyes of the market), to promote competitive possibilities and opportunities, and where enterprise is a generic solution to wicked social and educational problems (Ball, 2010). The mechanisms of audit and associated performative policy technologies are often linked to forms of managerialism; here, Gane links them explicitly to neo-liberal intensifications.

Gane's typology is an heuristic device and, as he acknowledges, needs more development. What it does make clear though are multiple forms of surveillance, operating together and overlapping (and in the intensifying neo-liberalism of austerity). Certainly the *replacement* of 'disciplinary' modes by the notion of 'control' seems premature; both appear to be operating. For example, the securing of children's services professionals to particular tasks in particular modes of governmentality certainly does not preclude the straightforward 'command and control' of (surveillance as) discipline – a very direct approach was adopted in the government progress report (Laming 2009) following the death of 'Baby P' (Peter Connelly):

*The utility of the policy and legislation has been pressed on me by contributors throughout this report. In such circumstances it is hard to resist the urge to respond by saying to each of the key services, if that is so, NOW JUST DO IT*  
(Laming, 2009, p.6-7)

What are the alternatives in debates about expansions and intensifications of neo-liberalism, in austerity? It is clear that parts of the political left are engaged in seeking out alternatives in the face of the hegemony (and their critique) of a neo-liberal project in welfare<sup>38</sup>, and that also link to (potential) selves of professionals (whether generically in 'welfare' or more specifically for parts of children's services). Dorling, for example (in his review of Marquand's (2014) *Mammon's Kingdom*) comments that it will be difficult to reject individualism until we can embrace mutuality, and here the "greatest obstacles in our way are ourselves" (Dorling, 2014, n.p.). Themes of a revitalized public realm – co-production (between professionals and users/children), participatory democracy, new models of public ownership and the social return on investment and early intervention – abound (for example, Hall et al, 2013-14; Angel, 2014; Marquand, 2011; Aked et al, 2009; Frost, 2014) though these are not particularly evident in public discourse.

There is also an emphasis on 'the good society' and a politics of public good and civic duty, positioned in contrast to the marketised and neo-liberalised (for example, Compass, 2014; Marquand, 2011), and also (normatively) against the paradoxically narrow 'big society' of a residual welfare state, for what is often called a 'progressive capitalism'; the debates also include attention to alternative developments outside of the UK (for example, Wainwright, 2014). There is talk of an ethic of stewardship for public good and, Ed Miliband (Leader of the Labour Party until 2015) acknowledged that the public realm felt "strangled by a sort of audit and marketised culture" and that it "went too far" under the New Labour project (in Marquand, 2011, p.10). Some are more explicitly oppositional than others (to neo-liberal themes) – those that focus on the social returns on investment, for example, arguably implicitly accept that an economic argument at least has to be won (for example, Aked et al, 2009), others continue to argue for old left expansionism (and universalism) in the public sphere, against privatisation, and linked to collective

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<sup>38</sup> This at least involves a number of 'think-tanks' and activist organisations such as *Compass* (a membership organisation seeking to 'give direction for the democratic left'), the *New Economics Foundation* (NEF), and *Soundings* journal (started by those previously associated with *Marxism Today* and the *New Left Review*), as well as a range of individual political commentators and academics and particular (often social movement-linked) campaigning groups.

action (for example, Wainwright, 2014) *in the face of* neo-liberalism. In recent months the economic debates have been given further impetus by the publication of Thomas Piketty's (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, a sweeping analysis of how inequality concentrates (intensifies) in capitalism rather than distributing its gains; this has been somewhat seized on by those on the left of the political spectrum<sup>39</sup> to provide economic justifications for its different political (welfare) platform.

However, realignments of the political debate appear a dim prospect and make little headway against a hegemonic (and 'common sense') belief in the power of free market economics and a politics of austerity that is set to continue **following the 2015 UK General Election**. A significantly shifted welfare paradigm, including in children's services, seems unlikely. This is the case, extraordinarily, as Stronach and Clarke (2012) point out so vividly, despite the global economic crisis of 2008 – with apparent "amnesia" (p.54) we follow a "discredited" (p.55) and "illusory" (p.57) economic model as 'business as usual', in fact the "state culture continues and even intensifies [its] worship" (p.55).]

## 5.5 LOST IN PRACTICE?

Children's services is not protected from the big picture; indeed, under the UK Coalition government's reframing of our welfare paradigm, they are arguably at its heart. At the same time, policy imperatives "do not arrive in empty spaces" (Clarke 2007, cited in Garrett 2009, p.140), they are already populated (and gridded) by other discourses. Garrett argues that this has contributed to the sheer messiness of the 'transformation' in children's services, its unevenness, calling up a picture of both micro-resistances and inertia. There may be something in this – Jayne Osgood (2006, 2012), for example, undertook a detailed study of early years workers and showed how, at a micro-level, early years workers act to subvert and re-shape

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<sup>39</sup> An unsurprising counter from the right has ensued, with a series of allegations about data errors originally published in the *Financial Times*, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 (that also impugn methodological choices that Piketty made); a rebuttal, with further statistical and methodological detail, was made by Piketty on May 28<sup>th</sup> – see Piketty (2014a).

discourses of both professionalism and neo-liberalism. On the other hand, if one sees a neo-liberal capitalist project as being in tension with a democratic way of life it would be unsurprising, simply, if the dismantling of 'the public' was, as yet, incomplete. In addition, the complexity of the 'transformation' being demanded in children's services is not something done overnight.

Most of the literature examining the impact of neo-liberalism on children's services (and the specific sectors that make it up) focuses on policy direction – that is, it is concerned with staking out particular positions in relation to versions of the left-right political ground, and in terms of what should be done. Certainly, there might be a basic tension between 'the needs of the child' and budget cuts in austerity. Garrett (2009) catalogues, in some detail, the impact of neo-liberalism in children's services but largely focuses on the shifts and implications at the level of services and what should happen, rather than on those who work in them. Literature about children's services that does focus at the level of professionals almost wholly concentrates on the impact on 'the workforce' and 'the profession' as a whole and in terms of its organisational and structural features; this often highlights 'de-professionalising' moves for the particular profession under discussion. For example, Bradford and Cullen (2014) trace youth work's ambiguous relationship with 'professionalisation' but also its increasing non-recognition in terms of professional status in current government policy. They also highlight particular features of neo-liberal and associated managerial practices that run counter to some of the main thrusts of youth work; relationships between young people and youth workers are now seen as being "subject to aggressive calibration and measurement" (Bradford and Cullen, 2014, p.10), and "at risk of being hollowed out by audit categories to become another 'zombie category'" (p.10-11).

With a focus at the level of the (professional) self, Ball's (2003) article 'The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity' is unusual. Stephen Ball shows how teachers begin to talk in new ways about themselves, in terms of new vocabularies of self, and as they work through requirements to reshape themselves in terms of 'policy technologies' involving 'markets, managers and performativity', including the

requirement to become an enterprising self (echoing the work of Nikolas Rose), present oneself in particular ways and maintain ‘fabrications’:

*versions of an organisation (or a person) which does not exist – they are not ‘outside the truth’ – but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts – they are produced purposefully in order to ‘to be accountable’. Truthfulness is not the point – the point is their effectiveness, both in the market or for inspection or appraisal and in the work they do ‘on’ and ‘in’ the organisation – their transformational and disciplinary impact.* (Ball, 2003, p.224)

The emotional impacts in attempts to ‘neo-liberalise’ one-self include guilt, uncertainty and stability as one orients oneself to external contingencies (and here Ball cites the work of Basil Bernstein on identity).

A sense of flows and mobilities (and changing goalposts) was captured by a research participant but, at the same time, more *mandatory* (that is, more strictly ‘disciplinary’) elements are still (and additionally) at work:

*It’s also been about - inconsistency, not so much in that what people do individually but in the sense that, that people change the framework around you all the time, all the time, because they decide they’ve got a better idea. So I’ll give you an example, the current Troubled Families agenda is an example, and going, right, this is what works, this is what you should do. And obviously that’s just a reinvention, as Louise Casey would say, of family intervention work, project work. But having said that, it’s got another name on it and it’s got these parameters, these mandatory parameters, which identify what a troubled family is So it’s a very top-down bureaucratic exercise.*

(Chief Executive, social enterprise, social work)

Here, then, is both mobility *and* stasis with which the self (in practice) is working (becoming in practice/action).

Austerity and cuts have led to much (more) reconfiguring and restructuring of services, including the widespread commissioning out of children’s services<sup>40</sup>.

Multiple organisations have ‘transformed’ themselves into social enterprises, with

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<sup>40</sup> This already sees private companies (such as *Virgin Care*) running a range of core NHS and social care children’s services; recent proposals to privatise child protection services (Butler, 2014) were later rescinded after widespread concern about the potentially distorting effect of introducing a ‘profit motive’ into such services (Butler, 2014a)

income generating 'arms' to 'align' with the new environment and its entrepreneurial requirements, rather than simply remaining legally constituted as 'voluntary organisations'. Two research participants spoke about the impact of cuts in their own areas on the work:

*....giving up on a huge bit of work that lots and lots, hundreds of people across the county had put time and effort into making work, given up on all the families we were currently working with, and given up on all the potential families that might have needed that support.... and what is the message back to families, it's that we don't give a shit, we don't give a shit....and that's the same message to the workers too.*

*....the thing about working smarter, actually there are ways we can all save time here but, again, that requires people to commit and hold their nerve for a period of time. And the conditions weren't necessarily right for people to commit and hold their nerve because they were also seeing redundancies happening.... [....].... there was a lot of wobbliness around.*

(Chief Executive, voluntary sector, social work)

And, later:

*The fact [is] that nobody was interested in having that debate [about the need for long-term interventions to see change] anywhere, and so there's the part of me that, just, it's crazy. For months and months and months you could see it coming.... and we know then that what we're doing is tinkering with families....*

These fragments highlight the continuing uncertainty and the lack of valuing many workers feel is evident (and also for their service users) in an intensifying picture.

Neo-liberalism, in its extensions, infuses and extends 'the market' into all aspects of the work of children's services, *and* those who work in it. Children's services involves 'social' and 'public' goods but it is increasingly 'fuzzy' to know whether it is the public good, or market forces, that should be being served. Things cannot be only private or owned by the 'market-state' but the revival of something called 'the public sphere' looks uncertain in current conditions.

## Chapter 6

### POSTHUMANIST RECLAMATIONS: BEING/KNOWING/PRACTISING

*Rethinking self beyond the humanist, in appearance*

*When the King asked him what he meant by infesting the sea, the pirate defiantly replied:  
'The same as you do when you infest the whole world; but because I do it with a little ship I  
am called a robber, and because you do it with a great fleet, you are an emperor.'  
(Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*)*

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings together a posthuman theoretical territory with my interview 'data'. However, the quotation above draws attention, in this context, to the way in which children's services policy and practice may be hegemonically saturated with 'the human' (and therefore perhaps the small ways in which something other might be introduced, thought, or made). That is, the social, political and organisational arrangements in children's services policy and practice are premised on an Enlightenment humanism (and the separation of the human from everything else), whereby social professionals are autonomous individuals with agency. In this world, dualisms emerging from the Cartesian separation of mind and matter multiply. The (Western) world is ontologically choreographed in this image, humanism as a frame of reference (and likewise, the humanist subject) is institutionalised, continually re-

secured and reproduced (Braidotti, 2013). That is, a reality takes shape and people come to live with it (Mol, 1999).

For example, in chapter three I suggested that particular categories of 'social identity', including professional identifications, pre-define who we are (and contain possibilities for politics along a left-right axis). Social identity acts as a mediating concept in relation to the experience, agency and interests (Hall, 1996; Hunter, 2003) of the individual, to which selfhood hitches itself, maintaining the autonomous human subject, and separation between self and other (and things). These categorisations for self (and upon which representation and analysis in critical social policy appears to depend) create particular grids or striations that carve up the landscape of practice. The individual, separate from this matrix, nonetheless names and attaches itself (and is named and attached by others) via identifications, choice, 'experience' and agency, and in this, reproduces the subject of humanism. Similarly, in chapter five I suggested that centering the 'experience' of social professionals via studies of the 'impact' of policy change on them once again assumes the pre-existing sovereign subject (to be impacted upon), and is also a static (and post hoc) way of understanding the messiness and complexities of practice.

This tells us something about the circumstances and conditions of the world that pre-figure particular selves in particular ways (and in conditions of surveillance in neo-liberalism), that interact and interfere in 'self'. However, they tell us little about practices - the performative and productive aspects of self and that might lie beyond a humanist grip, that emerge with and alongside myriad connections in the world. In this thesis, I call up a Spinozan monism and a posthumanist understanding of the world where we are not separate from it, but part of it in its ongoing re-creation. A oneness of the world, and in its differing, suggests rhizomatic formations where self is part of multiple (inter)connections in intra-activity (Barad, 2007), as part of the same, where agency (and selfhood) are part of the "ongoing configurations of the world" (Barad, 2003, p.818).

Critical posthumanism as an ontological practice, then, does not repudiate the already-existing for this too remains as part of the mix. If practice involves particular ways of doing and enacting self one can ask how one is ontologically choreographed in particular ways, according to, or entangled with(in) the gridlines that are part of the interacting forces productive of self. And a critical posthumanism encourages us to think beyond the humanist subject, to see what else might, or could, be there, that might not perhaps be entirely tied down to the versions of self that are insisted upon by established questions and knowledge practices, but that are *actualised in relation to* these. To make available a posthuman territory is to make a new connection, to help (one) see (and produce) such actualisations.

There are assumptions in my research questions suggesting that self is pre-figured in a number of ways (via Enlightenment humanism and surveillance), that interfere with and prescribe certain selves. Also, that *posthumanism* might potentially be used as a generative tool for new, or different, thinking. So, bringing posthumanism in relation with my interview 'data' is to make a particular agential cut and effect a particular connection, as cuts/connections have been made in previous chapters. Therefore, below, the examples of (actualisations and re-presentations of) practice are also selective, in line with my research assumptions and approach. This is a different form of research that attempts to push beyond the conceptions of what can be produced in (interpretive or post-positivist, for example) humanistic qualitative inquiry (though not a claim to better research). For example, in the way that coding 'works' (for interview data), claim Jackson and Mazzei, this disallows "the production of different knowledge" and "locks us into more of a territorialized place of fixed, recognizable meaning" (2012, p.12), rather than one that is dynamic, and productive, of new possibilities. And: "Becoming by definition is an experiment with what is new, that is, coming into being, *be-coming*." (Semetsky, 2010, p.480, emphasis in original).

In this research, my interviews are not so much a resource to be analysed and scrutinized according to 'coding' or a reduction into themes (nor for uncovering 'the truth'), but part of an investigation practice of gathering and effecting relations in

assemblage, and with attunement. They work in connection with other parts of the assemblage (critical social policy, children's services and so on), for a particular mapping of self, effected by the agential cuts identified. That is, the interviews do not 'drive' the research, nor are they operationalised via linear research pathways, they are part of a rhizomatic gathering and mapping.

In what follows I present selections of my interview data that concretize and particularise aspects of social professional selfhood in practice, as they emerged in my research conversations. They exemplify self (as presented in research conversations) emerging in entanglement, that is, as interacting with the discursive conditions and circumstances that pre-figure selfhood; and that also exemplify aspects of self that might lie beyond these. In bringing a posthuman theoretical territory to the interviews (in relation), the insights or 'levers' these suggest are used as generative to help in seeing, re-thinking and re-framing new possibilities for the selfhood of social professionals in children's services, as they emerge.

## 6.2 THINKING/BEING OTHERWISE IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

### 6.2.1 *Identifications and defamiliarisation*

Identifications are categories to which people do, or do not, align themselves. The suggestion is that they are important because they represent *boundaries* for thinking and being. Further, the modern 'autonomous' fixed subject of humanism – Deleuze and Guattari's 'majoritarian subject' (1987/1980) - is argued to align with capitalism's proliferation, and with identities that are designated and prescribed. These are 'tramlines' that "organise identity in terms of either/or categories" (Lorraine, 2011, p.82) and in this way a "range of continuous variations in human living....must be cancelled out" (*ibid.* p.81). Moulard-Leonard asks:

*Can we extricate ourselves from the connections and assemblages of which we are a part in order to form new assemblages more in keeping with the unfolding of our new capacities?* (Moulard-Leonard, 2013, p.103)

Children's services (and its connections) involves a set of discursive and social practices that constitute subject positions informing the categories by which people are designated, as well as through which they identify themselves. These practices, from Deleuze and Guattari's posthuman perspective are both "corporeal and semiotic assemblages that tend to replicate and extend themselves, thus settling into stratified configurations of power" (Lorraine, 2011, p.64) and, thus, as I have suggested in previous chapters, in relation to the set categories and labels of social and professional identity, and an actively constituting neo-liberalism (in surveillance). Lorraine goes on: "...myriad social investments coalesce around that identity" (p.64). By securing self to named and allowed identities, these replicate, repeat and extend – and so settle into fixed patterns, involving power. This posthuman 'lever' suggests that 'dis-identifications' may be important for producing selves beyond humanist, neo-liberal selves.

Whilst many practitioners are involved in efforts to shore up professional identities and professional status (and as reflected in a wide-ranging literature), it appears that when it comes to practices, professional identifications are much more negotiable, and produce even some ambivalence in practice. In response to my question (R = interviewer) about whether *self* was important in practice one participant (RP = research participant) emphasised:

*RP: Very much, very much so, there's a real sense of [bringing ourselves]-*

*R: Why is that important?*

*RP: Because you're working with people and you can't afford to be in the position – if you think about the position of therapist staff - you can't afford to be in the position of 'a professional'....[...]....you do not want to be 'a professional' when you go into somebody's house because if you go into somebody's house - and you come as 'a professional' - you come with an agenda, and an assessment, and a rhetoric, and a pathway, and other language which acts as a barrier....[...]*

(Chief Executive, social enterprise, social work)

This sense of practice was also echoed thus, in an exchange where the participant was emphasising the importance of working alongside service users:

*One reason is the public's perception of you, y'know - I don't wear a uniform, I don't have a badge, I haven't got a kind of policing role I don't know whether you'd, you'd, call it quite that - but a very formal role. If you have a title, a label, - people know what a social worker is, they don't necessarily know what a social worker does but they know they have a lot of power. They know that if you work in social care y'know, people are, - people have lots of ideas and perceptions about that,- whereas if you're in the voluntary sector – well I think people just maybe get a bit confused about what the voluntary sector is. But they know what you're not. And so then, the next bit, is - you have an opportunity to, to, show them what you are*

(Chief Executive, voluntary sector, social work)

So, whilst this does not suggest a blanket disavowal or 'dis-identification' with professional identity *per se*, it does suggest that in practitioner presentation of self, an awareness of professional identities as involving power, and surveillance of others. It can be consciously minimised, or moved around for self (presentations). Selfhood may not, then, best be secured to notions of professional identity all the time, it is at least context-specific. Self, here, is more than, or outside, professional identity.

The latter research participant cited above also linked a problem of professional identifications with directly changing practice with children, in a more *entangled* way. This participant had previously had a role leading and developing cultural and operational change, to integrate children's services, in the statutory sector. As resource constraints had bitten, the thresholds for formal social work interventions with children and young people had risen – those children assessed as having particular levels of need and who would have previously warranted formal intervention, would no longer receive this. The participant spelled out the dilemma:

*[The feeling was]... 'Social care are putting up their thresholds for taking cases on so we're going to end up being social workers down here, more children coming to our level [of service] then I'm doing a 'social worker's job' - and that's not right.'*

*Y'know I could go along with either way of looking at that -one is, yes, putting up thresholds, yes, y'know, people were feeling aggrieved – if threshold ds go up and there are more children coming to our level ....[...]. But, those kinds of – separations, - they don't exactly help with building an integrated service and systems. - Just forget thresholds, and just*

*work together, our job is to care about that child – everybody’s job, whether you are a children’s centre worker, health visitor, teaching assistant,....[...]....it doesn’t matter.*

(Chief Executive, voluntary sector, social work)

What is presented here is a dilemma of whether one ‘sticks’ to the set delineations that operate, and define who we are and what we do (and do not do), or whether one seeks to move beyond or through this, to something different, not so secured to the fixed and prescribed – *and that might be more oriented to the care of children.* However, to step outside or beyond occupational and professional identifications (or at least to loosen ties) has implications for selfhood, there is a sense here that practitioners may know that this may begin to open a lot, perhaps in ways which mean we can be, or know, differently.

There is a desire to move beyond professional identifications in other ways too:

*R: What supports, in practice, a sense of self then?*

*RP: I think it’s like-minded people – If I...[...]...could cherry-pick a team....[...]...our-selves would be an integral, vital part of that, you’d pick them for that, not necessarily for their professional skills, you would pick them also because...but, for who they are, how they present themselves, and what kind of interplay that is....[...]*

(Manager, statutory sector, Education support)

This respondent went on to associate “not necessarily more like-minded people, but, [people] more prepared – to experiment I suppose” with the voluntary sector, rather than the statutory sector, where: “I think your sanity is challenged on a daily basis in a statutory organisation....[...]....it’s so restrictive, you are almost like a clone, a clone worker”.

Here, then, is some more active *resistance* to the subject or identity positions assigned in oppressive ways within (supposedly) some organisational contexts, and a positing that self – more than professional associations - might have some advantages for practice. In a longer extract a respondent presents how self appears entangled with both organisational and professional identifications, and as perceived for both service users and herself as a worker:

*I: What's the purpose – the aim of your role?*

*RP: My aim – as opposed to the organisation's aim....*

*I: Oh...*

*RP: Yes, different – very different from the organisation's aim... my aim is to give people the opportunity to make change....*

*I: So, how is this different...?*

*RP: The organisation wants me to get people to do things for the, - interact [with the organisation] in a positive way....disseminate the organisational information in a way that's palatable – and they want me to smooth over any ruffled feathers so that there's a nice warm glow.*

*I: They don't want anything to hit the papers then...*

*RP (laughing) No....no.... Well, not unless it's a good news story of course! (laughing)..Because I'm constantly getting into trouble for not having enough photographs, of some, of some [person] clutching a certificate or something, or for not promoting the work that we do, in the way that is wanted....[...]*

*I: So how is all that for you?*

*RP: (pause) It's heart-wrenching....[...].....being constantly blocked and stopped – but some of them, for some reason I had the image of a little fish swimming upstream – some of them get through, y'know. I want to be able to encourage people to make changes - if they want to do that - but everytime you do that it's like 'yes, but...', 'yes, but...', 'yes, but...', but, so, your organisation is always saying they [service users] can only change like this, or like that....[...].....you want to be freer....[...]......at every turn you're blocked by some bureaucracy or other...*

*I: So for you it's, is it the same metaphor of a fish swimming upstream...?*

*RP: It is,- but it feels even worse, because I don't feel I do negotiate, y'know, all the rocks, and weeds, and stuff – the picture that came into my head was of being hung, drawn and quartered (laughs), that sense of being publicly torn apart – it's like, as a professional, y'know, you want to be high vis[ibility] in terms of kind of saying this is the way to work, this can be a way forward. – But people take great pleasure out of, like, no, that's,- 'you don't understand how businesses work'....[...]*

*I: So that must feel...*

*RP: It makes me feel totally and utterly undermined. Because I struggle, I struggled with the idea of being a professional to start with. That was really, really hard for me, coming from a working class background, the idea of being a professional....[.]....it took me a long time to claim that for myself....[.]....and now I've claimed it for myself, it's like no one cares or is interested in what I have to say – 'who are you?', 'you don't understand how the real world works'*

*I: What d'you mean by the real world?*

*RP: The business world, the world of targets, the world of funding, the world of 'practicality'...[.]....but I'm not a stupid professional....I have an understanding of all those kind of things, of course I have to, in running services....[.]....but I challenge them...[and]... want to do things a bit differently.*

*(Senior Practitioner, public/private partnership, youth and community)*

In this presentation of self, 'surveillance' appears very real, and as actively seeking to secure selfhood, via *pathways* to achieving particular identifications (through certain kinds of interactions and attention) as well as the difficulties of (trying to) stand outside of its field of vision. At the same time, this participant has felt ambivalent about their own professionalism alongside a class position identified. One gets a sense of complex, daily (and affective) interactions and negotiations of such spaces.

A further example of the risks to self was given by one participant who described the difficulties of re-inventing her organisation as a social enterprise, and the serious demands and stresses it had placed on her:

*Yeah, it's a risk with all sorts of things, it is a risk, all of it's risky and that doesn't feel very good...[.]....if it was just me that would be fine but it's not....[.]....It's all very well sitting out in your professional space being confident....[.]....The whole point about setting up an organisation was, quite aside from the practical reason of needing a job, was to own the agenda...[.]....but that's the point, it was created so that we could say what it was, we've written an outcomes framework, we write the commissioning framework, I'm completely motivated by that, and I've become far more politically aware...[.]....And there's also, on the other side of me, is the whole social enterprise agenda which is glamorous and is on twitter, and looks gorgeous and is all very sexy, and that's not real either....[.]....And you have to take risks to open up the space. If you open up the space you don't know what people will come up with. The last time we opened up the space....and we did it with the families, we did it with the workers, we did it with the*

*directors....[....]....it's challenging....but you genuinely have to be able to go, that's good, that's OK'.*

(Chief Executive, voluntary sector, social work)

What is interesting about this presentation is that what is being described here is, arguably, both an adherence to a direction of travel in welfare (neo-liberal configurations) involving the setting up of new forms of organisation that align with market practices but, *at the same time*, an extension of ways of practising towards more open practices (“open up the spaces”). Later this respondent talked about both “the safety of payroll” in attachment to an organisation and then, after re-invention as a social enterprise, “well, Im payroll now” and the tensions inherent in this – involving both a sense of freedom, and of loss. In posthuman vein, Deleuze and Guattari remind us that de-territorializations (becoming), and new variations in human living that diverge from the fixed are founded in, and have to proceed from, historical (pre)conditions, that is, in the conditions that exist now. This can involve a *use* of what is existing, and work to intensify it to work towards new possibilities. This is one way of reading an entangled becoming in to the presentation above. Here is someone ‘on message’, ‘doing’ enterprise and working forward in a new (neo-liberal) environment. By extending that, by intensifying the work being undertaken, new possibilities emerge – here, both in a political self-sense, and in new *outcomes*, involving others. This could be a way of seeking and getting sustenance (for self) from conditions that may not be very concerned with our sustenance (Lather, 2008).

Self simply as ‘identified’ or secured within the boundaries of humanistically inspired ‘categories’ that striate the landscape of children’s services, seems too simplistic here. If one brings this (posthumanist) concern into relation with what practitioners present about themselves and their practice, it appears to become much more possible to identify ways in which self as secured to notions of ‘identity’ interacts in an entangled, quite complex, way. Actualisations in practice interact with all the circumstances and conditions that are productive of (particular) selves, in a dynamic and shifting assemblage. This insight – drawn from a posthuman lever that questions how we are secured in multiple ways - highlights how the different

elements and aspects of 'self' and 'identity' are negotiated in complicated ways in practice.

Highlighting 'identity' as potentially complicated and problematic for thinking/being otherwise suggests, that social professionals might advisedly pursue explicit strategies of de-familiarisation. And, for example, the 'development of professional identity' (still a 'catch-all' important descriptor in professional training courses) might usefully, and explicitly include such strategies in their mix. Braidotti (2013) certainly suggests that we need to pursue such strategies in posthuman operationalisations. For Braidotti, de-familiarisation involves processes of *dis-identification*, a disengagement from that which has become fixed, familiar and normative, to work towards a posthuman frame of reference. This is important because, she claims, it means the self can become "relational in a complex manner that connects it to multiple others" (Braidotti, 2013, p.167) and more distant from "dominant institutions and representations" (*ibid.* p.168). This could move social professionals away from the grids of policy and practice a little and locate (their own recognitions of) selfhood *outside* of dominant modes of being. This, of course, runs radically counter to a prevalent orientation where professionals seek to 'hold on to' or shore up their professional identities. But in the posthuman, a designation of 'social worker' or 'youth worker' or 'teacher' can never be a static category anyway as its meanings inevitably shift along with the multiple interacting forces (as they are actualised in specific patterns of meaning and activity) that enact it, Braidotti also acknowledges:

*Dis-identification involves the loss of cherished habits of thought and representation, a move which can also produce fear, [a] sense of insecurity and nostalgia* (2013, p.168)<sup>41</sup>

However, for selfhood, operations of organisational, occupational, sector and professional power/identifications in organisations and multi-agency groups are

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<sup>41</sup> Braidotti (2013) also takes this further, into post-anthropocentric forms of de-familiarisation in order to pursue a monism and encourage connections with the non-human and the material in relation to environmental perspectives that see connections with the earth/the world as vital for understanding and tackling climate change and other (human) ravages of the planet.

problematic. Likewise, the hierarchical forms of top-down managerial ‘solutions’, and the separations between professionals and users (often now increasingly framed in ‘contractual’ modes of being between clients/consumers and ‘experts/technicians’) sediment and dis-connect us from each other (and the world), in ways which reify and (negatively) separate.

### 6.2.2 *Linearity and non-linear relationality*

In posthuman configurations, things are “web-like, scattered and poly-centric” (Braidotti, 2013, p.65). The image of the rhizome suggests diverse, unusual, recursive, and multiple connections (and via lines of flight) that brings proliferation and plenitude to the idea of relationality. A radical relationality is also about the quality of connections made – perhaps creative and affective as part of this, and “a focus on making difference rather than making similarity” (Fenwick, 2010, p.92). Given the complexity of the world, and of practice in children’s services, assuming and practising (self) in a more linear, or two-dimensional way may be problematic (merely an imagining of a *less complex* world that does not exist, or an ongoing attempt at complexity *reduction*). Relationships in hierarchical structures are, of course, also shot through with power.

One particular participant described the differential workings of multi-agency groups of which she was part. In one example she explained:

*That meeting was just crap, because, - it was chaired by someone I know – really, really well, who I’ve got a lot of time for, whose humour and company I enjoy very much but – in the meeting context had ‘come down from on high’ and everyone sat going ‘humph’, again, ‘enforced external agenda’. I mean it wasn’t even his agenda, that was a DWP [Department of Work and Pensions] agenda. So, the distancing of where the meeting rhetoric has come from, and how it is done – how it draws people in and engages – or not, I think makes a difference.*

(Chief Executive, social enterprise, social work)

What is being described here is a *lack of* relationality, in terms of the approach, a lack of connection and a linear supposition – that policy equals implementation - and, to some extent, a use of enforcement and hierarchy. On the other hand, a different description was given about another meeting:

*It [the group] exists already, in and of its own right. So, when 'Troubled Families' had arrived, it arrived at this meeting – the meeting of us all. And the meeting had a look at this 'Troubled Families' agenda and eventually said, 'Yeah, OK, you can be part of what we do' – Not, here's 'Troubled Families' and everybody went to join it. See what I mean? It [the group] exists in and of itself, whether the local focus is on a community budget or whether the national focus is on 'Troubled Families'.....the people who go to it care about what happens to families and children in [geographical area] and they will listen, and think about, what is in front of them.....[....]....and whether it's right, whether they can get involved and commit something to it.*

(Chief Executive, social enterprise, social work)

Here a richer connection is made – between a group and something external to them, that it was possible to have a dialogue about and to connect with – it was *folded* into the group. Acts of folding are to be open to otherness, so that the other becomes *part of us*; this is not a description of procedural, legalised, contractual relationships between bounded parties, but affective engagement and connection.

She goes on:

*I think it's about individuals but I think it's about how they manage their relationships – so, if I think about, let's think about that group of people....some really influential people who for me.....they've inspired me, they've guided me, they have been opinionated, they are strong minded, they take risks, they're quite bolshie, and they're not particularly interested in the formalities of whatever....What makes things happen and change?....they're putting their own stuff into the room and other people are working with it, they're not holding it back .....[....]..the meetings are long, they last a long time because people really do talk, I like to talk, those people really like to talk and I also know those people in that room if I'm struggling with something and I need someone to give me a little bit of input from their professional sector, I will call them, I will email them, and I'll always get something back.*

(Chief Executive, social enterprise, social work)

This is not a description of the malleable, subjectified, deficient (and *shamed*) social professional prescribed in policy and practice for children's services – in part it is a description of forthright dialogic debate in which people (feel they) have some power (and responsibility) and which has been generated collectively and collaboratively. This is something that many social professionals can be very good at, and very committed to – again, relationality (often of the complicated, non-linear sort) infuses (often difficult) practice situations with service users.

A lack of dialogue or sense of rich relationality is problematic. A Senior Practitioner in health services talked about 'inserting' herself in active ways into discussion but of sometimes getting little response:

*I find that – maybe that's the thing I'm waiting for – to have a good conversation, and actually what I often get is 'oh', a bit of a shock, rather than, - so, it's like they haven't got any sort of – their own - thought necessarily, behind what's been done – nothing back - so I don't get an equal and opposite reaction, - which I would respect and like.*

(Manager/Senior Practitioner, statutory, health services)

Later, she explained more as to why she thought this important:

*I need to be able to practise more freely, and we have to be professionally together on that. I mean, I respect other people's view....[...] If we are restricted from having very good conversations about what the best thing is, or the vest thing in a very difficult situation – is – then – we can't practice in, in an – inventive way, or y'know – we've got to back each other up, not in a defensive way...[...]....we've got to be able to defend our decisions as being right in an ethical, moral sense, rather than in an absolutely infallible, narrow accountable sense....[...] And, - I don't always feel that I've got the answers because my style is to think there might be more than one answer to things.*

(Manager/Senior Practitioner, statutory, health services)

And another respondent described what happened over a period of time, and how self becomes more closed down ways when dialogue was not held central:

*You no longer hold any tools to be able to enforce or effect change. Y'know, you no longer feel you can stand up and say 'y'know what, I think this commissioning process is wrong – ethically, morally – you don't do that any more, you just kind of suck it up, and you kind of have to in a way. You become disenfranchised from your own kind of power.*

(Manager, voluntary sector, youth and community)

Likewise, a Senior Practitioner in health services emphasises the quality of (the relationality of) clinical practice to which she elsewhere describes as "retreating" and recounts a series of relationally-related reasons for that.

*R: So, what supports, how is your sense of self supported in practice?*

*RP: Well, for me, it would be very much my clinical interactions with families actually, which is why I've probably chosen, well it is, to go back to, I'm very much immersed back in clinical practice – and, and being able to speak authentically about what goes on. So, y'know....When people get chipped away for a long time the voices diminish – and having been out there over the*

*years on panels, on boards, in reference groups and you just watch – watch what – well, really I would say managerialism has done to that over a period of time and you remove all that professional stuff and all that growth into a kind of boxed down, minimalized, invalidated process really. Y’know, for me, - it’s been about retreating....*

*R: How does it do that?*

*RP: Yeah, well, I would say, through a kind of systematic undermining. I think – so y’know it’s a gradual process – y’know, as you were asking I was thinking about social workers – [they] got lost first as individuals. That’s my experience of my colleagues, y’know. I can remember all that stuff about when they were going to court and they – and then [county] did all that stuff about saying they weren’t allowed to give individual statements, so it was all about, so they couldn’t speak in their own right, they weren’t allowed to.*

(Senior practitioner, statutory, health services)

Policy and practice guidance in children’s services routinely cite the need for better communication within and across agency boundaries, and a plethora of description, research, and different perspectives has been brought to bear on how this might be done (see Forbes and Watson, 2012 for some detailed examinations). What a critical posthumanism does, or might emphasise, in this mix, is a particular focus on the importance of *practices* (of a performing) of an expanded relationality and as (potentially) productive – for example, of difference. This is not a relationality to gain greater ‘control’ or impose will but as a device in, and as part of dynamic practice assemblages. This mode of practising, of conferring *plenitude* on relationality, stands in tension with bureaucratized and managerial practices that persist, and that have been (both in national and local configurations) too often structure-procedure-protocol bound. As a mode of practising (self) it does not – intentionally - fit, for example, the static boxes and linearised narrow accountabilities of defensive practices in austerity, and likewise works beyond the (now deemed failed) electronic systems in children’s services. It may be a practice-focused way of ‘matching’ or facing new (global and local) network mobilities (in governance and finance, for example) (Ball and Junemann, 2010).

### 6.2.3 *A hermeneutics of situation*

A critical posthuman connection draws our attention to productions *in the present*, what Nealon (2012) calls a '*hermeneutics of situation*'. It is a close attention to the here and now because "[r]educing human beings and their experiences to categories stabilized in past encounters loses the specificity of present encounters" (Lorraine, 2011, p165). Because a critical posthuman lens draws our attention to multiply performed enactments and 'ongoing reconfigurations of the world' in discursive and material assemblages, *of which we are only a part*, and through which there are constant mutations and differentiations, attention to the present here-and-now, becomes crucial. This is not the humanist subject *managing a situation*.

This, again, is not a hark-back to the set, the fixed and the static, but it is to look forward by looking closely at the specificities of a given situation, to sense its flows, affects, and detail, and for appearance. In part this is what Braidotti (2013) talks about when she talks about research in the posthuman as involving accurate cartographies. This means also that attention to the present brings a situatedness to practice (rather than too many external referents) and emphasises the fact that knowledge is situated. The possibilities of what can happen, or appear, in the present is what an accurate reading of the present can promote, because it can sense and see possibilities. Practice in children's services is also affective, and experience is also outside of ourself (again, of which we are only a part), a force. The senior practitioner in health services who talked about her "retreat" back into clinical practice into work went on to talk more of her difficulties of engaging with the politics of the organisation and direction of change. However, when she spoke of her practice in detail, her "immersion", the dynamics of practice situations, and how her "clinical interactions" supported her sense of self because of a "close engagement...and authentic talking about what is going on and what might be done", one could see that this was an attention to a hermeneutics of situation that had become no longer possible or sustainable elsewhere in her organisation. Through this she was able (with service users) to *pay attention* to the here-and-now, and use it as a creative moving forward; this sounds less like a retreat and more like an extension if one sees it in these terms.

Another research participant talked about an “extraordinary moment” in a multi-agency group which had been difficult and uncomfortable. This involved someone taking a (personal) risk in diagnosing an impasse round the room:

*She said she thought something was going wrong, that she felt uncomfortable and she wondered if it was because of...[....] She wondered if we could do something different, if the new, and small, organisations round the table who hadn't been at the last meeting....could say whether that was right. We had to work to respond to the new initiative and people did not know what was going on really. It was remarkable, the whole meeting changed, and the group has been different from that point. She sensed it, it was difficult, she took a risk and it can be really difficult in those groups, and it has been really productive from that point. Everyone responded, everyone knew what she was talking about, she kinda named it, y'know, the power, and the nuances of that in terms of what was going on – everyone responded. Then we could move forward.*

This describes an attunement and risk-taking *in situ*, and a forward-step, not according to a protocol or procedure. It echoes Tamsin Lorraine, who encourages us not to ‘stick to form’:

*Anytime that a theory imposes a form on lived experience, finer distinctions are lost and connections excluded that might have led to creative evolutions in living....in ways that could unfold towards a future we invent with others.*  
(Lorraine, 2011, p.166)

One participant talked about inventiveness and ‘making new situations’ each week in work with young people (running an educational project in a previous post):

*It gave me and them the freedom. What I said when they came in the door was ‘I don't care who you are on that side of the door – every time you come this side of the door you can reinvent yourself – every week if you want. You can be whatever you want, there's nothing that's on that side of the door that you have to bring in here, into this situation, if you don't want to....[...].it was a testing ground for them – and they used it! It was an opportunity to explore the possibilities of what could go on in that space, for that time. I don't know if it did any good, - as soon as they went out the door they would have the whole weight of the community on top of them again.*  
(Manager, statutory, education support)

In this instance, a hermeneutics of situation can suggest, then, questions about how we (might) become *with our outside*, in practice - and what Deleuze and Guattari

might call experiments with self, in (affective) 'encounter' and being/living as 'event'. O'Sullivan calls this an "experimental 'pragmatics' for living" (2006, p.309).

A theoretical territory of posthumanism provides particular devices or 'levers' with which to think social professional selfhood. In this chapter I have brought these devices into a connection with the data from my research conversations with social professionals in children's services. Particular agential cuts are made here. The presentation of data is not comprehensive – research conversations took place as part of an early gathering towards an assemblage, they did not flow from a worked-up theoretical framework nor were they driven by it; they were conducted in a spirit of curiosity and interest. As such, and in line with my research objectives and assumptions, and a methodology of mapping (creating) an assemblage for self, I have selected from my 'data'. What I have done is *make available* posthumanism, as generative, to think differently with my data. So what is presented are not enactments of self but *re-presentations* in the thesis to see how they might be productive of selves beyond humanist formulations.

What emerges are some particular, but broad insights for self and some ways (practices) which might move beyond humanist reproductions. Reading through a critical posthuman lens begins to open up a space for thinking, seeing, and being self differently in a number of ways. Explicit and conscious practices of de-familiarisation, a rich and expanded relationality, and a hermeneutics of situation not only effect potentially different ways of being, but are also suggestive of a different world.

## *Chapter 7*

### CONCLUSIONS

#### *Significance of the research and its possibilities*

##### 7.1 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

In this thesis I have been concerned with the selfhood of social professionals who work in children's services in England, and to ask how it might be possible to think and do 'self' differently.

In my introduction I presented social professionals as secured to dominant strategies of any given order, as constituted in discursive and material relations and in conditions of surveillance and appearance. As such they are tethered to a neo-liberal project (by markets and managerialism), as its instruments, required to demonstrate pre-determined policy outcomes in particular ways. But professionals as 'selves' are virtually absent. That is, they are everywhere and nowhere. Where alternatives – counter to the prescribed selves of neo-liberalism – are proposed, my premise was that these continue to be rooted in *the same structures for self*, that is, the (liberal) humanist subject. If one does not see the world, or practice, as rooted in Enlightenment humanism, where there is a split between mind and body and self has mastery, autonomy and (individual) freedom or agency, then one must look elsewhere for answers beyond this frame, and that might unsettle fixed patterns. I

used theoretical resources of a critical posthumanism to try to think differently, based in a Spinozan monism rather than Cartesian dualisms where we are not separate from the world but part of its entangled becoming. That is, self is an amalgam, as part of an assemblage of (multiple) others, imbricated on the surface in *doing*. This is to draw attention to both the conditions and circumstances in which self is produced, and a focus on *practices* of self. A non-sovereign self is part of a continually reshaping mix, and being and knowledge are thus emergent.

Paradigmatically, posthumanism challenges the division that is made between being and knowing, and the tripartite Enlightenment division of the world into a field of reality, a field of representation and a field of subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980). Here the world is organised into these fixed patterns and what can be researched is, in some sense, better knowledge about *what already exists*. An onto-epistemological positioning moves beyond this (to a trans-disciplinary space) in seeing the world as multiply connected, and through which knowledge/being might be produced. A rhizomatic approach is a theoretical articulation (of method), that is part and parcel of (a) theory itself as well as one methodological device.

The research strategy I articulated for a 'mapping' of self sought to make connections between different parts of an assemblage for social professional selfhood. In this, particular 'agential cuts' (Barad, 2007) are made, which are temporary delineations of territories in order to effect knowledge about a phenomenon or a reality, in the connections made – as an 'experiment' in effecting relations between different elements in an assemblage (that are productive of self). This is, of course, a challenge to conventional methodological configurations but it does actively pursue and seek to articulate an alignment with a theoretical positioning in the research processes employed, to pay careful attention to the strategy and methods and to describe the processes of the research, to deploy these with some systematicity through the chapters of the thesis. One always has a relationship to foundational categories of course, even if one seeks to move beyond these, and there do remain points of connection with these, for example, in my articulation of positioning in relation to foundational paradigms, and of aspects of

methods employed such as in setting up interviews with research participants. But in thinking differently about self (in a critical posthumanism) and about research that might produce a different kind of knowledge about self, I move to explore connections, rather than foreclose to one whole answer, to see what they do, and how they *work*. The assemblage effected in the thesis is, then, both generated, and intended to be generative and, in terms of the cuts (or delineations) made brings together in connection, following Mazzei's (2013) own description in this vein elements of policy-practice-ideology-participants-theory-researcher. Each chapter pursued a particular effecting of a relation for self.

As part of my research I conducted eight interviews with social professionals in children's services. These were drawn from across children's services organisations and sectors. They were conducted early in the research process as part of initial 'gathering' towards an assemblage and were conducted in a spirit of interest and curiosity rather than emanating from some fully worked through theoretical framing – this brought an openness to these conversations. Later, they were utilised (as were other parts of the assemblage) in a re-presentation. This is to acknowledge the selections and utilisation of this empirical data in particular ways, in line with the directions of my research and assumptions inherent in my research questions and approach. In using 'posthumanism' as a generative tool to see and think differently about self, to make new connections, this necessarily involved selection. But there is a particular form of 'experimental' rigour here too; in *making available* posthuman possibilities *that may not normally be available elsewhere* (in other studies) this is to offer an *opportunity* for different readings and re-presentations.

My first and second chapter introduced and established the theoretical and methodological basis of my research. This produced four subsequent chapters with each one bringing different elements of the assemblage into relation. Chapter Three examined the field of critical social policy (representations) and its concept of 'social identity', making available a posthuman lens to examine the *workings* of social policy as productive of selfhood, one set of conditions and circumstances in which self emerges. The 'work' that social identity does in social policy is to enable and

constrain the emergence of particular selves in assemblage; here they are secured to, and via, categorisations and identifications that serve social policy's own ends, and that re-produce and reiterate humanist subjects. Chapter Four is an analytical account of the actual policy and practice changes in the setting up and implementation of integrated children's services in England. Bringing critical posthuman insights in relation is to pay attention to the *performative* functions of actual policy, practice, organisational and technological change as they work with productions of social professional selfhood. These required a 'shamed' social professional selfhood in the wake of the death of Victoria Climbié, one with a preparedness to loosen professional ties, to re-secure to the new order of children's services. Chapter Five examines self in surveillance more directly, in conditions of austerity and an intensifying capitalism and as seen through research on the impact of children's services on professionals themselves. In bringing a posthuman theoretical territory to bear, I argue that research into 'impact' presupposes the fixed, sovereign subject of humanism. Instead, posthumanism can draw more effective attention to the conditions with which self is emerging and to help imagine re-workings of this. Chapter Six brings insights from a posthuman theoretical territory in relation with my interview 'data' from research conversations with social professionals. In this re-presentation it becomes possible to examine self as entangled with multiple conditions and circumstances that *make* self, but also to glimpse selves beyond these forces. They suggest practices and practice strategies that might take self beyond contained, secured selves in neo-liberal configurations, that bring more for self. I suggested such practices of self might include those of *de-familiarisation, a non-linear relationality, and a hermeneutics of suspicion* – a different, be-coming project for social professional selfhood.

There is a further question for me, which asks about the wider *meaning* of what I have done. For, whilst my research is explicitly not about 'outcomes' it does, *of course*, contain an implicit treatise on, and about, (self in) practice. I think it is this. What my research suggests is that we may know far less than we think we do about what and how our services work (or not) for the well-being of children, young people and families. What we *know about*, much more, is the selfhood as secured

(continually) to a variety of powerful grids, the tramlines for practice, about their surveillance. Self must (re)produce itself in children's services as a response to the grids (and requirements/desires of) social policy, organisational imperatives and structures, professional (and other legitimised) 'identities', and the workings of neo-liberalism, and more. This may *not* be to know about looking after children, in fact it may be to work against this, producing deformations of self/practice (being/doing). To try to over-plan and foreclose self, its pathways, appearance and, yes, outcomes, is to close down possibilities and opportunities for a self beyond self that is/knows/does *differently*, and that might contribute to children's well-being and protection.

Practice, and the self, can be more a place of *creativity* than a place of ensuring alignment to the pre-existing and required that plays to other agendas. To think in critical posthumanism is to think the self beyond (this) self, in part to become non-categorisable and non-identifiable, a self running against the very principles by which one is formed. This must be to risk oneself, its very formation, and beyond the compelling or coercive effects of (prior) 'knowledge', to risk an uncertain self, and to risk newness. But one does not need to work from a posthuman theoretical space (or set of beliefs about the world) in order to effect such practices for self, practices are part of the world in its be-coming, they are not pre-existing.

The killing and abuse of children (and all kinds of acts of terror) may continue. My research is really part of responding, *producing a response*, to this. It is not about a play of self nor an attempt to be clever and beyond what has been produced for the selfhood of children's services professionals (in various theorisations and operational prescriptions for practice), nor is it a centering of the selfhood/subject of social professionals. We could do well to give our-selves the best opportunities, in stepping forward from the present possibilities (our historical preconditions), for openings to multiple and different possible understandings. I have argued that in children's services this may not come from being and practising the grids of social policy, professional practice, nor neo-liberal regimes which foreclose and attempt predeterminations. The question is not, what is being done to me, what is required,

but, how can we become with what is happening in the world in a way that moves beyond what we know, that pursues connections and with an openness to what is happening. This is to realise an ontology of uncertainty in an attention to post/human self beyond self. This is selfhood is an everyday, ordinary being-politics where social professionals are civic actors in organisational contexts and where being, knowing and practising are one in their multiplicities, and whose experiments with self might offer proliferation, sustenance, innovation, and different ways of knowing, in appearance.

The main contribution of my research is its assertion of social professional selfhood as central to practice configurations, and in its movement towards rethinking and reframing this selfhood via a posthumanist lens. I have begun to articulate how a posthumanist understanding levers both practices of self, and the conditions and circumstances for practice into productive relation. My thesis is framed by a body of knowledge in (an inter-disciplinary) critical social policy and has the potential to make a contribution which could involve bridging a divide between theoretical studies in an 'ontological turn' and practices in welfare and organisational settings. My work brings insights about ontological and epistemological *practices*, and how these might be re-framed or extended.

More specifically, the notion of 'social identity' and how it works to foreclose possibilities for self, and how it might move beyond the production of subjects in humanism links to other theoretical developments in this area, notably in relation to post-colonial subjectivities. And, one imperative in children's services is to be able to better examine the conditions and circumstances that are inherent to child protection crises, that move beyond narrow accountabilities, to examine what policy and practice in organisational settings *contributes* and, of course, to effect change. I would claim a potential contribution in this respect to opening up particular spaces, via posthumanist insights, for question and debate about the workings of practice and selfhood that work in assemblage for practice and for what happens.

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