

Ainm /Name: Lydia Murphy

Bliain / Year group: EDF689

Uimhir mhic léinn / Student number: 167214945

Ábhar / Subject: Dissertation Thesis

Léachtóir / Teagascóir:

Lecturer Tutor: Dr Leah O'Toole

Sprioclá: Due date: 09/11/2021

Teideal an tionscadail /Assignment title: Leaning into Love and Compassionate Care in my Early Years Practice.

Líon na bhfocal /Word Count: 21570

Líon leathanach / Number of pages: 157

Aon ábhar eile sa tionscadal / Any other material in the assignment: Dearbhaím gur mise amháin / mise mar bhall grúpa (cuir ciorcal timpeall na rogha a bhaineann leis an tionscadal thuas) a rinne an saothar seo. Aithním go soiléir aon chabhair a fuair mé ó aon duine eile, baill fhoirne nó gaol clainne san áireamh. Mo chuid scríbhneoireachta féin atá sa tionscadal seo ach amháin nuair a úsáidtear ábhar ar bith as foinsí eile. Tugtar aitheantas do na foinsí seo sna fo-nótaí nó sna tagairtí. Dearbhaím go bhfuil treoirlínte an choláiste do thionscadail léite agam agus go dtuigim iad. Tá cóip den tionscadal coinnithe agam dom féin.

I confirm that I alone produced this project. I clearly acknowledge any help I received from any other person, staff members or relatives included. This project is my own composition except for material of any kind taken from other sources. These sources are acknowledged in the footnotes or references. I confirm that I have read and understand the Department assignment guidelines. I have also retained copy of the assignment for myself.

Síniú / Signature: *Lydia Murphy*

Dáta / Date: 09/11/2021



OLLSCOIL NA HÉIREANN MÁ NUAD
THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND
MAYNOOTH

Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education
M.Ed (Research in Practice)
(2019 – 2020)

Title: Leaning into Love and Compassionate
Care in my Early Years Practice

Name: Lydia Murphy

*A Research Dissertation submitted to the Froebel Department of Primary and Early
Childhood Education, Maynooth University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Education (Research in Practice)*

Date: 09/11/2021

Supervised by:

Dr Leah O'Toole



Declaration

I certify that this research, submitted for the degree of Master of Education, Maynooth University, is entirely my own work, has not been taken from the work of others and has not been submitted in any other university. The work of others, to an extent, has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Lydia Murphy

Date

09/11/202

Abstract

‘What does education need now?’

My research suggests the violence children are subject to is at an all-time high. The need for children to experience Love and Compassionate Care within our early years education system is needed now more than ever. Our policies favour terminology such as ‘whole systems approach’ and ‘economicus’. The standardisation of children’s learning is facing a worldwide crisis of outcome-driven goals. Emphasising literacy and numeracy with the effect of pushing down ‘schoolification’ on our young children. The purpose of this study was to examine myself both professionally and personally by exploring my ‘Living Contradictions’ with the intention of improving my own practice. Relational and holistic care are central to my values. I aspired to intensify my knowledge and professional practice by means of practical environmental interventions and observing the impact of the adult/child and child/child relationships. This research challenges the somewhat deficit-based lenses of trauma-informed practices. Rather viewing the research through a relationship-based lens seeking to buffer the effect of trauma on a person’s life outcomes. My self-study project employed qualitative research using Korthagen’s action research cycle and this was extended by using Brookfield’s lenses to allow the participants, theoretical richness and meaningful voices to be understood. Data was collected through reflective journaling, anecdotal evidence, reflecting mapping and experiential questionnaires. My results established innovative guiding principles for our preschool ecosystem. Our relational-based holistic pedagogy encompasses the self, the physical and affective environment which extends to the transformative effects of myself, my colleagues, and the children. The overarching themes emerging from my research were the ‘Good Enough Educator’, ‘Holistic

Curriculum’ and ‘The Ripple Effect. The conclusion explains the benefits of radical love as a revolution. Bringing forth multiple fields to seek the same goal. Defining what how predominant values are in decision making and how we need to pull them apart and interrogate them. Allowing innovate teaching and practice to emerge It explores what came from my dissatisfaction of the literature. Radical love promoting human kindness and compassionate care. The research end with recommendations for future practice including links to policy.

Key Words: Self-study, Action Research, Critical Reflection, Love, Compassion, Relationships, Transformational Education, Schoolification. Good Enough.

Acknowledgements

If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.

I cannot believe I am writing my acknowledgements for my master's syllabus. My key learning renders me to reflect on my journey of self-awareness, acceptance and co-construction of learning. There are many people I want to express gratitude to for supporting me throughout this journey.

My supervisor Dr Leah O'Toole, you're one in million! You started in Maynooth University at Christmas time 2018. They say people come into your life for a reason, in this case it is definitely true. I now know, I received a Christmas present that year I didn't realise I had been given. The powerful gift of friendship!

Dr Leah O'Toole I will never be able to thank you enough for your unwavering support in my journey. It meant so much, how much you believed in me, always encouraging me to have my voice heard. Your empathy and patience have made this journey in times of such stress much more manageable. I have been extremely fortunate to have experienced this journey with you! I really hope our paths do continue to cross into the future.

I would like to thank Dr Bernadette Wrynn for her support throughout my journey and the staff of Maynooth University, Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. This journey has opened my eyes to how powerful examining your own practice can be, analysing those hidden biases and strengthening my values. It has brought back out the creative parts within me that I had long forgotten. Thank you!

I would like to thank my critical friends for always being there reminding me of the value my worth. I never had to worry as I always had a non-judgmental listening ear in

my times of confusion, deflation or in times of anxiety, telling me ‘I could in fact do it, no matter how many times I said I could not’.

Agata, I do not know how I will ever be able to repay you for all the hours you spent reading and rereading my work. I am so grateful for your ‘Nazi’ stance when it came to my grammar and spelling, it paid off! I am now more conscious of the tenses in my sentences, Thanks to you 🤖.

I would like to thank my family for all the support they have given me over the last five years. Anne, you have been my rock throughout this educational journey. This piece I would like to dedicate to Terry as I’m sure he would be extremely proud of me seeing my achievement. He always instilled in us the value of ‘Love’ in our relationships.

Essie, my friend I would be lost without you! My little guardian angel always guiding me on the right path. All your prayers for me will never be forgotten. Thank you for all your support you have given me throughout this whole educational journey. I know I will always be able to rely on you no matter what happens in the future.

I want to give my colleagues the biggest Thank You for their support and willingness to take on new ideas. We did not have the easiest year, but we all stayed together and supported each other no matter what. We teased things out as a group, thank you for staying open minded about what was best for the children. Blessed with the best!

Finally, I want to thank the children from the bottom of my heart. Your trust in me was incredible every time you had to sign another consent form you did so with ease. Thank you all for just being you! Your input into my book is what made it soo powerful. All of us went into this work and I will be eternally grateful for all you have given me. I will always remember D and C lying on the ground holding my ankles as I prepared to leave

for my lunch. Hearing your words '*Don't leave me Tatyó!*'. Funny, I wish I could say that to you now.

Wishing all the pre-school graduates the best start in primary school!



Where there is great love there is always miracles!

Dedicated to Terry Mulvoy

Table Of Contents

Table Of Contents	vii
Introduction	1
1. Introduction:	1
1.1 The Focus of my Study:	1
1.2 My Values	2
1.3 Synopsis of Chapters:	5
1.3.1 Chapter 1	5
1.3.2 Chapter 2	5
1.3.3 Chapter 3	6
1.3.4 Chapter 4	7
1.3.5 Chapter 5	7
Literature Review	8
2. 1 Introduction	8
2.2.1 Relational Pedagogy	8
2.2.2 Bowlby to Bronfenbrenner	9
2.3 Love and Compassionate Care in Education:	12
2.4 Where does love and care lie in Policy?	14
2.5 Holistic Approach:	17
2.6 Children's and Educator's Connections	22
2.7 Professional Identity:	25
2.8 Conclusion	26
Methodology	27
3.1 Introduction	27
3.2 Social Paradigms:	27
3.2.1 Action Research:	29
3.2.2 Research Methods	29
3.3 Reflection:	32
3.4 Values:	36
3.5 Data Collection	37
3.6 Data collection instruments:	41
3.6.1 Journaling:	41
3.6.2 Questionnaires,	42
3.6.3 Reflective Practice/ Mapping:	42

3.6.4 Anecdotal Observations:.....	43
3.6.5 Children Art:	43
3.6.5 Photography:.....	44
3.6.6 Validity and Rigour:	44
3.6.7 Ethical Considerations:.....	45
3.6.9 Assent:.....	47
3.6.10 Confidentiality/Anonymity:.....	47
3.6.11 Vulnerability/Power:	48
3.7 Limitations:.....	49
3.8 Conclusion	49
Data Analysis	50
4.1 Introduction	50
4.2 What.....	55
4.3 What did I do?	60
4.3.1 Cycle One	60
4.3.2 Cycle Two: Reflective Mapping	78
4.3.3 Cycle 3: Gross motor Movement	83
4.4 Conclusion:	90
Discussion	91
5. 1 Introduction:	91
5.2 Holistic care.....	91
5.2.1 Relational Pedagogy:.....	92
5.2.2 Environment:.....	93
5.2.3 Children's Agency:.....	95
5.3 The Ripple Effect:	96
5.3.1 Co-Regulation:.....	96
5.3.2 The Ripple Effect:	97
5.4.1 Living Contradiction:	99
5.4.2 Self-Love	100
5.5 Conclusion:	101
5.6 Recommendations:	102
References:.....	104
Appendices:	121
Appendix A: Ethical Approval:.....	121
Appendix B:	130
Child Assent Form:	130

Appendix C:	131
Parent Consent Form:	131
Appendix D:	134
Colleagues Consent Form:	134
Appendix E:	135
Management's Consent Form:.....	135
Appendix F:	136
Appendix G:.....	137
Parental Questionnaires	137
Appendix H:.....	147
Appendix I:	148
C.A.T. Relational Mapping.....	148
Appendix J:	152
Intervention 3.....	152
Appendix K:	153
Children's relational evidence.....	153
Appendix L:.....	154
Patricia Reflective Task	154

LIST OF FIGURES:

FIGURE 1 CHILD TRAUMA ACADEMY. (PERRY, 1997)	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
FIGURE 2 VALUES.....	4
FIGURE 3 CIRCLE OF SECURITY (COOPER, HOFFMAN & POWELL, 2016)	22
FIGURE 4 CIRCLE OF SECURITY (COOPER, HOFFMAN & POWELL, 2020).....	23
FIGURE 5 RECIPROCAL ROLES (POTTER, 2020)	24
FIGURE 6 MCNIFF AND WHITEHEAD (2006).....	31
FIGURE 7 ALACT MODEL (BASED ON KORTHAGEN 1985/1988; KORTHAGEN & KESSEL 1999).....	33
FIGURE 8 KORTHAGEN'S ONION MODEL (2004)	33
FIGURE 9 BROOKFIELD'S LENSES (2017)	35
FIGURE 10 DATA CYCLES.....	37
FIGURE 11 PARENTS HERITAGE.....	40
FIGURE 12 EDUCATORS HERITAGE	40
FIGURE 13 DATA COLLECTION REVIEW	52
FIGURE 14 REFLECTIVE ART PIECE (MURPHY,2020) (30-11- 2020).....	54
FIGURE 15 PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES.....	57
FIGURE 16 PARENTS DATA COLLECTION.....	58
FIGURE 17 BEFORE INTERVENTION	61
FIGURE 18 BEFORE INTERVENTION (25-1-2021)	61
FIGURE 19 REMODELLED SPACE (25-1-2020).....	62
FIGURE 20 CLASSROOM RULES	63
FIGURE 21 CLASSROOM RULES	63
FIGURE 22 LOOK TEACHER A HEART MEANS LOVE (24-3-2021)	66
FIGURE 23 WHAT DOES A RAINBOW MEAN? E REPLIES LOVE (31-2-2021)	66
FIGURE 24 DINOSAUR (2-2-2021).....	67
FIGURE 25 VALENTINES (22-2-2021)	67
FIGURE 26 VALENTINE'S DAY (14-2-2021).....	68
FIGURE 27 HAND IN HAND (14-2-2020)	68
FIGURE 28 K ARTWORK (9-3-2021)	69
FIGURE 29 OUR CLASSROOM SYMBOL	70
FIGURE 30 CARE ROUTINES.....	70
FIGURE 31 CARE ROUTINES.....	71
FIGURE 32 BIRDS (6-4-2021).....	71
FIGURE 33 BIRDS (6-4-2021).....	72
FIGURE 34 BIRDS (6-4-2021).....	72
FIGURE 35 CORONAVIRUS (3-3-2021)	74
FIGURE 36 CORONAVIRUS (10-3-2021)	74
FIGURE 37 LOCKDOWN.....	75
FIGURE 38 H BABIES (8-3-2021)	77
FIGURE 39 BABIES (8-3-2021).....	77
FIGURE 40 RELATIONAL MAPPING (23-3-2021)	80
FIGURE 41 BEFORE 3RD INTERVENTION (5-4-2021)	83
FIGURE 42 GROSS MOTOR AREA (6-4-2021).....	84
FIGURE 43 SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY (29-4-2021)	85
FIGURE 44 TRANSITIONS	86
FIGURE 45 RAILINGS DISPUTE (18-1-2021).....	87
FIGURE 46 LETTER OF COMPLAINT (18-1-2021).....	87
FIGURE 47 RESPONSE (18-1-2021)	88
FIGURE 48 SELF-IDENTITY	89
FIGURE 49 SELF-IDENTITY (20-4-2021)	89

Acronyms

BERA: British Educational Research Association

CTA: Child Trauma Academy

C.A.T.: Cognitive Analytical Therapy

CECDE: Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education

COS: Circle of Security

DCYA: Department of Children and Youth Affairs

DES: Department of Education and Skills

DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

DoE: Department of Education

ECCE Early Childhood Care and Education

HSE: Health Service Executive

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NQF: National Framework for Quality

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

REC: Research of Ethics Committees

TOM: Theory of Mind

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Fund

WHO: World Health Organisation

Voice Colour Codes:

My voice



Children's Voice



Colleague A's voice



Colleagues B's voice



Colleagues C's Voice



Supervisor's voice



Critical Friends voice



Lecturer's voice



Parents voice



Introduction

1. Introduction:

The emphasis of my self-study action research project was to critically reflect on my practice with the aim of growth, improvement, development and perhaps to generate new knowledge within my area of research. Having gone through the process of self-study action research I can certainly speak with certainty surrounding ‘messiness’ of action research. My learning indeed was not linear, at times it was the like untangling the ball of yarn filled with ideas, emotions, questions, and propositions and as I progress professionally and personally, I am confident it will be just as messy. Yet, if I have become a better educator, it was in partnership of positive, loving, and caring relationships.

1.1 The Focus of my Study:

The focus of my study was born out of my knowledge of the power of relationships. *‘In short- Somebody’s got to be crazy about that kid’* (Bronfenbrenner, 2006 p. 262). I wanted to deepen my relationships with the children in my classroom and generate new terminology as a guiding principle within our setting. I have chosen self-study action research with the focus being on myself as an educator in transformation of new insight, learning and to generate better practices for the children and families I love and care about in my classroom. I understand I do not only go to work to teach but to learn within powerful relationships. There can be a shame/taboo attached to expressing feelings of love. Love from the holistic stance allows a child to grow to their fullest potential. I have witnessed many moments of loving and caring connections call them what they are which is ‘Loving and Compassionate Relationships’, the dance of reciprocity (Potter, 2020). Whilst I am aware the learning was coming from within the child, when I focus on the term ‘Relationships’ the advocate comes out in me.

Mental health is at crisis point in this country and worldwide. Absolutely, we need to campaign for better supports with multidisciplinary teams that are listening to each other. My concern is the way it can be delivered to society. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES's) is a quantitative study to which it does not measure the richness or humanness of relationships in society. It is confirming to have language to put on 'Why I am the way I am?' or 'What happened to me?'. Are we at risk of potentially having people being stuck 'Roots/Rooted?' The ACE's study that is used across training fields is narrowminded and deficit-thinking. Buber (2002) believes it is there to drive policy and money into underfunded and under-privileged sectors.

In terms of policy, my study advocates for individualised learning and care model. Our idealist Aistear: National Curriculum Framework (2009), Síolta: Our National Quality Framework (2006), also our cross governmental strategy 'First 5' does not mention the educators needs or well-being. Yet, we are working in partnership co-constructing learning with the child. Rather, these policies can be dominated by policies from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED) standardisation and narrowing of children's curriculum. Education within policy is generally spoken about in the future tense from a transformative stance. Rather we should focus on education for today not always tomorrow.

1.2 My Values

What started my passion?

My quest for a loving and compassionate pedagogy was born out of dissatisfaction, frustration, and a need to unearth the Adverse Childhood Experiences ACE's movement (Felitti et al., 1998; Harris Burke, 2018). The driving force for brain development most political campaigns is derived from rather deficit lenses. Perry's model below is of two

three-year-old brains. One receiving normal engagement of relationships and the other brain having experienced neglectful relationships.

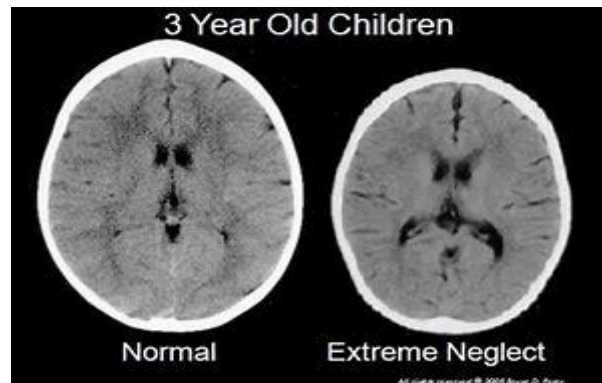


Figure 1 Child Trauma Academy (Perry, 1997)

Together the ACES movement and Perry's have quantifiable results. Policy has been derived and is driven by what can be measured, for example, the zero to three campaigns, critical window, birth to three.

Unfortunately, quantifiable research does not land well with the government for our early years sector. They tend to deviate from suggested preventative models as under three's being hugely disregarded in terms of funding within our sector. For example, the National Childcare Scheme (NCS)/Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) scheme gives a capitation grant to services employing degree level graduates only at the preschool cycle. Leaving the least qualified staff working in the tender years of birth to three.

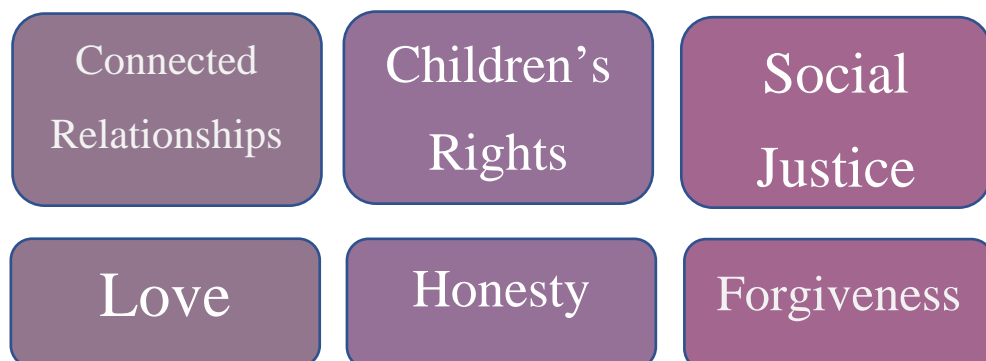


Figure 2 Values

The above boxes highlight a small-scale list of my budding values. Korthagen (2014) believes we are happiest when we are living closest to our values. My values are ever evolving. Nonetheless, these have been predominant within this research project. Our values come back to what is important to us, some hereditary and some we have developed from our lived experiences.

Connected Relationships will always be at the heart of my work. I strived to connect daily with the children and families within my classroom. I believe educational relationships can be the agents of change both in the immediate space of the classroom and they have the potential to change a person's life trajectory. As young child struggling to speak in school my teachers had a huge impact on my connected relationships. I believe the educational relationships I had in school developed my passion to go on to be an educator for young children.

I always had a vision I wanted to change the world regardless of how many people told me it was aspirational and could not be done. I was one of the '*Dream Children*' the Americans identified because I was brought to America at one and a half. I grew up in a multicultural society. My best friends were Mexican American, Indian American and I was Irish American. I was unaware of the racism that existed within the world, yet I was hypersensitive to anyone knowing I was Irish. Also, on moving to Ireland I also disregarded my American heritage. Unconsciously, I want children and families to have the freedom and sense of belonging regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, or age. I had no awareness of my white privilege. With age, knowledge and understanding I would only come to know why there was so much hate. The implications of social justice I now recognise the importance and significance.

1.3 Synopsis of Chapters:

1.3.1 Chapter 1

Chapter one reveals the aims and focus of the self-study research project utilising the power of loving and compassionate relational practice within my early years classroom. The self-study reveals my professional and personal values, rather than surmising their origins.

Critical evaluation was evident Brookfield's Lenses- self-reflection, scholarly literature, students' feedback, colleagues' experiences. This research study can change potential views within education from a psychological perspective of trauma or through an educational lens of curricula.

1.3.2 Chapter 2

Chapter 2 educates the reader with the theoretical literature underpinning love and compassionate care curriculum. Explaining the many different definitions of love and compassion. I have chosen to frame my research with relational pedagogy of Attachment Theory/Bio-ecological lens, Bowlby-Bronfenbrenner also interlinking educational theory within the text. To locate my research with the educational context, the study of ecology can give the researcher closer proximity to the research site of the classroom environment and the people within it, including influences relationality context to policy (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2005; Hayes, O'Toole, & Halpenny, 2017; DeFehr, Infante, and Valladares, 2021)

Next, I drilled down into pedagogy to explore the purpose of a holistic curriculum for the whole child. Intertwining a critical lens to the archaic argument of the brain and the body within holistic care. Relational attachment perspective within the holistic

curriculum allowed me to explore the emergent provocations of myself and of all the participants.

Following this, two innovative reflective relational tools were explored to process the interactions between the educators and the children. The educators were familiar with the first tool The Circle of Security: Classroom Guide for Educators (COS) (Powell, Cooper, Hoffman, & Marvin, 2020) and the literature introduces relational mapping named Cognitive Analytical Therapy (C.A.T.) (Potter, 2020). Finally, the literature introduces the influences of professional identity within the early years sector, highlighting the discourses underpinning professional identity.

1.3.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 defines social paradigms and gives rigorous rationale for choosing my methodological research. My research is based on the study of ecologies centring itself in attachment theory for this reason I choose to use a qualitative lens allowing for the richness and meaningful idiosyncrasies of human beings.

The chosen action research cycle was Korthagen model of Action Research and to encompass and theorise the voices of the participants Korthagen's model is extended using Brookfield's Lenses (Brookfield, 2018). To critically reflect on my practice the action research allowed me to stop and reflect on the data before continuing to the next cycle.

My values are emphasised clearly before exploring the data sample including my journey and the participants journeys. Next the data tools are named with clear justification explored. Ethical considerations were paramount within this research with a significance on issues of power and hegemony.

1.3.4 Chapter 4

Chapter four encompasses how my passion for educational relationships began. The details of three action research cycles and two interventions held with the classroom environment as well as anecdotal information recorded as part of my relational interactions with the children.

‘The Nurture Nook’ and ‘Gross Motor Area’ were developed as holistic relational spaces for the children to explore as peer to peer or with an educator. The Circle of Security and Cognitive Analytical Therapy was explored in detail between the two interventions with the educators as a means of critical reflection in the feelings of ¹‘shark music’.

1.3.5 Chapter 5

Chapter five is in pursuit to make sense of my data collected using a reflective practice as a main tool. Making links with the current literature previously drawn within chapter two. This chapter highlights overarching guiding principles from the data collected within the three relational interventions.

¹ Helps to explore uncomfortable feeling from one’s childhood

Literature Review

2. 1 Introduction

The section presents a critical perspective of the topic love and compassionate care in the early years education. It is supported with relevant underpinning theory of relationships in education. The focus of the literature review from relationships and evolves to a holistic view of early years practice. Viewing early years practice from the perspective of nurture and care whilst placing the child within their world expects psychological theory to have a significant place within the educational literature (Sidorkin, 2021). Biesta (2011) advises to increase rigour educational research theoretical sources should be obtained from multiple disciplines. Historically Psychology, Philosophy, Sociology, and History were the cornerstones of education beginning with child studies such as Piaget (Biesta, 2011). Both educational and psychological relationships theory together form a unity of interconnectedness establishing a holistic environment for children to learn and grow (THRIECE, 2019).

2.2.1 Relational Pedagogy

Bowlby to Bronfenbrenner is where relational pedagogy is established. Relational Education emphasise the importance of relationships in education (O'Toole & Hayes, 2020). Recently educators have been leaning towards relational pedagogy through a psychological lens with theories such as Bowlby, Ainsworth, and Bronfenbrenner (O'Toole & Hayes, 2020). Relational pedagogy is how we are in /teach relationships within education meaning NCCA, 2009; O'Toole & Hayes, 2020). When me becomes we (Stern, 1977).

2.2.2 Bowlby to Bronfenbrenner

Attachment Theory was the first scientific approach to examine the relationships dyad between the parent and the child (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby believed the most significant relationships in a child's life is the proximity they had with their maternal figure he later adapted his theory to express it did not have to be the maternal caregiver, but a child needed a significant caregiver in their life to succeed (Bowlby, 1969). He noted if the dyad separated for a significant period in the first five years of life the child would have higher chances of adverse outcomes growing into adulthood. O'Toole and Hayes (2020) believe you must take into the consideration the time it was written, today this thinking would be refuted. Bowlby's mother was detached from Bowlby as a young child this could have influenced his original thinking (Bowlby, 1969)

Relationships consist of a partnership they can be seen as a form of a dance or proximity behaviours (Harlow; 1968; Stern, 1977; Ryle, 1998; Travarthen, 2004).

Following Bowlby's discovery of Attachment Theory, this led him to unpack this proposed thinking even further (1973). He then proposed how relationships were responded to made huge significance to a person's brain, meaning if a child is responded to in an appropriate consistent manner this drives the child's sense of self (I am worthy or lovable). Bowlby (1973) named this concept the child's Internal Working Model (IWM). However, when child's cues are not consistently met, they may find it much more difficult to predict future outcomes both internally and externally in relational behaviour (Bowlby, 1973; Page, 2018; Powell et al., 2014; Siegal, 2020).

Following Bowlby's solo work, he then united with Ainsworth (1967) to explore in finer detail the intricate way in attachment occurred between the mother-child dyad. However, Ainsworth's results were not culture sensitive meaning there was huge

generalisations within her findings. Her analysis also lacked context as Ainsworth's studies took place in laboratories (Ainsworth, 1967). Yet Ainsworth's findings developed a series of attachment styles (secure, insecure, avoidant, and disorganised) but more importantly she acknowledged child's need for a 'Secure Base' from which to explore (Ainsworth, 1967).

Years later Bowlby's son extended on Bowlby's theory with a focus on educational relationships. He found children could in fact develop more than one significant healthy relationships that being mainly found in a child's educational relationships (Bowlby, 1997). He believed if the educational care was high quality with a significant, consistent educator that the maternal figured trusted a child could in develop to their full potential (Bowlby, 1997). Today we recognised this as the key worker system (NCCA, 2009; Barnardos, 2014; CECDE, 2006). Hayes (2013) supports the need for the term nurture within education as she believes it is a deeper level of care and relationality.

Attachment theory has become the foundation of educational policy within early years education in Ireland and worldwide (NCCA, 2009; First 5, 2019; Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures; 2014).

Whilst Attachment Theory is criticised for the under acknowledgment of cultural context meaning cultural capital was not identified (Vicedo, 2017). Bronfenbrenner and Morris viewed the child within the relationships of his/her home and community, unlike Bowlby and Ainsworth he emphasised the importance of environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's most current Bio-ecological model of human development was selected as an extension of attachment theoretical framework running throughout this self-study thesis (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). It is significant to note the differing version of Bronfenbrenner's theory as his theory has evolved from the 'Eco-logical Theory' to the 'Bio-ecological Theory' emphasising the

role of relationships and even after his death in 2005 his work was still deemed a work-in-progress (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik 2009; O'Toole, 2016; Hayes, O'Toole & Halpenny, 2017).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) began with his foundational material the 'Ecological System Theory'. The child was placed at the centre of evolving systems compiled of the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem. Later, he added an additional layer named the Chronosystem for the inclusion of time within his work (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Yet, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems only ever briefly alluded to the importance of relationships in a child life. Moreover, a child is never without significant others in the context of their lives (Hayes et al., 2017). Attachment theory began in the microsystem of a child's life (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1967).

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) still placed the child at the centre and added a relational context to their theory, shifting from the Eco-logical Theory to the Bio-ecological Theory. Tudge et al. (2009) made a comparison of his new theory to Russian dolls. However, when opened each doll is a separate identity and can stand alone. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) saw this model in a more cohesive frame, each system not only nested but extensively interconnected by relationships, also embedded in one's culture supported by ²linkages from one nest to another. Bronfenbrenner has been critiqued for his abandonment of culture within the microsystem. Yet this could be a misinterpretation of the systems theory as culture is embedded into all cycles (Hayes, O'Toole & Halpenny, 2017).

² Linkages: experiences and structures that tie systems together and encourage similar learning processes from one setting to another.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) corrected the emphasised the importance of relationships in the form of a proximal process dyad meaning the energy between the child, the people in a child's life, and the environment noting the importance of objects and symbols. They expanded their theory of relationships when developing the Process Person Context Time (PPCT) model viewing participants as active agents within the nested systems reducing the overpowering or stagnation of development with the environment (Hayes et al., 2017). The environments are not seen to stifle the child as they are given agency within them (Hayes et al., 2017)

Proximal processes are simply interactions with the environment or the individuals within it (Hayes et al., 2017). These interactions can be closely related to the theories of Attachment, however, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) developed psychological model by seeking to discover authentic relationships in real physical contexts in genuine environments. Bronfenbrenner argued 'much of developmental psychology is the science of the strange behaviour of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest period of time' (1977, p 513). Yet, never quoted Ainsworth in his observation. So far, this chapter has critiqued relationships theory. Now moving to the centrality of love in education.

2.3 Love and Compassionate Care in Education:

Introducing love in education can be quite controversial. However, researchers and theorist have started to emphasise the use of the word love in educational setting and some school environments (Page, 2018; Page, 2017; Triesman, 2021). How do we define love when it is such an abstract concept? Love has many different meanings to different people. It could mean holding someone or something in high regard, there are

romantic connotations to the word love, something pleasurable (Grimmer, 2021). Yet love can mean security, accepting of imperfections (adult or child) or forgiveness.

Chapman and Campbell (2016) categorised children's love in the same light as adults, when they are giving and receiving love. They stress if we can connect with a child to their preferred love language we are then attuning to the child's expression. They define these 'love languages' as:

Physical touch- rough and tumble play, bear hugs, a child will touch your face or shoulder when talking.

Quality time- requests story time to snuggle up to you, invites you to play all the time.

Words of affirmation- they express 'they love you' 'you're so sweet'.

Acts of service- they help children get dressed or put on shoes, help with dinner trolleys, clean up.

Receiving gifts- children going to the garden and bringing you back a rock, wanting to draw you pictures (Chapman & Campbell, 2016). Children and adults will have a mixture of 'love languages' depending on the situational context. Yet, on closer inspections a love trait that is dominant for a particular child may appear (Grimmer, 2021).

Now transitioning to the word 'Care' and its definition Noddings (1994) believes to care for someone you must be able to care for them to the appropriate level of their needs otherwise it is just sympathy. To care is a verb or an act of service (Noddings, 1994). The word care embraces the word compassion which originates from the '*Compati*' which means '*to suffer with*'. Gilbert (2014) stresses that is not always the

best mindset when beginning to care for someone. He states it not just suffering with but the ability to relieve it.

Powell et al. (2014) offer a different lens to caring for someone. They seek an opportunity to '*being with*' the person in their difficult emotions. Not immediately jumping to problem-solving/ solution focused approach just sitting with the person/child in their difficult emotions. They believe often people have the solutions within themselves. However, a period of holding space is the beginning stages caring/ compassionate approach (Powell et al, 2014; Rogers, 1974; Winnicott 1964). Care and compassion are once again difficult to define as there are many layers and levels within the contextual context of the situation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Yet, altruism love underpins the act of care (Gilbert, 2014).

2.4 Where does love and care lie in Policy?

Gooch and Powell (2012) acknowledge the dichotomy of processes for raising quality and care. They state care is often diluted in favour of educational goals. There are many tensions between care, love, and education in terms of measuring the process of outcomes versus opportunities of curriculum goals (Gardener, 1993; Hayes & Filipovic, 2018). It could be argued our priorities for children in early years should be less focused on societal needs, political agendas, or educational outcomes and more about learning to be in relationships (Browne-Lee, 2020). Children's key and individual learning will emerge simultaneously whilst being loved and care for. Increasingly from an international perspective the discourse of love has been widely debated (Page, 2011; Semann, 2019; Gerhart, 2004; hooks, 2000). Grimmer (2021) argues love is already widely underpinning educators' practices however, the language and policy now needs

to catch up (Rouse & Hadley, 2019). The word care is repeatedly used within educational policy documents (NCCA, 2009; CDCDE, 2006).

Historically, it is important to note love has only recently been added to Ireland's educational research (NCCA;2009). In comparison to England which has removed the term loving from all their policy documents (Grimmer, 2021; Page, 2018), Irish policy obtains a sense of openness and forward thinking to the term love in early education (NCCA, 2009). Our National Curriculum Framework: Aistear does mention love within the principles of relationships as a guide for early years educators (NCCA, 2009). However, the term love does not run throughout the framework in terms of the holistic curriculum. Irish policy is saturated with the benefits of well-being and care of the whole child (NCCA, 2009; CECDE, 2006; First 5, 2019; BOBF, 2014). Page (2017) believes love and care are an extension of the other. Both educationalist and psychologists agree the need to be loved and cared for is viewed as a basic human right, we survive and grow in connection with others (O'Kane, 2021; O'Toole & Hayes 2020; Coyne, 2020; Porges, 2017; Maslow, 2013; Carter, 2012; Szalavitz & Perry, 2011; Gerhart, 2004; Noddings, 1994; UNCRC, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978; (Harlow & Hansen, 1963).

Learning in education is known to be supported within psychological safety (NCCA, 2009). However, defining love and care within education is complex. Historically, the literature states the propound need for parents and guardians to love and care for their children (Winnicott, 1964; Stern, 1977; Bowlby,1988; Travarthen, 2004) Some would argue educators should not have to deal with children's psychological needs as it is beyond their training capability. However, it is difficult for a child to have significant learning without a significant relationship (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006; O'Toole & Hayes, 2020). Hence, as previously mentioned the arrival of the key worker system

in early education (CECDE, 2006; NCCA, 2009). A key worker system allows a child and their family to have a significant educational relationship with one educator in the setting providing continuity of care for both the child and family. The educator is with the child in loco parentis in the settings care (Bowlby, 2007; NCCA, 2009; Barnados, 2014). The educator is a child's and family's safe hands and secure base (Powell et al., 2014; NCCA, 2009). Early Years Educators accepting children and families exactly as they are, not trying to mould them into what is familiar to them or the dominant culture (Brooker, 2005).

Grimmer (2021) expresses she interviewed many early years educators and found lots of love within practice. There are reservations surrounding the word love within pedagogy from a child protection perspective, nuclear family being uncomfortable with someone else loving their child. To address these concerns Page (2016) coined the term 'professional' in front of the word love to distinguish it from a mother's love (Page 2017, 2018). hooks (2000) stresses defining appropriate love is difficult as many people can unintentionally wound a child and think it was because they loved them, also known as tough love. The word love in education can evoke a whole realm of feelings (hooks, 2000; Page, 2018). Not to overlook the challenges of a loving pedagogy, reflective practice is suggested as a tool to have meaningful conversation with educators and revise when necessary (Grimmer, 2021).

Early years educators (EYE) can be fearful of using the word love as it can connote to sexual desires (Aslanian, 2018). However, when we explicitly link love to Rogerian theory of Unconditional Positive Regard the term love fits neatly within education (O'Toole, 2015). Noddings (1994) uses a feminist frame to apply ethical consideration within educational institutions. She stresses the importance of caring for someone being cared for. Noddings (1994) states the violence in children has reached unprecedented

levels. An under researched area of education is the number of preschool children expelled from educational centres set up to cater for educational disadvantage is higher than high school expulsions (Giordano, Interra, Stillo, Mims, & Block-Lerner, 2020)

Now more than ever there is so much to be gained by placing emphasis and modelling love and compassion for each other (Kaur, 2013). Love and compassion are not only extended to human connection but also encompassing animals and the environment. Brown (2012) believes we are living in an environment where love and care are scarce. People are afraid to be vulnerable as it could be read as a sign of weakness.

‘To live our lives based on the principles of a love ethic (showing care, respect, knowledge, integrity, and the will to cooperate) we have to be courageous.’ (hooks 2000, p. 90)

Loving, caring, and nurturing relationships are the foundation to the work in early years (CECDE, 2006; NCCA, 2009; Epstein, 2014; First five, 2019). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) upholds the children’s rights to be respected from our youngest in society, allowing them to make decisions in matters that affect them (Lundy, 2007). Whitebread et al. (2003) stresses learning does not only encompass what children are taught but also what they experience. Biesta (2016) extends this piece with his effective pedagogy acknowledging children’s funds of knowledge recognising the children’s value and belief systems. Freire (1987) acknowledges educators do not just come to school they also come to learn.

2.5 Holistic Approach:

The holistic approach to education takes into consideration the whole child, incorporating body, mind and spirit unfolding within the child’s lived experiences (Miller, 1991,1997, 2006; Miller, 2006, 2007, 2010; NCCA, 2009). Freire (1987)

believed education should in fact come from the children's daily lives. The educators are observing the children and co-constructing the curriculum in tandem with the children funds of knowledge (Hedges, 2007; Greene, 1995).

Palmer (2017) poses the statement within educators are continually being asked to pull things apart and inspect them. He synthesis what could happen when we align theory together such as the body and mind. Alsop (2008) states the borderlands of the body and mind split have been debated by philosophers and psychologist since archaic times. THRIECE (2019) researched holistic care, relational pedagogy, and inclusive practice in early childhood education using participatory action research across three European countries Ireland, Poland, and Portugal. The need for test standardisation and behaviourist approaches were progressing to an all-time high (Nowak-Lojewska, O'Toole, Regan & Fereira, 2019; O'Toole, Regan & Nowak-Lojewska, 2019; PIZA, 2022). THRIECE feared for the future of children's education in the mists of narrowing the curricula.

“Because it offers an antidote to materialism, fear, and separation, the holistic perspective is important not only for the renewal of education, but also for our very own survival” (Nielsen, 2001, p. 4)

As the argument of the body and mind split continues trauma specialist are seeking to remove the divide between the body and the mind (Maté, 2003; Burke-Harris, 2018; Van der Kolk, 2014). Mate stresses the importance our attachment in early life affects the mind and body into adulthood. Felitti et al. (1998) began the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) research exploring the links between mental health difficulties and physical health from childhood stressors. These events can be incidental or happen

over a prolonged period. Burke-Harris (2018) reignited awareness of the ACE's scale measuring a person's traumatic events to life term goals.

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Kaiser Permanente (1995-1997) questioned a cohort of middle class, white participants because they believed the results could affect the wider population meaning upper and lower socioeconomic status and beyond. They believed if they applied a cohort of working-class families it would lead to a result of othering meaning that trauma would not be deemed a social issue and more of a class crisis.

'It is true that poverty and deprivation don't automatically lead to poor attachment-far from it, in fact. But we must never underestimate the impact of difficult circumstances on the physical and mental health of parents and the direct impact this can have on their capacity to be responsive to their children'. (O'Connor, 2013 p. 9).

Bruer's (2010) stresses neuroscience is one of the misleading driving forces of policy for children's developmental outcomes. He believes words like critical window, sensitive period, brain connections, attachment, zero-to-three are driving force of this campaign. He is not questioning that early intervention is not important. However, Bruer's (2010) interpretation portrays a more optimistic piece for the rest of a person life. Rather if we analyse neuroscience from a relationships perspective the opportunities are more hopeful.

Carter's (2014) definition of love from a neurological perspective is social communication, feelings of empathy and compassion and a sense of reciprocal trust. Coyne (2020) explains when we are in the presence of people, we trust we can be soothed from feeling of anxiety. Carter (2014) and Porges (2013) argue human beings cannot function, thrive, or reproduce let alone survive in social isolation. Our bodies

even pre-birth are individually wired for connection meaning love, compassion, empathy, nurture (Mate, 2003; Van der Kolk, 2014; Siegal, 2020). It only takes one person to love you to change the neurological pathways of the brain (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2005). Oxytocin helps to shape the neo cortex of the brain (Carter, 2014). The term love is regularly used when speaking about a mother child dyad to support the theories of brain development and co-regulation/self-regulation. In early childhood care and education, we are in partnership with the child co-constructing meaningful relationships (Gerhardt, 2004). Oxytocin the love hormone is responsible for all social interactions and social bonds. Carter (2014) states it is the key to healthy relationships. She also notes babies' nervous system in the beginning stages of life seem to be particularly sensitive to the love hormone to stimulate growth, cognition, and the emotional nervous system. Put modestly, the human species cannot survive without love (Lee et al., 2009; Meyer-Lindenberg et al. 2011; Epstien et al, 2012; Feldman, 2012; MacDonald & Feifel, 2013).

Our children's brains are firing all the time building connection from each interaction and experience they have. Siegal (2020) states neurons that fire together wire together meaning the experiences our children have are wiring their brain feeding into their internal working model (IWM). Siegal (2020) argues every child is born with an innate attachment system, this function of the attachment system seeks to stay near the people that care love and protect us is to stay in proximity to human that ease our distress. Our attachment systems seek to keep us alive we need attachment for survival (Vrtička & Vuilleumer, 2012). However, both positively or negatively all the biological systems within the human body are interconnected with each other meaning adaptations of one system has a knock on effect to the other systems in the body (Child Developing Centre, 2020). When early years educators are trained in relational practices they can

act as a barrier to negative outcomes for both the child and families within their care (O'Toole & Hayes, 2020).

On the continuum of neuroscience linking the body and the mind, Van der Kolk (2014) believes in play with a child, the feeling of safety is felt throughout their whole body rather than just communicating to their mind. Children are concrete learners they experience and explore feelings to connect with the mind (NCCA, 2009). Merleau-Ponty (1962) stresses our bodies are not only being sensed by the world but within the world. As humans we are multi-sensory beings. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, (2010) utilises the term '*becomes with*' in play. They bring together the importance of objects and symbols within the environment in a theory of Relational Materialism (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Relational Materialism emphasise the importance of the environment as the third teacher (Gandini, 2011). Questioning is the child playing with the sand or is the sand playing with the child? Moving to merge literature of the body to the environment it is believe we have not only five senses but seven, including proception and vestibular senses (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2013). To develop important muscle formation within the body needed to sit appropriate levels of risk are needed when a child is in play. Children learn their boundaries of adventurous play by being allowed to take appropriate levels of risk feeding into their positive mental health (NCCA, 2009; UNCRC, 1989).

Adventurous play has been directly connected with a greater sense of self, more resilience, higher self-esteem increasing well-being (Kolehmainen, Francis, Ramsey, Owen, McKee, Ketelaar, & Rosenbaum, 2011). Restricting risky play within early years can hinder development (Brussoni, Olsen, Pike, & Sleet, 2012)

2.6 Children's and Educator's Connections

Powell et al. (2014) devised this attachment-based parenting programme 'Circle of Security' COS to help support our interactions from an Infant Mental Health Perspective. Meaning babies from 0-5. Their slogan is *'Always be Bigger, Stronger, Wiser and Kind. Whenever possible follow my child's need, whenever necessary Take Charge'* (Hoffman, 2017).

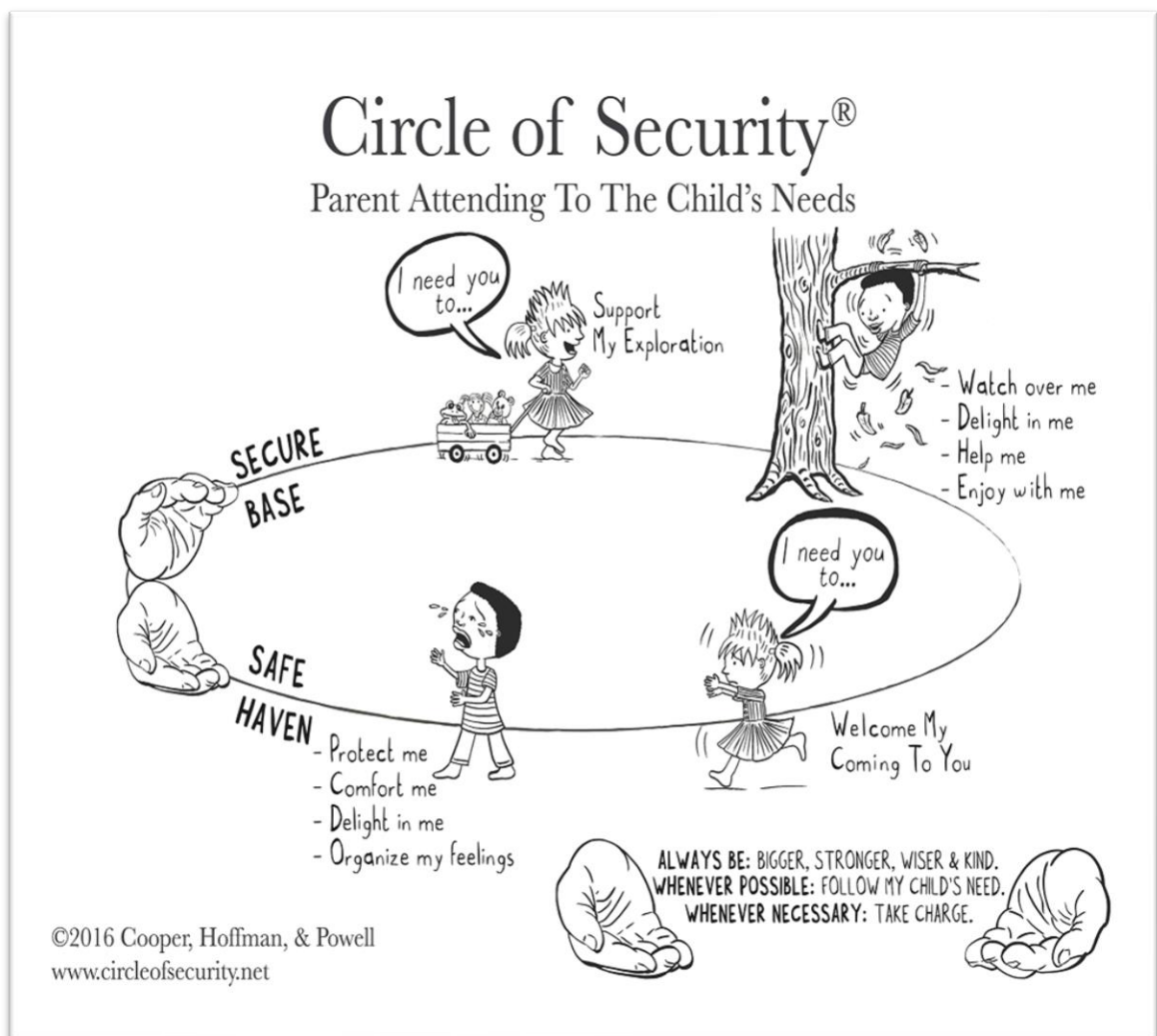


Figure 3 Circle of Security (Cooper, Hoffman & Powell, 2016)

More recently they have added an additional piece for educators to support interactions. Hoffman et al. (2017) stresses the COS for a parent looks different dependent on how many children they have as educators we are experiencing this at any one time. It is

extremely difficult to be all things to all children. Their slogan for educators is *Always to be Strong, Kind, and Committed. Whenever possible follow my child's need. Whenever necessary take charge.*

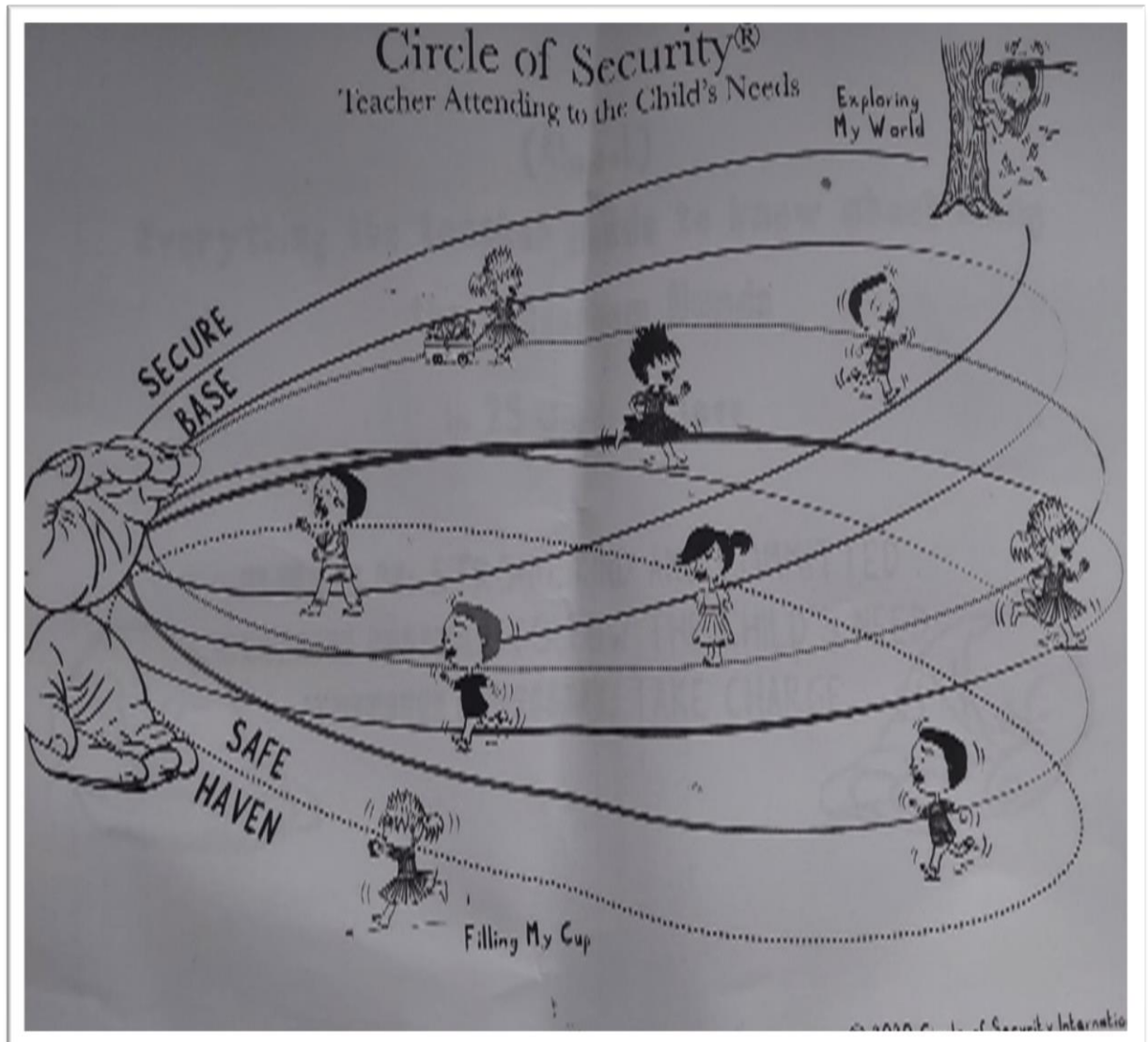


Figure 4 Circle Of Security (Cooper, Hoffman & Powell, 2020)

Educators working in the dance of educational relationships have our own attachments and IWM's working alongside the child's (Riley, 2011). At many stages in relationships there will be a miscue within the dance, we don't correctly hear or feel what the other participant is expressing (Powell et al., 2014).

Ryle (1975) developed the idea of reciprocal roles between the child and the educator. The is a reflective mapping process usually takes 10 mins. The educators use this space breakdown individual interactions at play. Below is an example of reciprocal poles of engagement for example a child showing anger towards an educator. The educators IWM could perceive this as personal and feel bad, scared, or hurt. Potter's (2020) reflective tool allows the adult to reflect on the interaction and step out of the dance the dance of anger and hurt/blame to a space of child attunement. Meeting the child's anger with love and care *'I see you're really frustrated/ scared/ overwhelmed. Your safe, I am going to help you'*.

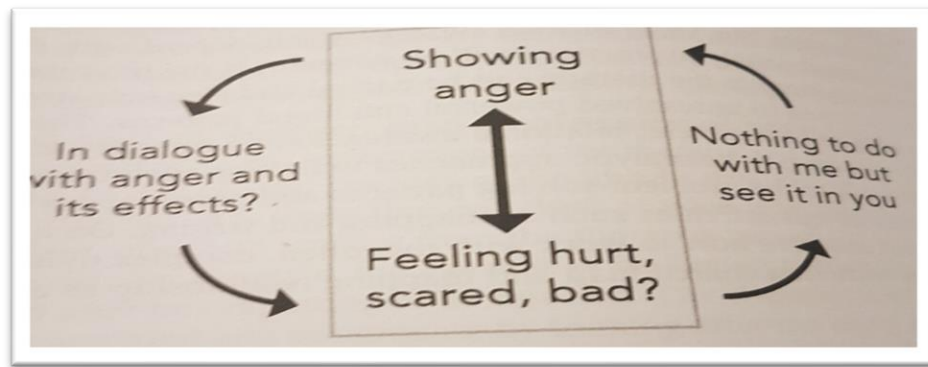


Figure 5 Reciprocal Roles (Potter, 2020)

Ainsworth divided children's attachment into overarching categories. Potter (2020) allows educators to look at moment to moment reflective engagement. Ainsworth's Theory of attachment has been criticised as being modelled on the western community. Cultural capital was not considered within this model (Vicedo, 2017). Palmer (2017) asks what educators do when they lose heart? they can become disconnected from the children and themselves.

2.7 Professional Identity:

Rogers, Dovigo, and Doan, (2020) argue neoliberal agendas are being supported within early years teacher training. Yet, with settings students are being ‘puer economicus’ meaning there is still a strong emphasis on numeracy, literacy, and documentation. This is correlated to parental views of what education is or should be. The emphasis is turning out children reading and writing to become an employable member of society in the future (OECD, 2021).

These notions are feeding into self-belief, and confidence of the individual as the students are being deskilled from their professional learning of holistic care (Rogers et al., 2020). Dalli (1993) extends this thinking in his belief that early years educators are seen as the ‘*Cinderella's*’ of the educational system. Implying they are told what and how to teach from multiple outside sources both consciously or unconsciously impacting how we feel about ourselves and our work.

Alsup (2008) refutes this hypothesis examined in a ‘*Borderlands Discourse*’ seeing continuous professional and personal development as an avenue for transformation. However, this method seeks to use critical reflection as a tool for the individuals’ thoughts and actions. Alsup (2008) states self-awareness is key and often hard decisions will have to be made in terms of pedagogical practices and ideologies in the best interests of the children.

Professional identity is never stagnant rather on a continuum of day to day lived experiences. Malony (2018) suggests what could be hindering our self-worth within academia is the fact we are a sector of women who love and care for children. She divides the two realms stating caring for young children and academia are worlds apart.

Brown (2019) striving for perfectionism is a heavy weight to carry on a person. It also shields people for vulnerability and connection. She asks us to ask ourselves the question what kind of leader you want to be (Brown, 2013).

2.8 Conclusion

The literature above seeks to highlight the contextual theory to show the idiosyncrasies that are human relationships. Following this the context of love and compassionate care within the narrative of education developed and openness to the possibility moving new terminology into our daily interactions.

The literature then leads you into a pedagogical approach of holistic care, trying to address the age-old argument of body/mind separation and a focus on quantitative trauma research. However, the importance linking the literature in relationships. We cannot educate the mind exclusively they work in tandem with each other.

Following this the literature drills down into educational relationships as a partnership. Viewing learning as another dance and tools an educator can seek out to verbalise their feelings within educational relationships Lastly the focus turns to a personal stance of professional identity and what it means for the educator lived experiences.

Chapter three defines the methodology underpinning her data collection, identifying tools to collect information. It goes on to consider ethics within the research and limitations are explained.

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

My methodological chapter seeks to give sound reasoning and justification for why I made the methodological decisions in this research project. To capture my methodological processes for the research aims and rationale a detailed evaluation of the research method and design is clearly stated below with the inclusion of research paradigms, research sample and ethical considerations within the research project. Data collection is considered in terms of all the participants. Qualitative data collection was chosen with the mindset of capturing rich, meaningful well-rounded documentation of relational engagement.

3.2 Social Paradigms:

A paradigm is lens through which we view the world (Mukherji & Albon 2018). Paradigms are grounded in different values and beliefs systems. Traditionally, educational research began seeking quantifiable facts, measuring, ticking boxes to educational goals (Cohen et al, 2018; O'Toole, 2020). The positivist approach sought to examine data at a statistical perspective seeking generalizability, reliability with the possibility of standardisations (Ernest, 1994). Moreover, a positivist approach can be viewed as more scientific. Yet, most positivist research can be contested regardless of its rigour through a different lens.

Lather (2006) argues there is danger in attempting to pigeonhole humans into an outcomes-based research lens, for example throughout this self-study action research project, I am contesting the deficit nature of the positivist paradigm utilized within the ACE's study (Felliti et al., 1998; Harris Burke, 2018) Social humans are complex

creatures living within contextual environments. The richness of human interactions has layered outcomes in all the characteristics positivist view can detached the full human from the research (Bronfenbrenner, Morris, 2005). For this reason, I am choosing a multiple paradigm approach using the interpretive, transformative and a critical theory paradigm.

We should be careful to note that the world never really conformed to the simple two-part division of this dialectical structure.... Reality always presents proliferating multiplicities.... Reality is not dialectical. (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 128).

Recently educational research is transforming by using multiple paradigms to express values and belief are being exercised (Cohen et al, 2018; Lather, 2006). My research embodied the complexities and messiness of human relationships in an interpretive context through qualitative research. The positivist approach to research does not acknowledge the richness of human beings' individualities. Human science is at a loss when the question of will, decision, reason or choice arises (Chomsky, 2012)

Encouraging educators to examine their own values and beliefs through multiple paradigms honours the uniqueness of their research (Latter, 2006; O'Toole 2020).

Whilst understanding self-study action research has a transformative element as you are seeking to challenge your values and beliefs to change yourself within your practice.

While many educators also seek to change themselves, they also have a sense there is a societal piece filtering out from their individual change (Sullivan et al, 2016,

Whitehead, 2015b). The use of multiple paradigms will not give you a set answer to your question (O'Toole, 2020). Equally the openness may even leave you with the possibilities of more significant questions to be answered. By incorporating a political

paradigm of critical theory recognising the power agendas of hegemony of top-down approaches (Brookfield, 2018).

3.2.1 Action Research:

Historically, social scientific research began as clinical research with an investigator researching other people and their work completely removing themselves from the research data (DCEDIY, 2016). As far back as 1953 Ausubel noted the challenges when utilising a ‘basic science’ approach in educational theory. He questioned its relevancy, believing it was too detached and indirect without including the self to affect educational change (Ausubel, 1953).

With significant advances and forward thinking in research the criteria began to change including the self in psychology, sociology, and educational theory. Lewin (1944) coined the term action research underpinning active participation, intentional teaching also trying to influence a democratic society (Whitehead, 1989; Brydon-Miller, 2003;). Husén (1988) believed that teaching is not a science but a form of art. Currently, research argues teaching is seen as both a science and an art. Koshy (2005) believes research is about the creation of new knowledge. Action research occurs in several different methods such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Participative Research (PR) which I will briefly address. Following this, I will focus on the method Living Theory/Self-Study Action Research that I have chosen to use as my research study. I am primarily seeking the improvement of my practice.

3.2.2 Research Methods:

Participative research can be employed at a local level to effect change within organisations. While this method is based in the values with the mindset of sustainability the most probable reason for utilising this method (Cook, 2012). It is very

much goal oriented and that of an outcome-based process for the community (Cook, 2012). Sohng (1995) believes participative research encourages critical reflection as a community of practice. The results can empower the community in which it is trying to shape. Whilst I am seeking transformational education it is not my goal.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is closer to my research choice of self-study action research as there is emphasis placed on the personal development of all the participants. Active participation is essential in the development of PAR (O'Toole, 2020). However, there can be a desire to change societal realities. Like self-study PAR relies heavily on reflective practice leading to a more creative group outcomes than PR (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; O'Connor, and Diggins, 2002).

I have chosen Self-Study Action Research (AR) since the goal of the research is to enhance my practice in the context of relationships with my colleagues, children, and families within our community. Like PAR and PR which are value-led, Self-study concentrates on the values and beliefs the researcher first and foremost. Sullivan et al (2019) tells us to hold onto the idea as it is your practice you are trying to change. Action research can become fixated on changing others or the world. Self is key in self-study. Living theory and self-study are similar in context. Whitehead (1989) developed his living theory by focusing on his interpretations of his lived experiences. He developed the term 'living contradiction' meaning do I do as I say I do (Whitehead, 1989). Self-study may transform you into a researcher that you never knew you were. Telling the authentic journeys of transformation (Glenn, . What I perceive as a flaw may undoubtedly spark of your greatest learning (Whitehead, 1989). Embrace the mess with critical reflection you will find the meaning. However, within the mess there is praxis informed decisions (Sullivan et al, 2018)

Action research asks to critique ‘why you do what you do?’. Action research by nature and sense is a transformative paradigm meaning action takes place to observe improvements in practice. Figure x is an action research cycle from McNiff and Whitehead (2006).

I choose to use their action research cycle as it affords the researcher time to stop first and observe. As educators we can get caught up in getting a plan together and implemented to collect data equating to a result-focused lens without getting a sense of the full picture in the classroom. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) emphasises the plan first and observe later. Action research is circular by nature, and you can in fact start at multiple points once the cycle is completed. Visually McNiff and Whitehead’s (2006) model is broken down to evaluate and modify your plan of action then you are back to observation at the beginning of the cycle. This empowers the educator not to rush, let it flow focusing on an opportunity-based research project. Listening is imperative to both the self (body and mind) and the participants. Have my values or belief altered? Did my practice influence others? How are the participants feeling both children and adults?

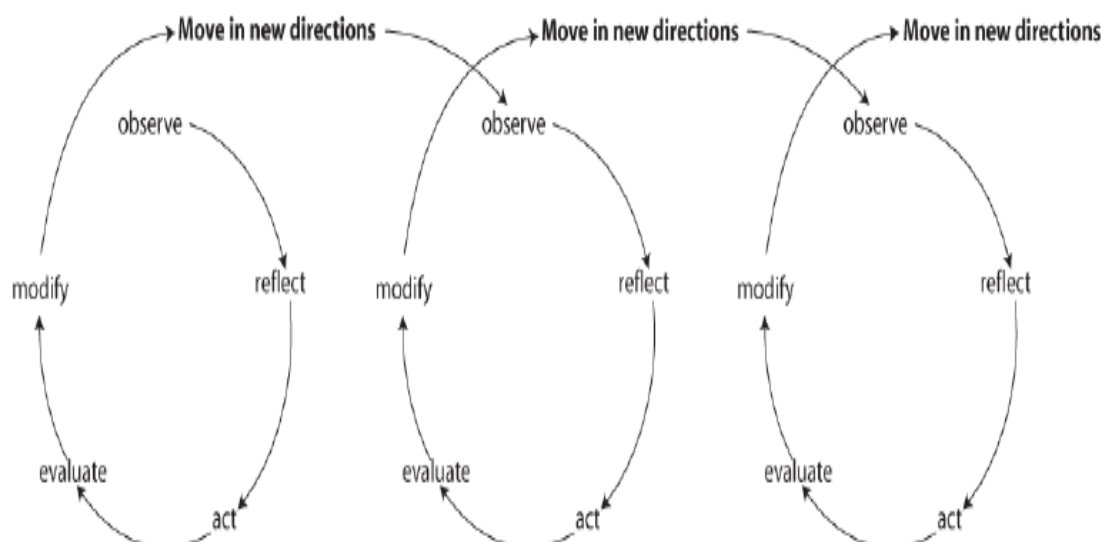


Figure 6 McNiff and Whitehead (2006)

3.3 Reflection:

Action research is centred in reflection. Reflection renders opportunities to concentrate on our values, beliefs, and assumptions (McDonagh et al, 2019). Very often reflection helps an individual/ individuals to make tacit values, beliefs, and assumptions more overt (Sullivan et al, 2016). Tacit knowledge is often difficult to put into words in other words experiential knowledge. However, it could also be explained as the subconscious mind. Within relational partnerships it is difficult to pinpoint (Venkitachalam, & Busch, 2012)

Reflection can be understood and interpreted in a plethora of ways. Reflection by name renders an art of reflection, reflective practice, reflective consultation, reflective practitioner, critical reflection. The name of reflection underpins expectations and contexts to which the situation arises. Models such as Korthagen (2004), Bortons (1970), Moon (1999b), Gibbs (1988), Brookfield (1995) support the researcher with a guided tool.

Firstly, Self-study/ Living Theory requires the enhancement of your own practice. The reflection models I used within the research project was Korthagen's (2004) model interwoven with Brookfield's lenses (1995) guided my research.

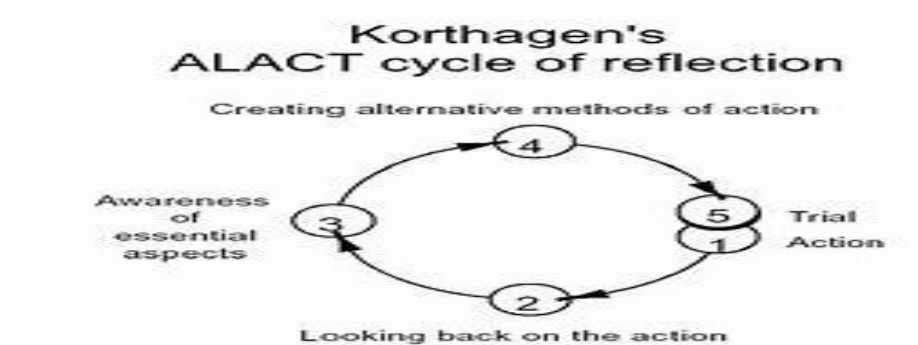


Figure 7 ALACT model (Based on Korthagen 1985/1988; Korthagen & Kessel 1999)

Onion model of Korthagen

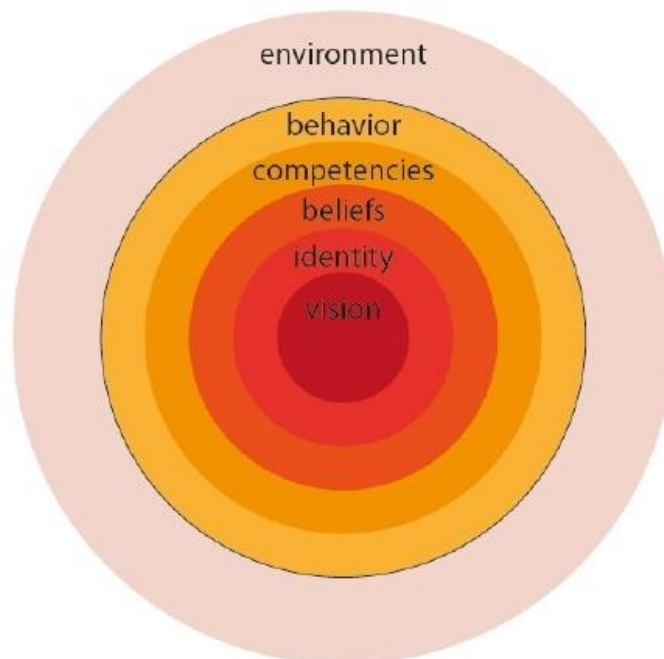


Figure 8 Korthagen's Onion Model (2004)

Korthagen's (2004) second onion model granted me the opportunity to go deep within myself as it is a nested set of questions for personal reflection. He envisions how one nest influences the next layer both in and out model, for example the environment affects behaviour which has a knock-on effect to your skills etc. like Bronfenbrenner's nested ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Korthagen (2004) started out asking the question ‘What makes a good teacher?’.

However, upon reflection he decided this question was too ambiguous as it is contextually driven in terms of competencies and skills. Korthagen’s model is relational in the context of engagement with others.

Korthagen (2004) has developed core competencies within this framework which very much link to my deeply held beliefs of trust, care, courage, creativity sensitivity, decisiveness, spontaneity, commitment, and flexibility. He states for years we have focussed on the problem rather than the strengths within the person. This is the basis of my practice today, a strengths-based approach.

Biesta (2007) relates to ‘³Bildung’ as reflection in a personal, self-transformative capacity. The researcher takes accountability for trying to harmonise the heart, mind, and the self. This can surface conflicting thoughts and ideas within the research project. My research went in search of aligning my mind with my heart more fully.

Knowledge encourages epistemological and ontological changes in our thinking; hence why reflection being placed at the centre of thinking and experience (Cushion, 2018). The creation of learning can be assumed to be the acquisition, construction, and re-configuration of knowledge structures. However, to assume learning is neutral and not embedded in culturally and socially loaded ideologies is learning apart from the authentic self (Cushion, 2018). Yet reflection helps a person to break down those dominant narratives or discourses that may need realigning within a person’s frame of thoughts. No matter how ethical we are our ‘unconscious biases’ and ‘living contradictions’ will appear when we are least aware of it.

³ Bildung: Bildung is the combination of the education and knowledge necessary to thrive in your society, and the moral and emotional maturity to both be a team player and have personal autonomy.

I see Brookfield lenses (2018) as an extension on Korthagen's (2004) model within the environment encompassing professional identity. I am making the link between Korthagen and Brookfield's model as helps it helps me to develop a critical stance within the environment both physically and relationally. Brookfield's (1995) lenses helped me to personally iron out some of the dominant narratives between my inner conflicts that arose between my head and heart. Assumption and habits are highlighted when I was working on autopilot not questioning 'Why I do what I do?' (Meizrow, 1997). Brookfield (1995) helped me to smoothly incorporate the voices of the educators, critical friends, and validation group to ensure blind spots are tackled from a professional lens, pedagogical lens also a political lens uncovering hidden power agendas and ⁴hegemony. Foucault (1980) problematizes reflection through a constructive lens clarifying reflection as a catalyst for transformation of social harmony. Whilst I understand this is about improving my practice, I can also see the bigger picture of the effect of my practice on my children, educators, and society (Whitehead, 1989)

Brookfield's Four Lenses:

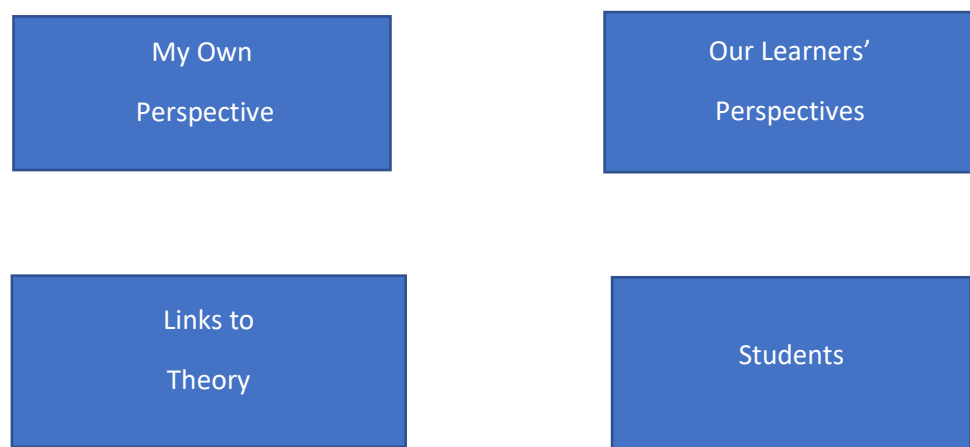


Figure 9 Brookfield's Lenses (2017)

⁴ Hegemony: is the act of coercion from a source of power of leadership, creating the idea that the best interests of weaker individuals are at the foundation of the source.

3.4 Values:

Whitehead (1989:14) invites you to reflect upon your practice by asking the question ‘How can I improve my practice?’. Korthagen notes we are most self-fulfilled when we are living closest to our values. Whitehead’s reflective question leads me to question my values ontologically and epistemologically in an axiological mindset. Our values and assumptions are ever evolving. Vygotsky (2009) emphasizes it is through others we become ourselves meaning our ecological theory influences our thoughts and proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2005).

Proximal processes are bi-directional meaning as much as other people are influencing our thoughts and behaviour as individuals, we must then examine our influences on society (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2005). From an ontological stance the importance of examining our own and the ripple effect of social awareness to impact humanity unconscious awareness could have positive and negative effects on our community. Social Justice has never been more important when educating children as our mental health difficulties are soaring. Expressing love, care and safety is influencing our children to be loving and caring (Bowlby, 1969; Potter 2020)

Epistemological values are defined by how a person constructs knowledge (Mc Donagh et al., 2019). Within education there can be still a dichotomy of knowledge in that love and care are not recognised rationally as knowledge (Hayes & Filipovic, 2018). Care not love or nurture was justified as meeting a child’s basic needs (Hayes, 2013). The heart brain is working in conjunction with the head brain to create knowledge and memory (Siegel, 2020). Learning is a whole-body experience (Holistic Care) (NCCA, 2009). Axiological influences effects of deep-seated relationships. Buber (1969) stresses from an ethical perspective the importance of communication listening

to what others have to say rather than at them to be heard. Awareness of power in relationships of education for example are children allowed to co-construct knowledge in the classroom (Apple, 2012,2013; NCCA, 2009).

Whitehead (2005) stresses the importance of embedded values being key in my learning and development of self. Whitehead's (1989) living contradiction highlights to me that sometimes within educational structures it may be an impossible task to live completely to the values we hold, but enquiry dialog may bring us closer to the practice we would like to achieve. However, I want to give my community agency both ontologically and epistemology that we can make the world a safer kinder place to be.

3.5 Data Collection

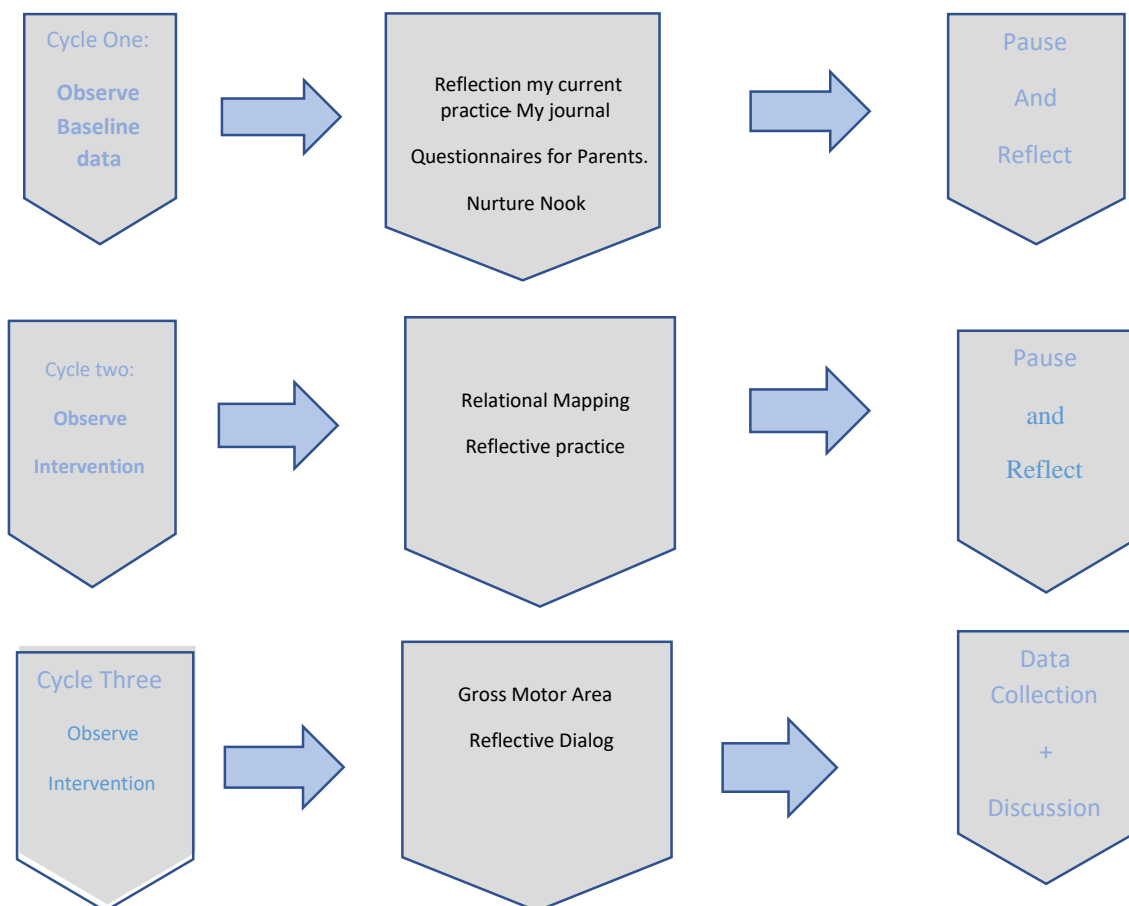


Figure 10 Data Cycles

3.5.1 Sampling:

My research is a small-scale self-study action research project. In total the research project includes twelve children and thirty-one adults, two critical friends, and a validation group. As part of the action research project to ensure rigour I called upon critical friends to help and analyse my research. Within my college we developed a support network of people researching similar topics to ourselves, seeking advice and support throughout the research process.

This research was completed in a community-based early years setting, it is deemed one of the ⁵DEIS communities in Ireland. My setting caters for approximately seventy children age ranging from six months to school age. All children are referred by the public health system. Ireland's public health care system is government funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE). It comprises community services and hospital care that is provided free of charge or at a reduced rate.

Currently we are using the High⁶/Scope curriculum framework whilst utilising the Ireland's National Curriculum Framework: Aistear (2006) and Ireland's National Quality Frameworks: Síolta (2006) for the care and education of our children (Epstein, 2014; NCCA, 2009; CECDE, 2006).

3.5.2 Research Participants:

I am beginning with my background history; I am Irish born female of catholic heritage. However, I spent much of my childhood in the United States of America moving back to Dublin at age eleven. My early years educational journey began in 2001 with a post

⁵ DEIS Delivering Equality of Opportunities in Schools: meaning preschools in this area receive additional governmental funding to give children equal prospects as their more privileged counterparts.

⁶ High/Scope: is curriculum model used in underprivileged preschools in America to ensure children had optimal outcomes for later on in life. The children attended high quality early years service for an average 2-3hrs a day. Perry preschool model showed with high quality interaction children long term outcomes were positively affected.

leaving certificate (PLC) Diploma in Childcare. Our service received additional funding in 2015 as a cohort we all retrained in High/Scope Curriculum. I wanted to delve into the theory of early years somewhat more this led me to apply for the early years teaching and learning degree in NUIM. Which has developed much further than I ever imagined becoming candidate of the M.Ed. in Education.

The self-study action research took place within my own classroom. The focus was to reflect upon and improve my practice. My current role is part of a team of four to support and foster my children's love for learning, using positive relationship building with not only the children but their families. Working alongside two full time colleagues one of whom works four out of five days and week, the missing day is then covered by an additional colleague from the room next door. All colleagues are Irish catholic heritage all having worked in the sector for ten years or more. Two of the three colleagues have completed their level five and six in Early Years Education and Montessori. My final colleague has completed her level six in Early Childhood Education and Care and has completed and a BA in English and History. All colleagues including myself have upskilled in continuous professional development (CPD) for example, Infant Mental Health training (IMH), Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience training (ACES).

There are twelve children in my classroom all Irish born five of whom are girls and seven are boys. Within the children's nuclear family ten of the children are living in their original family unit. All mothers are Irish born with two of the twelve children's fathers originating from outside Ireland- European and African heritage. All colleagues, children and guardians agreed to take part in the study.

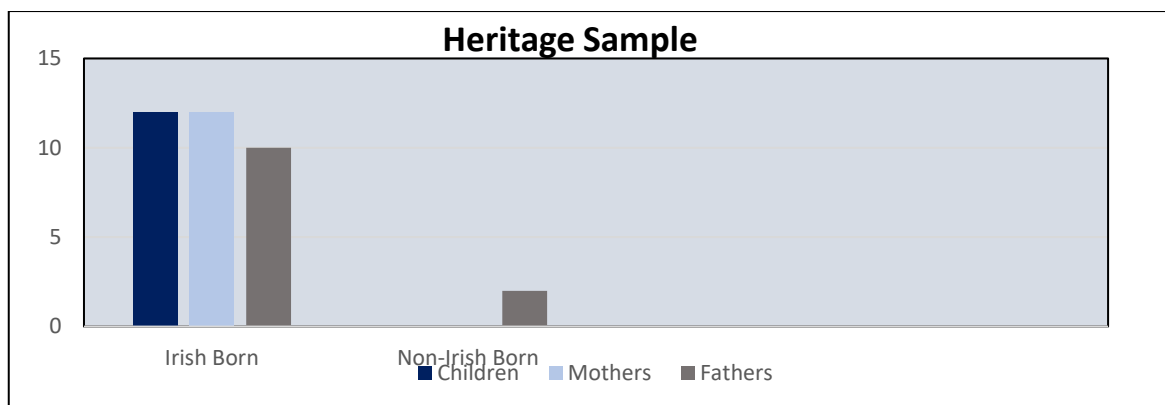


Figure 11 Parents Heritage

I have also chosen two additional critical friends one of whom is trained to BA (hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care also a work colleague who I have sought advice from throughout my studies. Her ability to think critically is remarkable if she does not agree with my stance, she is not afraid to give her opinion. Her life experiences hold a wealth of knowledge as there is a significant age gap between us. Moreover, she has also trained in level five and six in early years with the same CPD as my colleagues presented above.

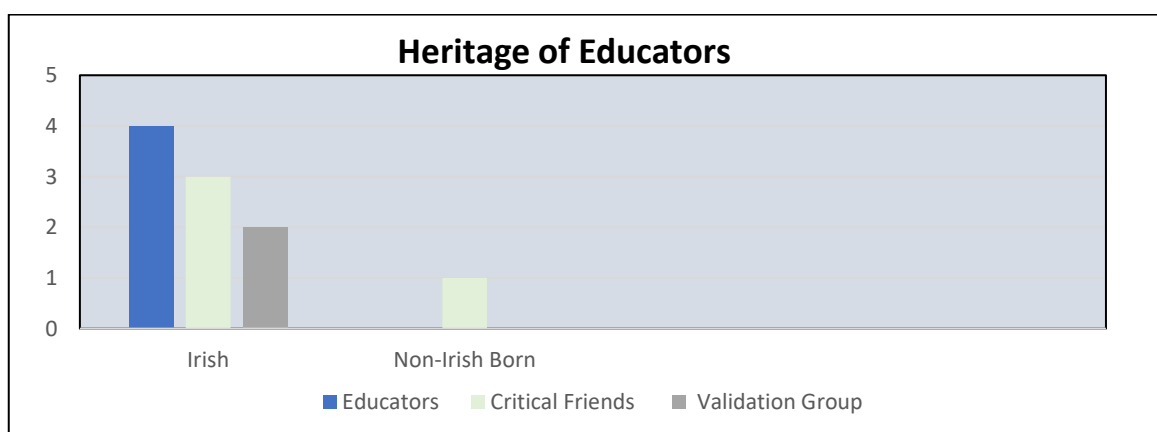


Figure 12 Educators Heritage

3.6 Data collection instruments:

3.6.1 Journaling:

Journaling often begins with critical conversations with other. Brookfield (2018) stresses the conversations with critical friends can help the researcher to shed light on deeply held assumptions. McNiff (2016) tells us recording your developed thoughts is crucial in term of the process of action research. Mukhherji and Albon (2010) stresses the importance of our dilemmas both personally and professionally. Tripp (1993) maintains critical incidents usually involve a dilemma. However, on closer inspection of these incidents it can help an educator to deal with these challenges more effectively the next time. Moon (2006) argues just because we are keeping a journal does not mean it will be reflective. When beginning to write reflectively, it can be difficult not just descriptive in the quality of writing. However, once you have something written it is easier to go back and move into a more critical space than where you first began. It is harder to remember details from memory alone.

My journal in terms of data was key to the development and the critique of my thoughts. I did not only use words in my journal, but also used drawing to express my inner unconscious thoughts and feelings. My journal assisted me to make meaning of my thoughts in my inner world within my personal and professional life. Drawing is considered to have had a history of assessing cognitive functioning (Veale, 2005). However, within this research my drawing was related to present and past emotions. Robert-Homes (2011) argues drawing can be a powerful means of exploring feelings and thoughts. Self-realization is the interaction of pedagogy coming to the process of professional and pedagogical ideology (Lustan, Struck, Luibyva, Kulish, and Vertuhina, 2020). Glenn (2018) notes as previously mentioned above to embrace the messiness of

action research. On reflection my journal helped me to unravel the messiness and clear the haze to be able to see more clearly. Cook (2009:85) believes the mess adds to the rigour.

3.6.2 Questionnaires,

At the time of baseline data collection our country was in the middle of a global pandemic, this had a knock-on effect in the research tools available to the researcher. To gather my baseline data, I wanted to hear all my parents' individual voices on the topic of love and compassion in their children's learning. Questionnaires encompassing open ended questions can be less intrusive to begin (Bergmann, 2011). I am aware the response to questionnaires can average at about half that are successfully completed (Creswell, 2007). However, using the method such as a focus group the likelihood of hearing all the voices is difficult to achieve and trusting your participants to give honest accounts in front of a group is challenging (Creswell, 2007). In terms of collecting authentic data the results may be similar (Creswell, 2007). From previous experience the authentic data surfaced after the focus group had concluded, in a smaller group of where colleagues felt safer to reveal honest opinions (Murphy, 2019).

3.6.3 Reflective Practice/ Mapping:

'It is teachers who in the end will change the world of the school by understanding it' Stenhouse (1981 p. 104). McLaughlin (2004) explains the key to understanding the world more is to reflect upon it. I have chosen reflective practice as a data tool; with three colleagues the group was small and intimate to be able express their strengths and struggles on the topic of love and compassionate care from an early year's perspective.

Mapping is a technique explored in relational practices of reflection. Patterns from which we engage with each other are reciprocal (Potter, 2021). Ryle developed the

dance of attuning, engaging, or responding. Yet in engagement someone else is responding, reacting, and coping. Relational mapping helps to reflect on roles in relationships. So rather than relying on generalised attachment categories mapping helps us evaluate individual interactions to note patterns of engagement, increasing rigour of relational exchanges (Ryle, 1975). Potters describes these interactions as a pole one end is action and opposite end is feeling they are reciprocal for example when we are loving to feeling loved (Potter, 2021).

3.6.4 Anecdotal Observations:

McNiff (2016) believes all research begins anecdotally. The children's, colleagues, and my own interactions were logged as documented evidence for our journey together. Anecdotal evidence was documented from the educator's lens, this may unconsciously lead to dominate narratives through the eyes of the educator. However, the educator was aware to ensure a non-judgemental stance. Explicitly writing the words the way they were expressed by the participant. Like our child observation records factual evidence is recorded (Epstein, 2014)

Mukherji and Albon (2018) state qualitative observations are usually taken in naturalistic environments. The classroom was set up by the staff. However, the children have agency over how the equipment is used and incorporate ideas such as new materials, making rules for our classroom, displaying their artwork. The children are encouraged to take ownership of their space (Clark and Moss, 2012; NCCA, 2006).

3.6.5 Children Art:

The children artwork and craft making was all open ended and inspired by the child. Permission was sought for the use of the children's documentation. Murkherji and Albon (2018) we should not underestimate children's capabilities in research citing they

can be unreliable in response to answers given. However, adults change their perspectives all the time and it is not questioned. Roberts-Homes (2011) explains children drawing can be a powerful for children to express feelings emotions and learn from them.

3.6.5 Photography:

Clark and Moss (2011) stress the importance of children being allowed to do their own documentation through the Mosaic approach. The photographs within the data collected were additional sources of information to give the full picture of the data collected. No photographs of children are presented within this research project. Photography may support an abstract concept such as love to become clear and concrete. Photographs can be interpreted differently by different people. However, it can bring authenticity to words on a page.

3.6.6 Validity and Rigour:

In the collection of data, the researcher needs to always ensure they are not in breach of the ethical guidelines (McDonagh et al, 2019). The primary motivation behind triangulation is to enhance validity and rigour of the piece of research. Triangulation is achieved using multiple sources of data to achieve your finding. Robson and McCartan (2016) tell us triangulation is a research tool to improve the value of the data and the accuracy of the finding. In my research study triangulation is achieved through the multiple sources I have used to collect data for example questionnaire, open end art, mapping. Foss and Ellefsen (2002) believes that triangulation provides the foundations for more rich and authentic data.

3.6.7 Ethical Considerations:

This section pursues to provide a detailed account of ethical issues/moral concerns arising in my research project. Ireland as it stands does not hold a single regulatory body for research ethics (DCEDIY, 2012). Outside of clinical trials who are governed by the aegis of the EU Directive on Clinical Trials (Department of Health and Children, 2004) ethical approval is usually sought within research ethics committees and universities (REC). Ethical approval can be an essential factor in keeping yourself, the participants, all stakeholders within the early years setting and university safe. Ethical considerations in research highlights the physical and psychological safety of all involved minimising the risk of harm (BERA,2014; HIQA,2016). National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2012) Educational research is sourced under the category of social sciences in research. Moreover, social science seeks to lead to democratic society (first five, 2019). Research undertaken in this area should be comprehensive of all the stakeholders' interest, values, methods, and outlooks without losing yourself own identity. Research in social science it should be done with the upmost integrity encompassing individualism, privacy, autonomy, and respect for diverse values within communities (DECDIY, 2014).

Relationships are the basis of a self-study action research project so like any other relationship trust is warranted between the researcher and the participants. Although, BERA (2018) asks the researcher when engaging in ethical relationships between the participants, the researcher should take responsibility for their actions throughout the project and possibility after the research is finished pending publications and disseminations. The participant's well-being is paramount regardless of the stages of development. Data collection when the researcher is most engaging with participants appears to be the emphasized phase of ensuring ethics. However, it needs to be

considered throughout. The main areas that arose from an ethical perspective within my research piece were as follows:

3.6.8 Consent:

To beginning my process of consent, I approached my manager with regards to allowing me to research my practice within my early years classroom. We discussed the process of the research project topic also if she would need to give me any extra support for example, time away from my current position. During data collection I may need support around accessing the main caregivers adding notes to my reflective journal. She agreed to the research going forward and we could discuss time for interactions at a later stage.

Next, I received consent from my colleagues who I am working with daily. Reassuring them I am studying myself and my practice and trying to improve. Yet, I required their consent as I am never alone in this journey of relationships. Their identities would remain anonymous with pseudonyms.

Following this, I reached out to the children's caregivers for support in developing my relationships of parenthood with parents. Many were curious what they would have to do. I explained it was my practice I was focusing on; however, I would need to collect data in the form of daily conversations for my reflective journal. I will ensure their names will not be used within the research project. Additional consent was attained for vignettes. Lastly, I consulted my critical friends and validation group for consent assuring them they would remain anonymous within the research project. See Appendix B for consent forms.

3.6.9 Assent:

The UNCRC (1989) states children should be involved in decisions that affect them.

They have a voice, and it should be taken seriously in an age-appropriate manner.

Assent is a person under the age of eighteen who cannot legally consent alone to their participation in research, assent is required. Yet, in terms of participation within the research project assent is not enough to allow the child to partake it must coincide with the guardian's consent. Each child in my classroom was given the opportunity to be part of the research project. I spoke to the children at their developmental level, informing them I was writing a book about our classroom and my work. I then questioned 'Did they want to be part of it?'. They all agreed to help me write my book. However, both written and verbal consent was also granted again by checking in with the child/children in moment-to-moment experiences. Individual vignettes within the data collection additional assent will be attained (Skånfors, 2009; NCCA, 2007). Children have the power and authority to refuse any work from being presented in this research project. The children may feel they are presenting as vulnerable to which the documentation will not be used.

All participants enlisted in the research project voluntarily and were told they could disengage with the research at any point with which all their data would be destroyed.

All participants were informed of who was going to be viewing the data collected naming my supervisor, the course co-ordinator and the external examiner.

3.6.10 Confidentiality/Anonymity:

Throughout the research I must consider the participants' inclination to overshare their story, perhaps leaving them feeling vulnerable in the future. Confidentiality and anonymity can allow participants to be honest without the fear of judgment or criticism

in the future. All participants, stakeholders and the early years setting will remain anonymous throughout the research. This is to protect the identities of all the research participants. If this data is used at a later stage where anonymity is not possible the participants will be afforded the opportunity to take part by regaining consent to allow identities to be distributed (BERA, 2018).

3.6.11 Vulnerability/Power:

As previous stated above my topic of love and compassion in relationships is highly emotive. Yet DCYA (2012) encourages researchers not to deem all sensitive topics high risk. If the proper protective procedures are in place the research will often be a hugely valuable piece of research and in fact be deemed low risk. However, the researcher must be aware of the protocol if a disclosure is made within the research project. Child protection concerns are mandated to be reported to my designated liaison person (Children's First, 2011)

Ireland data protection laws are covered by the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 (Government of Ireland, 1988 and 2003). It protects research-related activities such as the collection of evidence, storing, accessing, and disclosing of personal data held on electronic sources or handwritten systems by the researcher. The data is stored for ten years following the university's ethical guidelines.

All electronic data is stored is encrypted with a secure password. Handwritten notes-reflective journal of reflections, observation or discussions are stored in a locked file in the researcher's bedroom. Data collected from the children's guardians in the form of questionnaires and anecdotal notes was stored also be stored in the researcher's home.

Documentation taken from the children's learning journals is stored within the workplace as they belong to the children. The building is locked securely each evening

when we leave. A minimum number of photographic samples of children's work as evidence, permission is sought by the individual child and guardian also by the management team they are then emailed to me. The researcher downloads the documentation and uses a password-controlled folder to protect this documentation

3.7 Limitations:

The limitations to my study are relationships are difficult to measure. We may never see the outcomes of our relational practice within the timeframe of a child being in your care. Yet, we need advocate for process over outcomes lens (Hayes & Filipović, 2018).

Self-study action research is personalized to the self. This could lead to biased thinking or perception. However, the participants learning in the research is key with more time the findings may adapt but it was the research key learning within a certain time frame. The study is not exhaustive research of relationships and relational practice. However, innovative practice is displayed with a focus on further research for the future.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter encompasses the research design and rationale for my research including methods of validity, ethical considerations, and limitations for this study. Chapter four comprises the data collected including some analysis of research collected. The cycle interventions are highlighted with the research chapter.

Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter displays the data gathered from my three intervention cycles. Starting from the baseline data to the interventions, finally an evaluation of the intervention that took place. Below is a table summarised my work accomplished and briefly evaluated. The chapter then moves to a detailed evidence description of the data collected within each cycle anecdotal with testimonies from the children, parents, and colleagues.

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Baseline Data: Reflective Journal. Reflective drawing. Conversation with manager/critical friend. Questionnaire from parents. Most of the participants were comfortable with the new terminology 'Love'. They valued holistic approach to early childhood education. It was identified post lock down children were struggling with self-	Baseline Data: Evaluation of intervention 1. Staff and I still needed support and self-care.	Baseline data: Evaluation of cycle 2 Successful relational mapping sessions but there was still a need to support the children's big physical movements safely and appropriately and support transitions from the garden to the classroom.

regulation of emotion, and behaviour was very challenging for all involved. Colleagues and I were approaching burnout.		
Intervention 1 Nurture Nook was created to provide opportunities for co-regulation for children, mindful focus on love and compassionate care in my own practice.	Intervention 2 Individual and Group Reflective practice developed. Introduced and facilitated for myself and my colleagues relational mapping.	Intervention 3 Indoor mat area created to provide space and opportunity for children to engage in physical movements and allow appropriate risk
Evaluation 1 My reflective journal with Korthagen model, photographic evidence, informal interviews with colleagues	Evaluation 2 Informal interviews. Reflective journal-check in with manager.	Evaluation 3 Observation. informal interviews with children. Reflective journal.
Findings: The nurture nook was successful for children provided opportunities to embed love and care into themselves building	Findings: The reflective sessions were so successful that a new role has been to created for the larger staff team. Leading a common	Findings: This gave children the physical movement their bodies needed, allowed risk within the classroom.

<p>empathy. The word love was being expressed by the children. However, staff were still struggling with all the big feelings and emotions. I was feeling the pressure of holding the professional love for the classroom. I was holding all the babies.</p>	<p>language for discussing relational issues. Staff had a better understanding of children's behaviour and their role in the relational dynamic through the idea of 'Good Enough'. Staff agreed the Nurture Nook was very successful in meeting the children's emotional and psychological needs. Transitions from the garden arose as a significant stress. Meeting the children needs for big movements and sense of risk was achieved in the garden.</p>	<p>Built friendships and socio-dramatic play. Transitions were better aided. Emotional regulation and behaviour were noted. Listening to the child's voice embedded the holistic care within our classroom- seeing the whole child.</p>
--	---	---

Figure 13 Data Collection Review

Our introductory block week really started the unpacking of my unconscious values-based thought processes. Korthagen (2003) and Palmer (1998) believe we are happiest when we are closest to our values. At the beginning of our research journey, a task was assigned to write about our values. I headed my piece as 'Trauma Informed Practice'.

Yet, when my lecturer unpacked it, the feedback stung knowing how much I wanted to help vulnerable children.

This sounds as though it is going to be a really worthwhile piece of research. I'm not sure about the 'trauma sensitive' aspect of it. You have not referred to it much throughout your proposal. Are you more interested in living your value of care as you develop a more holistic practice, I wonder? Think about it a little more. Well done on sharing some interesting ideas! Bernie, Caitriona and Máirín. (Glenn, 31-9-2020)

On reflection she was right, she hovered over my writing, viewing it as whole picture rather than separate identities (Potter, 2021). She located a positive 'Living Contradiction' that I was not aware I was embodying. Using meta-reflection my Living Contradiction could disrupt thinking intertwined in the ACE's seminal study with a more positive approach. 'The importance of relational practice within my classroom'. I viewed relationships and holistic care as separate identities (Whitehead, 1989).

Listening to Dr Elizabeth lecture on love I knew I had found my topic. She was genuine treating all her students from pre-schoolers to master's level with unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1973; Campbell; 2018). I understood the significance of 'One Kind Adult' is hugely influential for a child to thrive (Bronfenbrenner, 2006; Pierson, 2013). However, embodiment of the meaning love, took more reflection. My heart and gut knew but my head needed time (Murphy- Reflective Journal 1-12-2020). Brown (2017) suggests we move our learning from our head to our hearts through our hands. I would tweak this philosophy, our heart is where the learning is felt, and moved to our brain through our experiences (Murphy-Reflective Journal, 4-7-2021). Personally, anger which is usually viewed as a negative emotion was the driving force for my passion.

This picture below started the journey between my head and my heart. It will not make sense to anybody, it does not make sense to me (Murphy, Reflective Journal, 30-11-2020). Yet the clarity I got; I have never had that before (Mc Loughlin, 2020). I needed to acknowledge self-love in my journey (Campbell, 2018). I had more self-love than I thought to go through what I did and continue to strive.

Vulnerability is the core of shame and fear and our struggle for worthiness, but it appears that it's also the birthplace of joy of creativity, of love and belonging (Brown, 2013 p.)

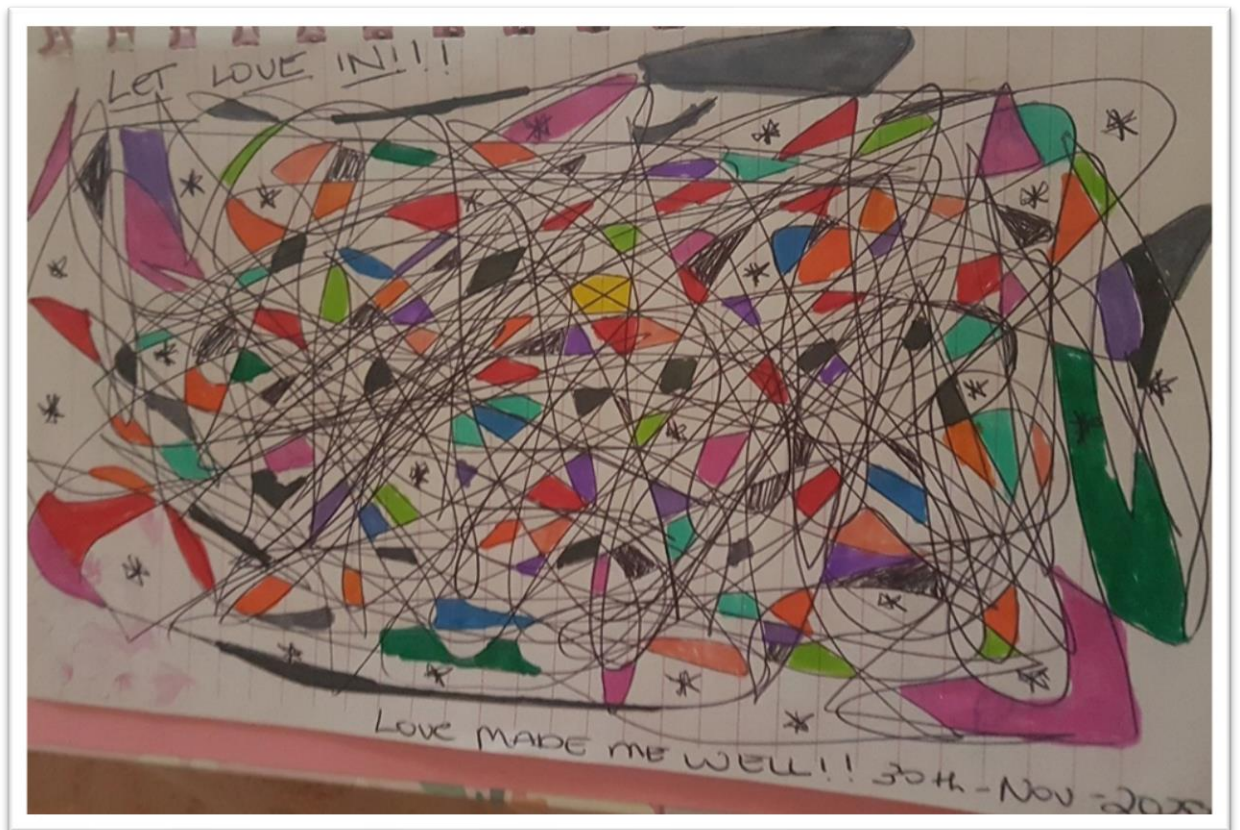


Figure 14 Reflective Art Piece (Murphy, 2020) (30-11- 2020)

Love made me well! Is written underneath. Brown stresses the importance of vulnerability. Mc Loughlin (2020) echoed her thoughts for our research project. She invited the class to sit with uncomfortable emotions. Wondering where have you felt

that emotion before? Drawing this picture gave me an ah ha moment (Winfrey, 2021). I realised how I had healed myself. As much as I am seeking a positive outlook for outcomes of childhood trauma there is much that can be learned about the overarching trauma informed research model when viewed through a relational lens of love and compassionate care.

4.2 What have I to find out?

Once I had spoken to management and colleagues about my research intervention, seeking permission to use the word love when educating the children. The literature to support ‘professional love’ in the early years classroom discusses the importance of linking with the main carers of the children to identify issues with the terminology (Page, 2017). Ethically, I also linked in with parents to find out how they would feel using new vocabulary of love. Out of a possible ten questionnaires five were returned. (See Appendix C for all questionnaires (14-1-2021).

Do you believe this statement is true: 'As a parent you are your child's first teacher?'

Yes



No



If yes can you tell me why you feel this way?

As a child's parent we teach them from day 1.
From holding a bottle to even teaching them good
Sleep patterns. I believe everyone in a child's life is
there teacher - from home to the environment.
If no can you tell me why you feel this way? "Nature VS Nurture"

Do you believe education has changed since you went to school?

yes, Schools have recognised ^{more} that all children
have different needs, & different rates of learning.
I can't ever remember SMT's in my school as a
child.

What does the word love mean to you?

Love has many different meanings in my eyes. I love
when it rains! That doesn't mean I stand in the rain
for a long period of time. I love my kids dearly
& for them I would do anything. Love is compassion,
Kindness, happiness, empathy. Love to me also means to
show joy & give joy to others, Love is also an
expression through hugging, kissing, cuddling & even
doing something as small as making dinner &

How does it make you feel to think your child's /children's teacher loves your child?

It makes me feel Safe, Secure and Content knowing that they are loved as much as in school & at home.

Do you believe us as teachers care for you as well as your child/children?

yes most definitely. Updates are giving on a regular basis. communication is key & I think all teachers have been great.

What do you hope your child achieves by the end of this year?

I hope she is prepared as much as she can be for primary school. I hope she makes lots of friends and I hope she can socialise a bit easier compared to the start of the year.

Is there anything you have not told me about your child that you would like me to know?

After easter holidays, I think emma may become a bit withdrawn, I don't know! She loves her daddy & unfortunately our family home has been split. I'd like you to know that she may need more emotional support from everyone involved in her life.. ♥

Any other comments?

Thank you for all you do.

Figure 15 Parental Questionnaires

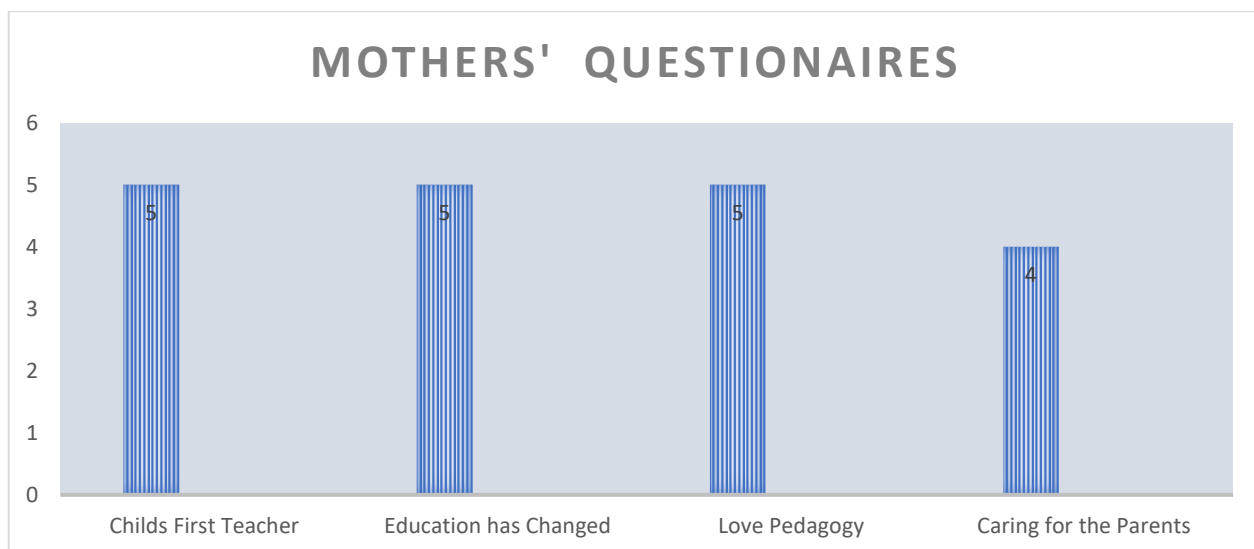


Figure 16 Parents Data Collection

The table above supports the data collected in the questionnaires given to the parents.

Analysis of the data mirrored the literature and our National Curriculum and Quality Frameworks in terms of their role as the mothers also the child's first teacher, expressed differently but meaning the same thing (NCCA, 2009; CECDE 2006).

Parent K: We teach our children how to walk, talk, our values and beliefs.

Parent S: I feel this way as a mother I am my child's first impression of life.

All the mothers' believed education has changed in some way since they went to school. Their responses echoed the literature of the child's voice (UNCRC, 1989; NCCA, 2009). The accessibility of more information due to the internet. Also, the multiple languages children use as communication (Malaguzzi, 2011).

Parent E Yes, schools have recognised more that all children have different needs, different ways of learning. I can't ever remember SNA's in my school as a child.

Parent K: Yes, education has improved children are heard more now

Parent S: *Yes, it has complete changed. As internet has opened up every persons reach of information*

The mothers had very innovative thoughts on the introduction of love into our classroom. The word ‘safe’ was replicated in half the questionnaires relating to their child being loved by their teacher.

Parent E: *It makes me feel safe, secure, and content known that they are loved as much as school and at home*

Parent C: *Very happy at least I know my child is safe*

Parent S: *It makes me feel safe and lucky. I know Lydia loves my child and he loves her too. Its an amazing feeling to know I’m dropping him off every day to people who love and truly want the best for me child.*

Lastly, most mothers’ believed we care for them as much as the child.

Parent K: *Yes, my daughter’s teachers are very kind and understanding. I feel I can confide my worries about my girls to them*

Parent S: *Yes, I feel like my teachers really care and listen to the parents. The communication and help they have offered me during my two children’s time in the creche has been so caring and generous. I feel so happy both my kids got to experience an amazing start to the school/education system.*

Parent C: *Sometimes but not necessarily as we wouldn’t have the bond the way our kids would.*

To conclude these results felt like my values were triangulating with our parents’ values of love in education also NCCA (2009) principles for the child. I was surprised to see so many parents linked love and safety together. These findings correlate with the

neuroscience of the developing brain (Siegel, 2020; Porges 2017; Mate, 2003). The parents welcomed love within our curriculum.

4.3 What did I do?

4.3.1 Cycle One

Reflecting on my reflective journal and triangulating sources with the parents' perspectives I began to research interventions to encompass my values. Teasing out the tensions I felt with my values of Trauma Informed Care (TIC) and placing myself within a pedagogy of love and care. I enlisted support from a member of my validation group. She suggested '*maybe create a Nurture Nook*' (Murphy-Reflective Journal, 15-9-2020). Love and caring in education views the whole child being actively embodied through relationships. TIC echoes love and care learning through a rights-based lens (Nicholson et al, 2019; UNCRC,1898). Moreover, I could see and feel the tension of my values embedded in the space to support children without the deficit connotations. This space allows all children to explore and just be (Murphy-Reflective Journal, 20-10-2020). Below is evidence to how our space began and what we created



Figure 17 Before Intervention (15-1-2021)

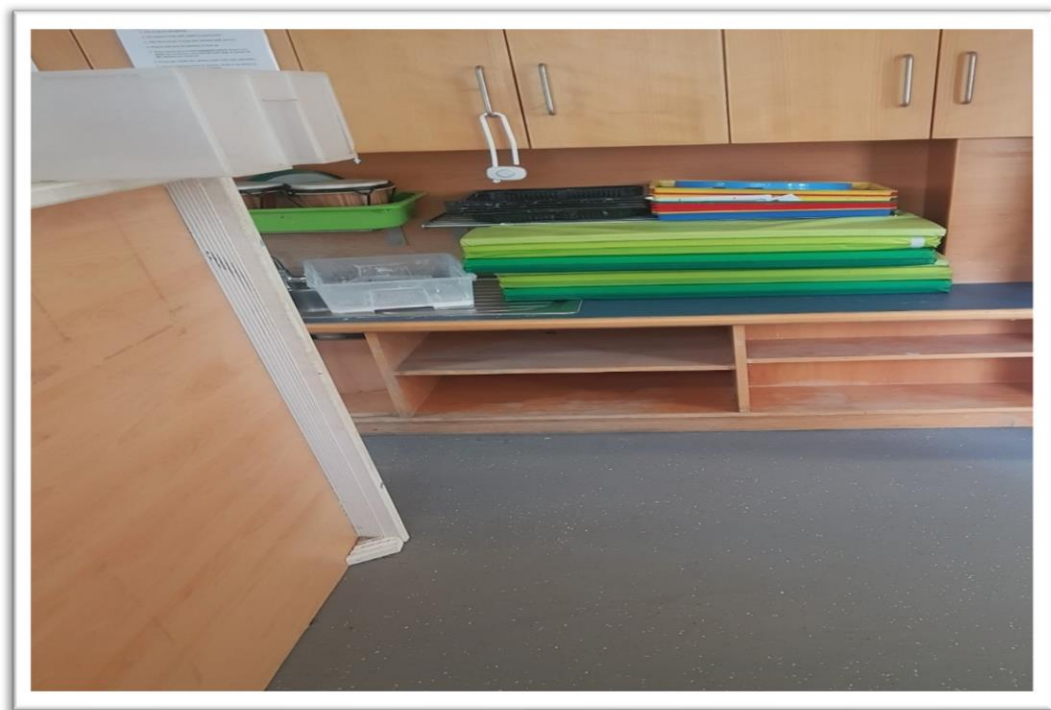


Figure 18 Before Intervention (15-1-2021)

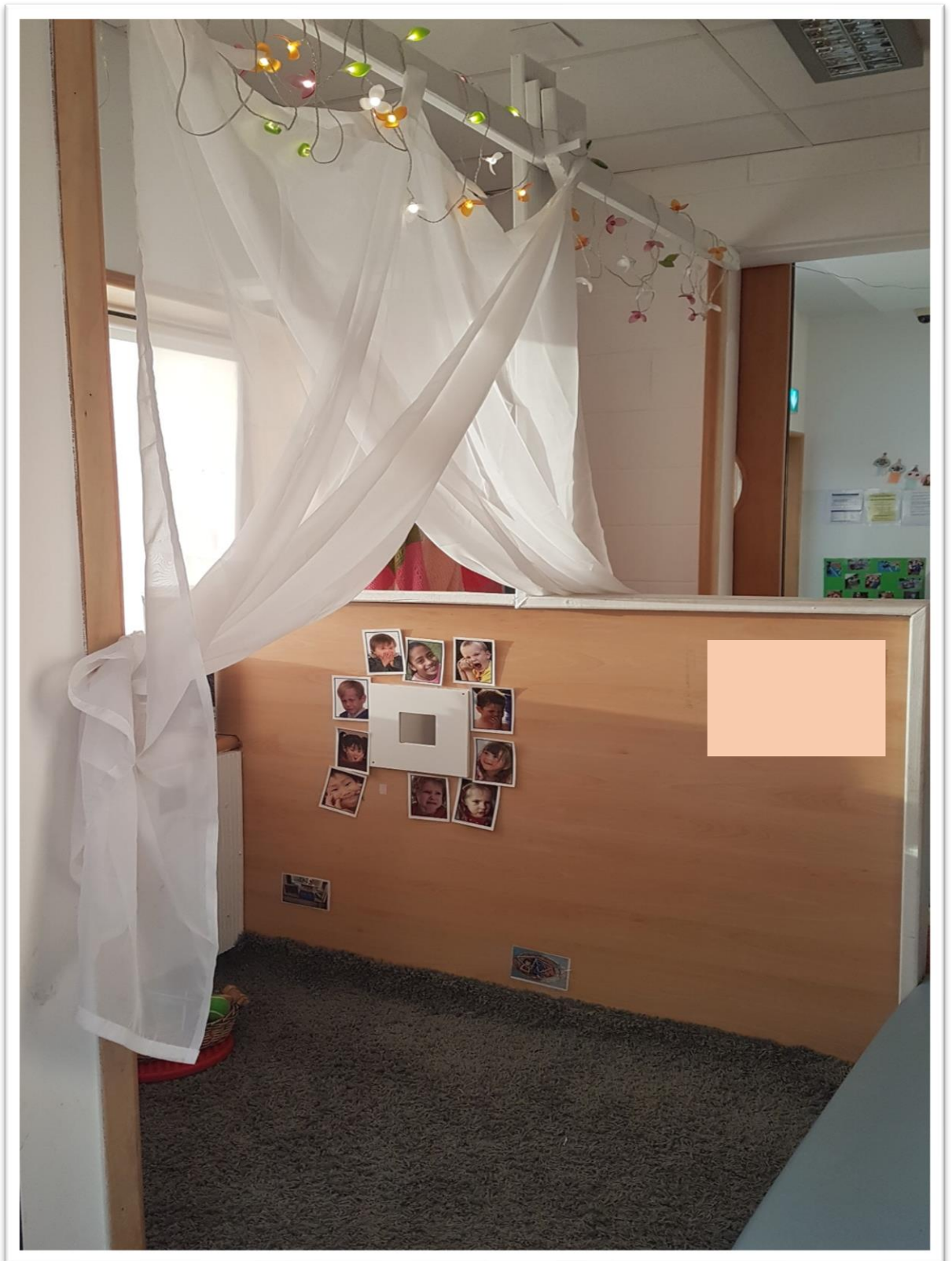


Figure 19 Remodelled Space (25-1-2020)



Figure 20 Classroom Rules (March)

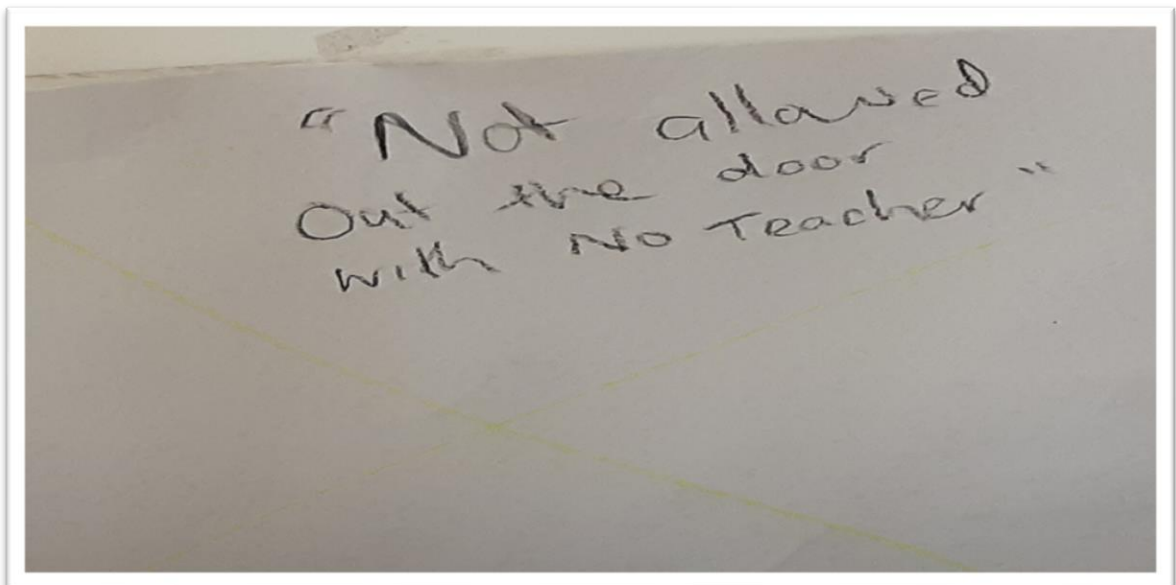


Figure 21 Classroom Rules

Rules for the children to remember to keep everyone safe. Written and added to by the children using then observation paper we use for them (March, 2021).

A nurture nook is warm, comforting space children can come to play and just be. It can also be used as a space to support children's developing relationships, building emotional intelligence, and enhance problem-solving skills (Delahooke, 2019). We added curtains and soft lights emphasising more homely feeling, a mat was put for the children to be comfortable sitting on the floor and a couch for the children building a home from home approach. Soundscapes and sensory music are regularly played softly for the children encouraging a calming environment. Weighted blankets and ear defenders were introduced later for children needing co-regulation. Baby cream is also stored in the press for children wanting a massage. The mirror is to give the children opportunity to explore their different emotions. The 'Nurture Nook' became a place for lots of abstract conversations such as love, death, spirituality, and a private space for children to express personal feelings, values, beliefs with each other and safe adults.

This intervention has opened my children up to deeper levels of analysis of their own thoughts and other people's thoughts/emotions (Delahooke, 2019). Examples of this follow,

I was reading a story of 'Pinocchio' the fairy had told Pinocchio his nose was growing because he told lies about going to school. At this point a C stopped me '*Lydia, Pinocchio wasn't telling lies' 'He couldn't go to school because new people are scary'*'. Example of children's synthesis (3-15-2021).

World book day, I read the story of the three little pigs. I could see by the children's levels of involvement there was lots of emotions being explored. From the photograph that was taken H is wrapped around another C for support, C was hiding behind a turnip

from the home area. After the story was finished, I wondered ‘*Why was the wolf so Angry*’ K replied, ‘*I could be his friend*’. I was amazed at K’s reflective skills. He too struggles with co-regulation. this conversation led onto exploring feelings of Anger covering up ‘Loneliness’. Z expressed ‘*We could make him dinner*’. I replied, ‘*You think the wolf is hungry, that’s why he is angry*’. We then explored Anger covering up ‘Hunger’. It became clear to me the lasting influences story time would have on the children (3-4-2021)

Most of the children participated in this activity and deeply reflected on the emotions of the wolf. If they could bring the conclusions of this story out into their homes, we are at a place of transformational education by viewing anger from a place of empathy rather than blame or shame. Brookfield Lenses (2017) granted me to opportunity really explore the emotions from the child’s perspective. I concluded the effects story time could have had on transformational education. This introduced me to a term ‘Radical Love’ this love and compassionate care is felt for humankind including animals which I have learned need to be underpinned by this term.

The children’s level of synthesis would not be made by most adults. Yet, there are a four-year-old child able to analyse why he might have told a lie or is angry. Children are not egocentric as once believed (Piaget, 1954). Children can think in counterfactual reasoning, meaning they can put themselves into situations they are not physically in (Apperly, 2011). They were looking at that situation through a loving and compassionate lens. Children’s level of thought is much deeper to the years prior. I do not believe it was showing them emotion cards it was labelling hard and difficult emotions in the moment as well as positive emotions. We as team were all open to all different types of conversation.

Korthagen's reflective model invited me to look back on my implemented action within my classroom. Whilst applying Korthagen model I merged Brookfield's Lenses Theory at the reflective stages to adopt an all-encompassing evaluation examining the impact of the additional nurturing space (Brookfield, 2018). Below portrays children's collective abstract thoughts on love. Expressing love in a hundred ways



Figure 22 Look teacher a heart means love (24-3-2021)



L on the back for my
initial

Figure 23 What does a rainbow mean? E replies Love (31-2-2021)

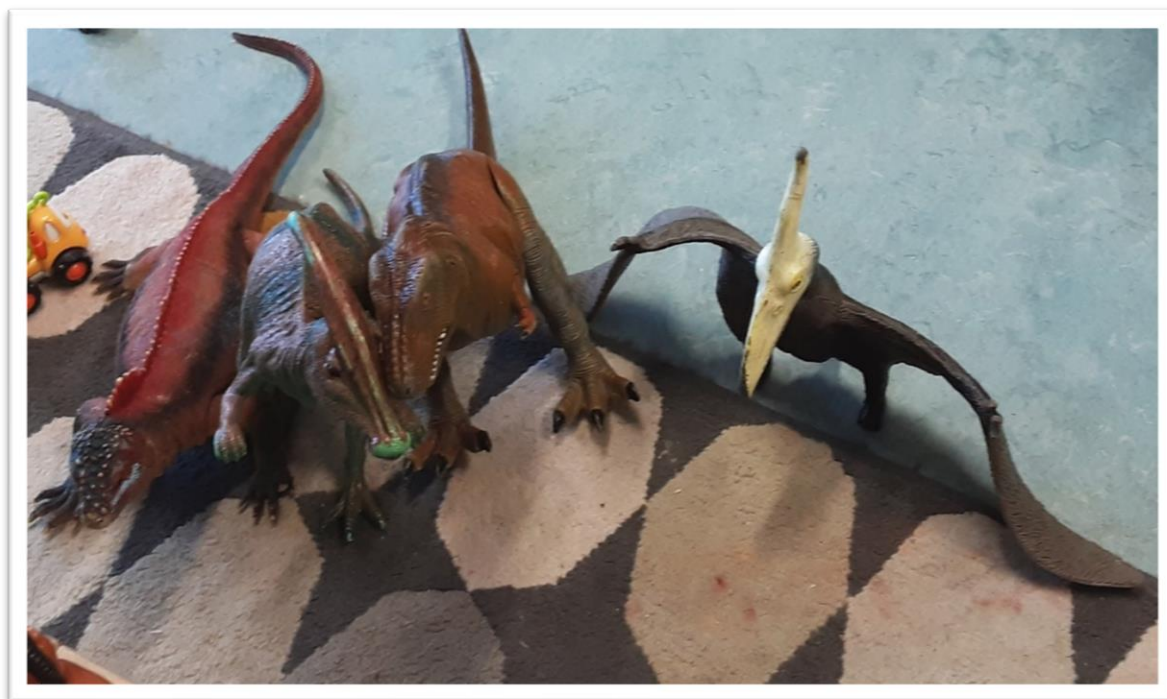


Figure 24 Dinosaur (2-2-2021)

C is keeping his teachers in mind. He expressed these were his teachers (2-2-2021)

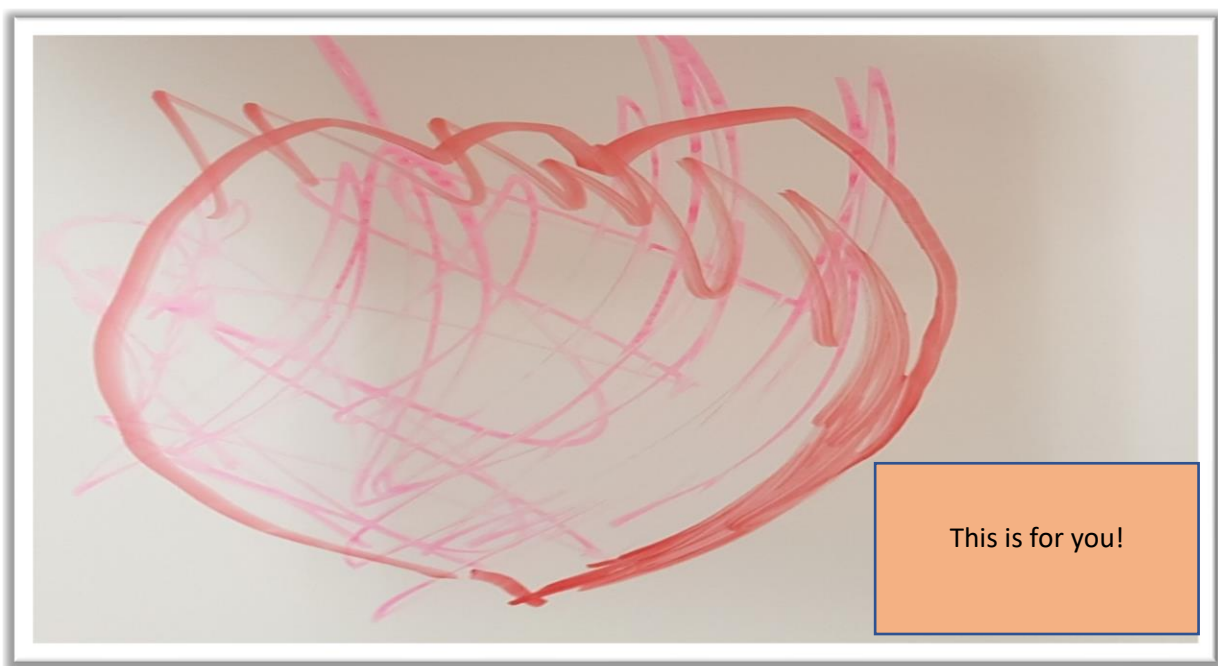


Figure 25 Valentines (22-2-2021)

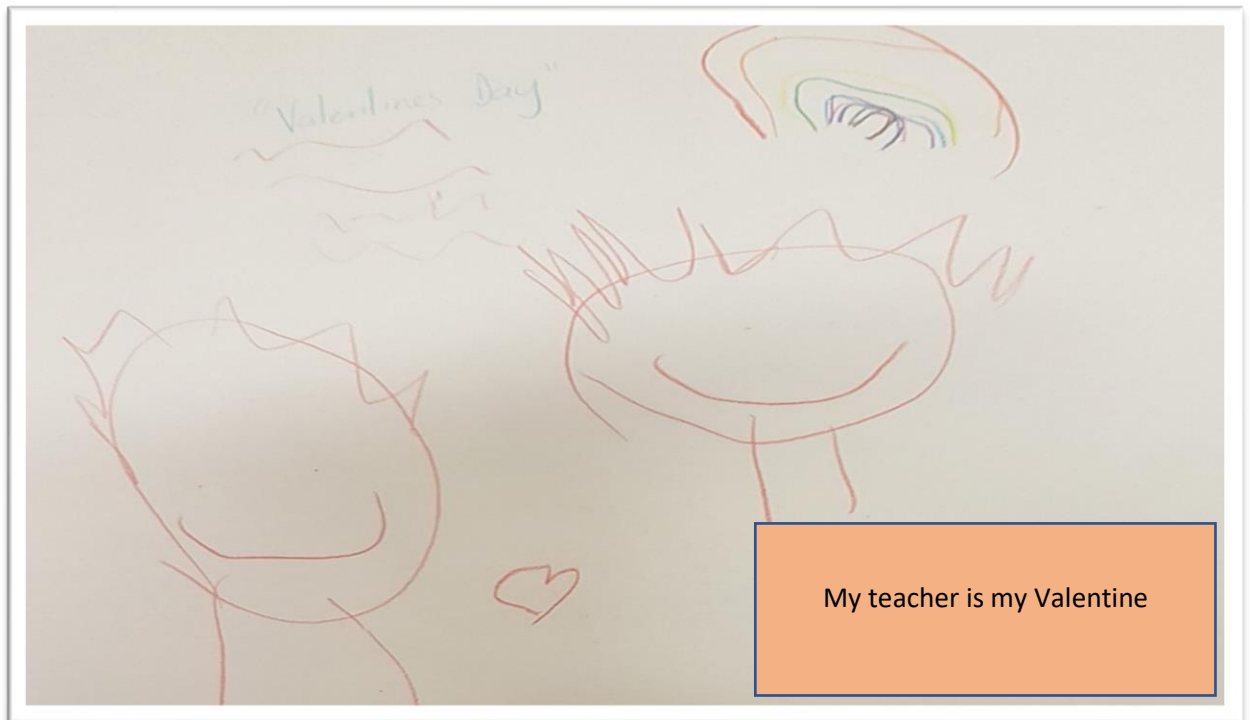


Figure 26 Valentine's Day (14-2-2021)



Figure 27 Hand in Hand (14-2-2020)



Figure 28 K Artwork (9-3-2021)

This is my best friend K. K spent over an hour creating this art piece for his friend K.



Figure 29 Our Classroom Symbol

I wanna draw a rocket for our room.



Figure 30 Care Routines

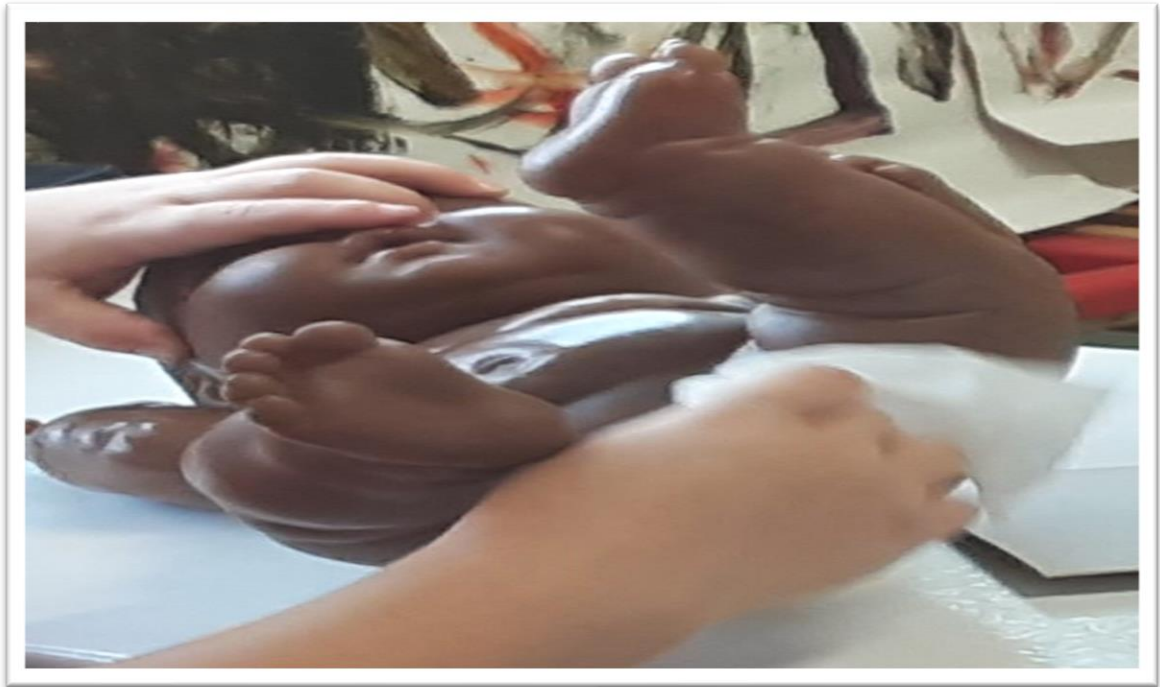


Figure 31 Care Routines

To inspire the children to care for others we encouraged the wildlife to enter our busy suburban setting. The children grew in confidence, empathy. Children suggested cutting up their left-over fruit and reminding me we must feed the birds. H took on the leadership role to urge the birds into the setting, reminding all the children *'stand back, so we don't scare them, they'll come in'* H.



Figure 32 Birds (6-4-2021)



Figure 33 Birds (6-4-2021)



Figure 34 Birds (6-4-2021)

The nurture nook was used as a space for privacy and co-regulation. K came over and expressed '*I need to talk to me in private*'. He took me over to the nurture nook and close the door and said, '*I need to be changed*' (5-3- 2021).

D needed a lot of support with co-regulation I used this space on numerous occasions to support his arrival. He would use the area and weighted blanket to regulate his body and mind into the classroom (15-3-2021)

I explained to D what might be happening in his brain when he gets big feelings. '*There is a little warrior in you brain and when you get scared sometimes, he wants to fight and sometimes he wants to freeze to protect us.*' D replied, '*That happens to me*'. '*What do think we could do calm down that warrior?*' D began deep breathing. (23-4-2021)

K was struggling with big emotions he headed for the nurture nook and tried to shut me out. I took I deep breath and went in '*You're really frustrated, you couldn't have that*'. '*Yeah, he screamed*'. '*I'm here, your safe*' I let him get all the emotions out. As he was calming, I spotted a bird outside the window. I told him he was there watching over us and everything was going to be ok. We when outside and spotted a special feather the bird had left us. We explored angels being invisible watching over us (13-4-2021)

Covid-19 has impacted all our lives including our children. My research did not escape the emotional / psychological Covid-19 impacts. Children's representation of

coronavirus

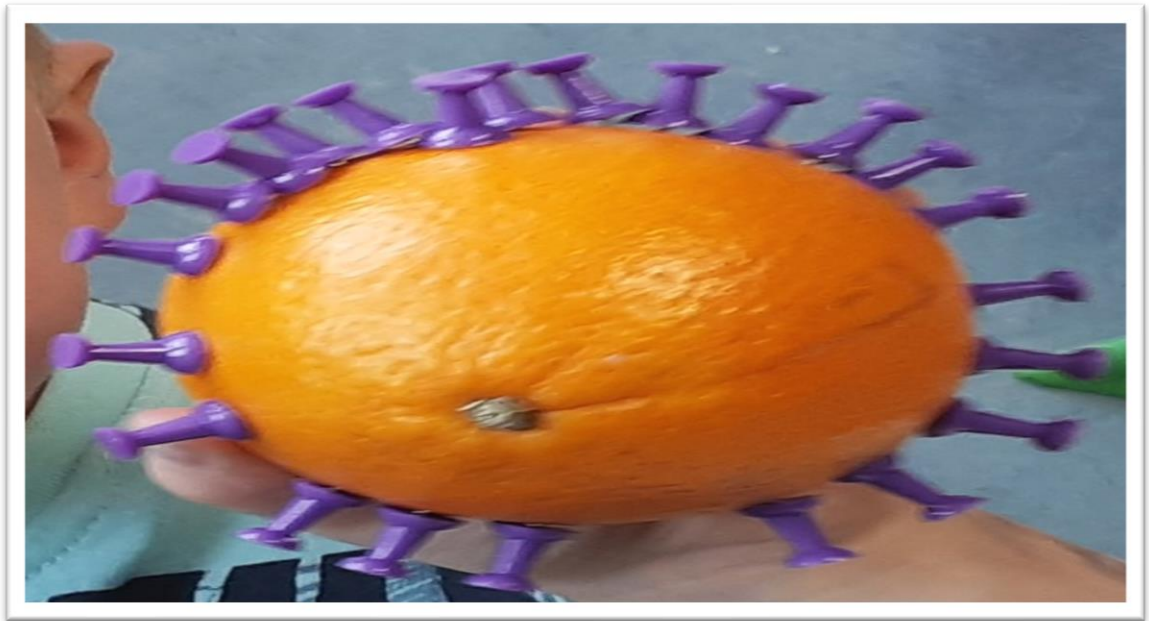


Figure 35 Coronavirus (3-3-2021)

Lydia, look its coronavirus

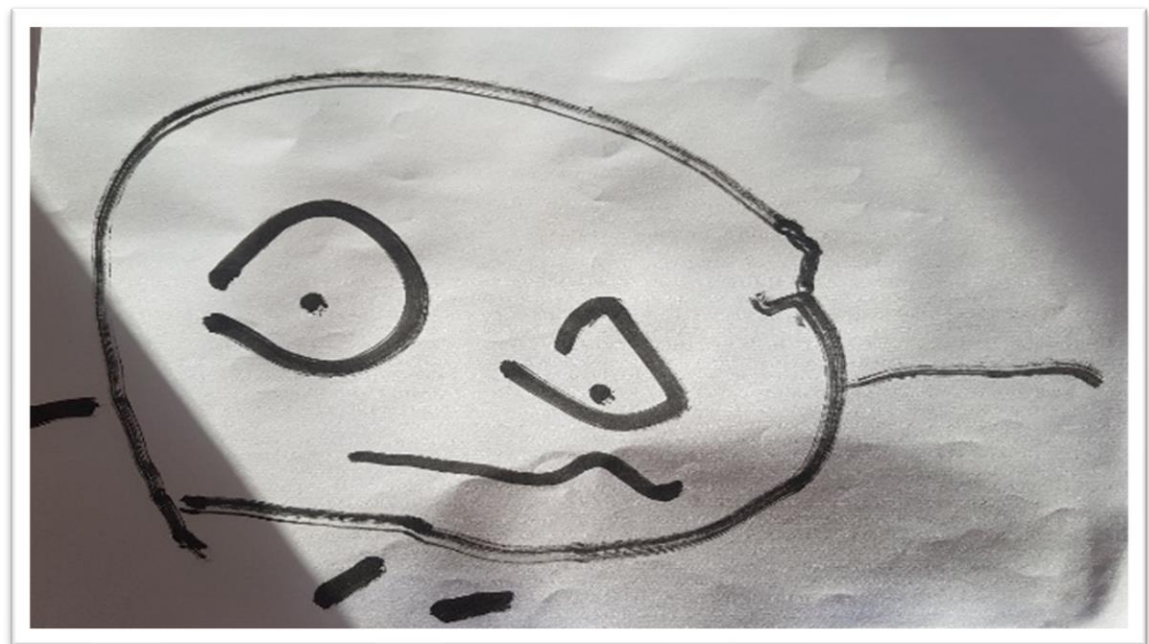


Figure 36 Coronavirus (10-3-2021)

K tell me about your picture. 'It's Coronavirus'



Figure 37 Lockdown

K you're in lock down and you're not gettin out! E replied 'Aww, can we use the phone?' K says 'No' E replies 'I hate lockdown'

I expressed my relationships thoughts to my supervisor. D expressed '*School is open again, then its closed again, then its open again.*' I said it was having significant impact on the relationship building in the classroom. D sentence triangulated my feelings of the relationships. In January and February 2021 Covid peaked, Government guidelines suggested if it was not necessary, we were to work from home. The number fell and we were asked to work week on week off. During this time, the children were allocated to different key workers. However, in March 2021 we resumed with the original children we had. Many of our children had not been in school since the previous December (18-12-2020). I was finding the relationships much harder to form. Secure relationships need consistency to development. The children with no prior notice were just told they

could not come back to school (O'Toole & Hayes, 2020; O'Kane, 2021; Siegal & Bryson 2020).

Furthermore, children were pushing boundaries with both physical and psychological aggression. *I am working in early years twenty years and have never experienced these levels of anger and aggression. Many times, I felt out of my depth dealing with behaviour.*

I sought advice from critical friends and my supervisor. I expressed to my supervisor '*I wish I did not know as much about relationships as I do. As I am always second guessing myself. Am I doing the right thing?*'. Below is the vignette I conveyed to my supervisor. Our routine is formatted in picture format on the wall. I watched C take interest in the photos. He then expressed '*Lydia carrying D, Bad Lydia, Bad Lydia*'. I was devastated, I expressed to my supervisor '*D needed much more co-regulation to keep all the other children safe*'. My supervisor articulated '*I know how you're feeling and have felt like that myself at times*' she suggested '*if possible, spending five minutes with this child alone*'. (12-3-2021). I went back to C to repair. I explained *I had to keep everyone in the classroom safe that is why I have to spend more time with D*. He replied, '*Like I have to keep my cousin safe.*' I replied, '*That's a big job for a little boy*' he replied '*Yeah*'. I let him know the teacher are here to keep your cousin safe.

Following this I said but I'd love to spend time with just me and you. I took the time out with him and the relationship (13-3-2021).

However, as aggressive as the behaviour got, I would always try to seek to understand. Yet, I am only human I did at times become more directive telling the children '*This behaviour needs to stop*'. Feeling for the innocent children or myself that got caught in another child's moment of emotional dysregulation. (16-3-2021)

(8/3/2021)

H was playing babies in the 'Nurture Nook'. As the play continued, I wonder with the child, 'What do the babies need next?' H replied, '*All the babies need you*'.



Figure 38 H Babies (8-3-2021)



Figure 39 Babies (8-3-2021)

The photo above was captured by the child H.

Bringing cycle one to a close and evaluating what was happening, I wondered what he was expressing was extremely significant. At this point I was somewhat overwhelmed, dealing with most of the conflicts and being at opposite pole of the aggressive behaviour. The beginning stages of burn out were starting to arise. My reflective journal triangulated with what my colleagues were feeling. Below is a summary of my colleagues' thoughts.

'I don't let my own child talk to me like that; I'm tired of taking it off these children'. 'I want to go back to the younger age group as least you feel needed'. 'I'm not good with this age group' colleague A. (14-3-2021)

Transitioning from the garden is my absolute 'Shark Music'. You're running around chasing them and they think it's a great game' colleague B. (14-3-2021)

'It's mentally draining when the conflict goes on and on, but you know he needs those boundaries and safe hands' 'Then being told I only listen to Lydia' 'Go back to your room we don't need you here' colleague C. (21-3-2021)

Whilst, we knew the Nurture Nook was having a positive effect for the children with the supporting evidence of love in their artwork and language we were all doing our best to support the children in extremely difficult times. Supporting the children and deepening our sense of love and care to really embody 'Professional Love' we needed to start our own self-care. This was the start of cycle two.

4.3.2 Cycle Two: Reflective Mapping

As previously noted, when checking in with my colleagues we were all experiencing high feelings of overwhelm. I wondered if having a safe space for my colleagues to

allow them to express these feelings openly may support co-regulation as a team. I could no longer be the safe anchor for the whole classroom as I was coming burnout myself. I suggested reflective practice to my colleagues to support our own self-care so we could possibly be more able to embody the term 'Professional Love'. I do not want to say we were a 'living contradiction' because we were absolutely doing our best, leading with love. However, sustaining this embodied term needed support for ourselves or understanding good enough was enough. The Circle of Security (2016) describes it perfectly. I approached my colleagues wondering would they be interested in participating in a revised method of reflection for individual interactions called Cognitive Analytical Therapy (C.A.T.), reflection with a map (Potter, 2020). Explaining this could help instill a common language between us with more of a focused lens on individual relationships with the children. Allowing the educator to express the feelings

under the both the adult behaviour and child's behaviour. Below is an example of one of the sessions held with my colleague.

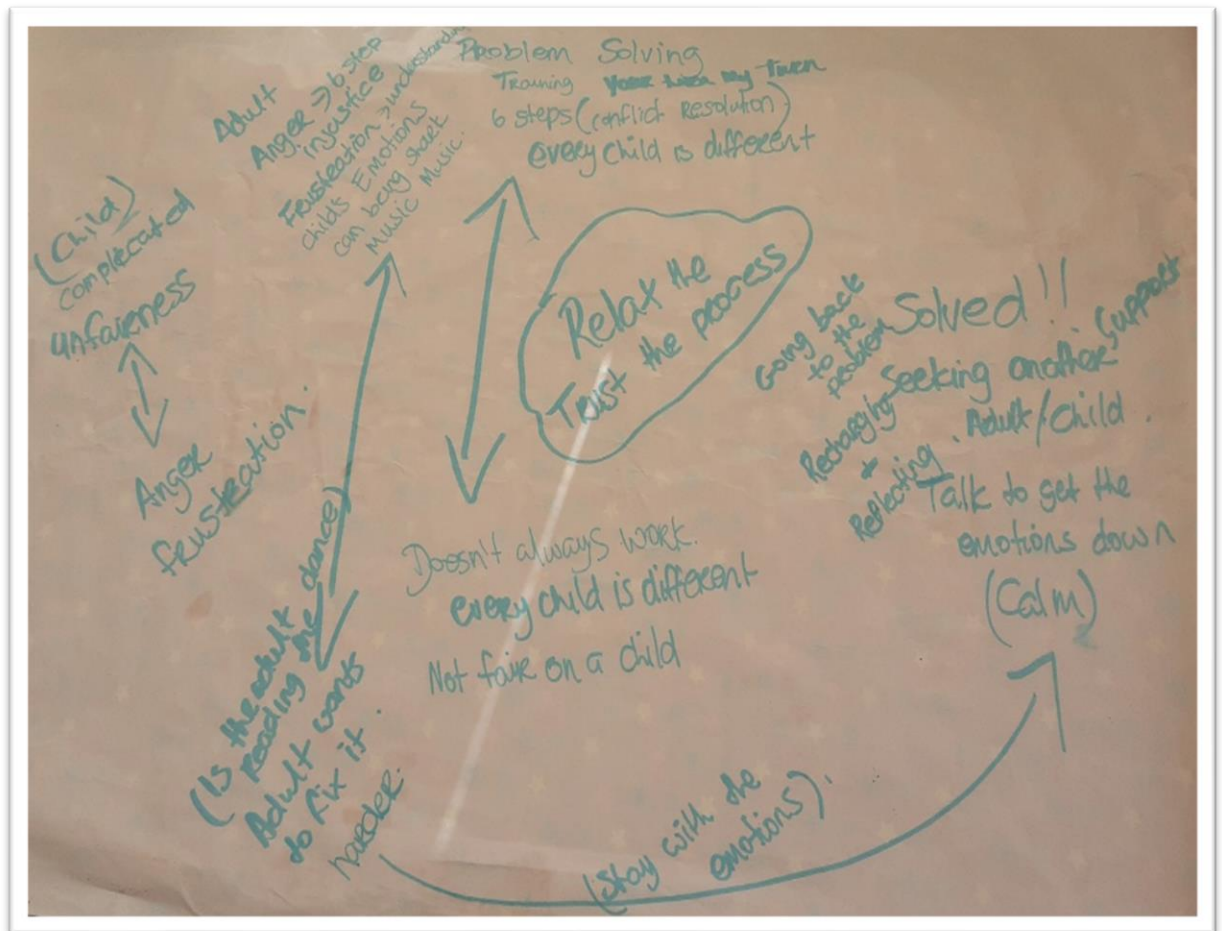


Figure 40 Relational Mapping (23-3-2021)

This map may not make sense to the reader's eye. However, you will see below will the clarity my colleague took from this session. She was reflecting on a conflict resolution with a child that has limited expressive language and a child with typical language development. She noted her ⁷shark music when in problem-solving mode. She expressed '*he gets so angry I just want to get to solving the problem as quickly as possible*'. I asked her '*Could anything support her in ability to problem solve?*' which

⁷ Shark Music: Circle of Security use Shark Music to support individuals to explore how uncomfortable feelings from prior experiences from their own past can influence their current relationships.

she replied, *'Call Lydia'*. As we delved down into this slightly more, she concluded they were both participating in an anxious dance. She saw his reaction was stemming from her reaction. This educator was following our curriculum, her gut was telling her differently as she remarked *'It's not always fair, every child is different'*. I named for her conflict will have a power agenda no matter how the High/Scope curriculum suggest you are a neutral participant. I explained this child has limited speech he needs more support in conflict to balance the power. The next day a conflict arose we laughed she said to me *'Can we map that!'*

The example portrays an educator trying to complete a conflict strategy from opposing ends. Pervious my colleague would have expressed concerns at this child's *'Miscues'* in interactions, without acknowledging her position in the interaction (COS, 2014). The educator recognised she was in an anxious state in the beginning stages of this child's emotions, filtering to the child's opposite pole giving the child a sense of being rushed (Potter, 2020). That's the dance of relationships and Educator A was aware her internal tension with the conflict resolution and her capacity to regulation herself (Potter, 2020). Colleague's A quote of her first experiences of mapping *'Mapping the experience made me realise how much 'Shark Music' I have around problem-solving with K as I am always second guessing myself that I have done right by him'*. Further

Reflection: *'Made it easier for me to solve problems in the future'* (24-3-2021).

The evolution of the reflective mapping is only in the infancy stages of work. However, profound unconscious thought processes by my colleagues been now become much more conscious. This cycle gave me the opportunity to unite the staff with a common language we could view relationships with. Pervious to this our staff were aware there of 'Shark Music'. However, C.A.T. mapping has made our Shark Music visual on paper within interactions not allowing us to dismiss/shelve our part in the relational

interactions. This cycle allowed me to create a community of learners within my classroom setting. This cycle has deepened my value of reflective practice in our profession. I would also underpin this cycle as staff continuous professional development. Quotes by my colleagues after they participated in the reflective mapping *'I feel much better leaving work having talked this through'* and *'It's reassuring I did the right thing'* (24-3-2021). I am extremely proud of what I was able to achieve in this cycle to support the children's relational interactions. Our conversation starts with *'The Dance'* we are participating in extending love and care also hearing the voice of the child much clearer. This intervention was so successful my manager has created a new role for me as the reflective practitioner for our service. I could see my colleague's terminology changing and their body language was warmer spending more time seeking to connect. My colleague suggested singing to the children *'Bye bye Z, Bye bye Z, see you in the morning, we love you!'* (6-5-2021).

The third and finale cycle was directed from the colleague noted the difficulty we were having transitioning the children from the garden. We came together as a team to reflect upon our initial observations. Our early years classroom is very much collaborative space, decision making processes are collegial between the staff and the children. However, to support the child's voice holistically we needed somewhat more reflection. The issue began because it was problematic transitioning from the garden to the classroom.

(Session held 1-4- 2021)

I reframed this as an open-ended question to everyone *'What do think the children are telling us when they are resisting coming in?'* she replied, *'I know they do not want to come in'*. *'Now that we must work in isolated pods this has a knock-on effect to the*

time. We must use the garden at certain times, as we cannot be out together'. *'We are being controlled by Covid-19 and the dance of being controlled is to rebel'* After a discussion I suggested *'what they might need is a space to move their bodies'*. The children had an emerging interest in making bouncing castle and were currently using the book area as a bouncing castle. Bringing the two pieces of information together I suggested the children needed a space to move. Books are extremely important for the children's learning but were currently not being used effectively.

4.3.3 Cycle 3: Gross motor Movement

The reflective session ended with an agreement to follow the children's lead move the books to the 'Nurture Nook' for a quiet space to do reading. Then turn the book area into a Gross Motor Area, which the children informally named the Mat Area. We were striving to achieve a common goal from a loving and compassionate lens.

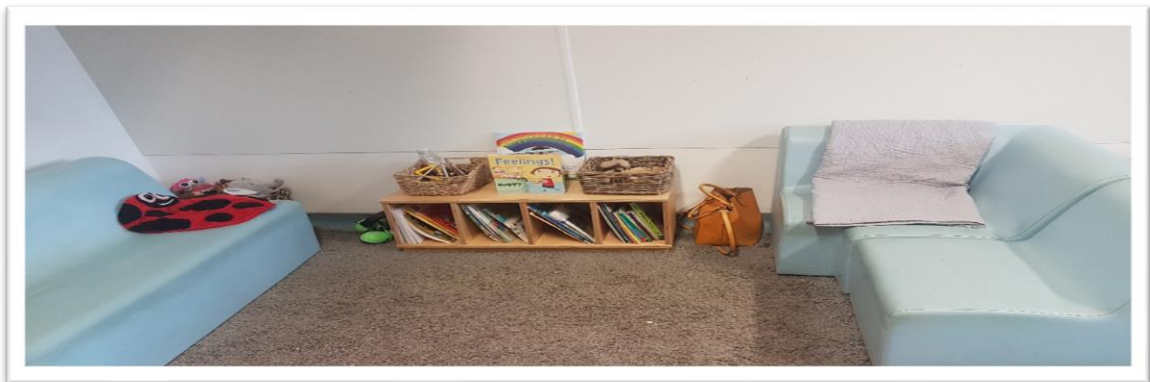


Figure 41 Before 3rd Intervention (5-4-2021)



Figure 42 Gross Motor Area (6-4-2021)

This idea was extremely simple to reconstruct the Ikea mats were put down on the floor. We then used Velcro to stick the mats to the walls decrease of any injuries to the head. Cushions and couches are all wipeable. The Velcro meant the mats could be detached from the wall daily to be cleaned, keeping inside our public health guidelines. Shoes can be removed and stored in the box at the entrance to the area. This area did not only promote gross motor movement but provided a space for friendships and socio-dramatic play. The children called on the architect H to help them build dens.



Figure 43 Socio-Dramatic Play (29-4-2021)

They took on fictional role play characters such as Spider-man and Unicorn Kitty to scale the wall. Gymnastics developed as a theme hand stands, tumbles and cartwheels being the favourites. This area did not make the room any louder, in fact it was the opposite because how they had a set area for rough and tumble play. The ‘Gross Motor Area’ supported the children in transitions relieving waiting periods. This meant if the children did not want to take part in small group time, large group time they could play in the mat area whilst transitioning (Epstein, 2014). I also suggested ‘*a more playful transition for the children by bringing the garden slide or tunnel to the door for the children to have an existing transition into the room*’ (16-4-2021).



Figure 44 Transitions

Beginning my journey, I did not link my work or my values to holistic care. I had to go on my own exploration to see the link in my practice and values. Watching the children play in this ‘Gross Motor Area’ solidified my learning and my values of holistic care, embodying learning, and feelings. I saw the importance of empowering the child’s voice and whole child in this intervention. I am now aware Professional love and care is best practiced within a holistic environment. We incorporated an innovative space of risk inside the classroom. Holistic care underpins the voice of the child (NCCA, 2009; CECDE, 2006). Seeing a whole person with rights. Whilst this happened very early in collection of my data, I did not note the significance. The relational interaction was laden with my values of holistic care and professional love.

K was extremely upset as the management team had to higher the children’s railings in the garden for their safety. I could see his frustration as he could no longer stand and see over it. He voiced ‘*why they did this?*’. I replied, ‘*to keep all the children safe and inside the garden*’ I added ‘*If you’re really want to know why write to the management*

team and ask them why'. The photos below capture K's voice being heard and his journey

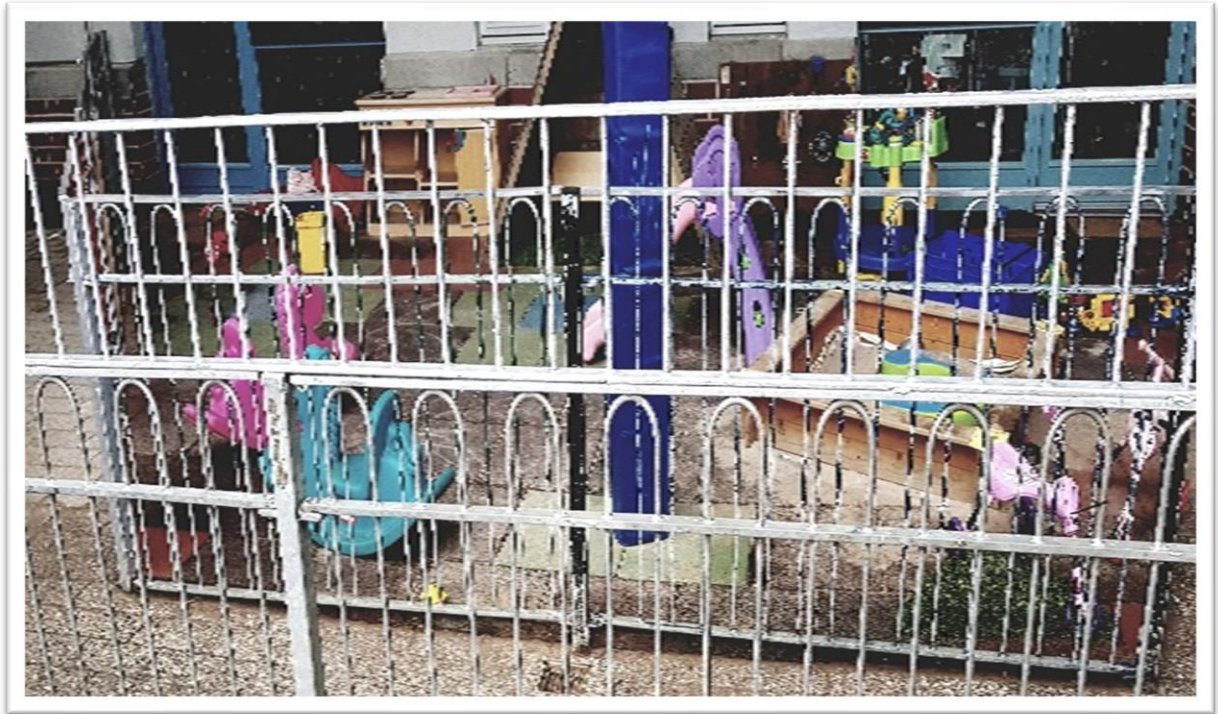


Figure 45 Railings Dispute (18-1-2021)



Figure 46 Letter of Complaint (18-1-2021)

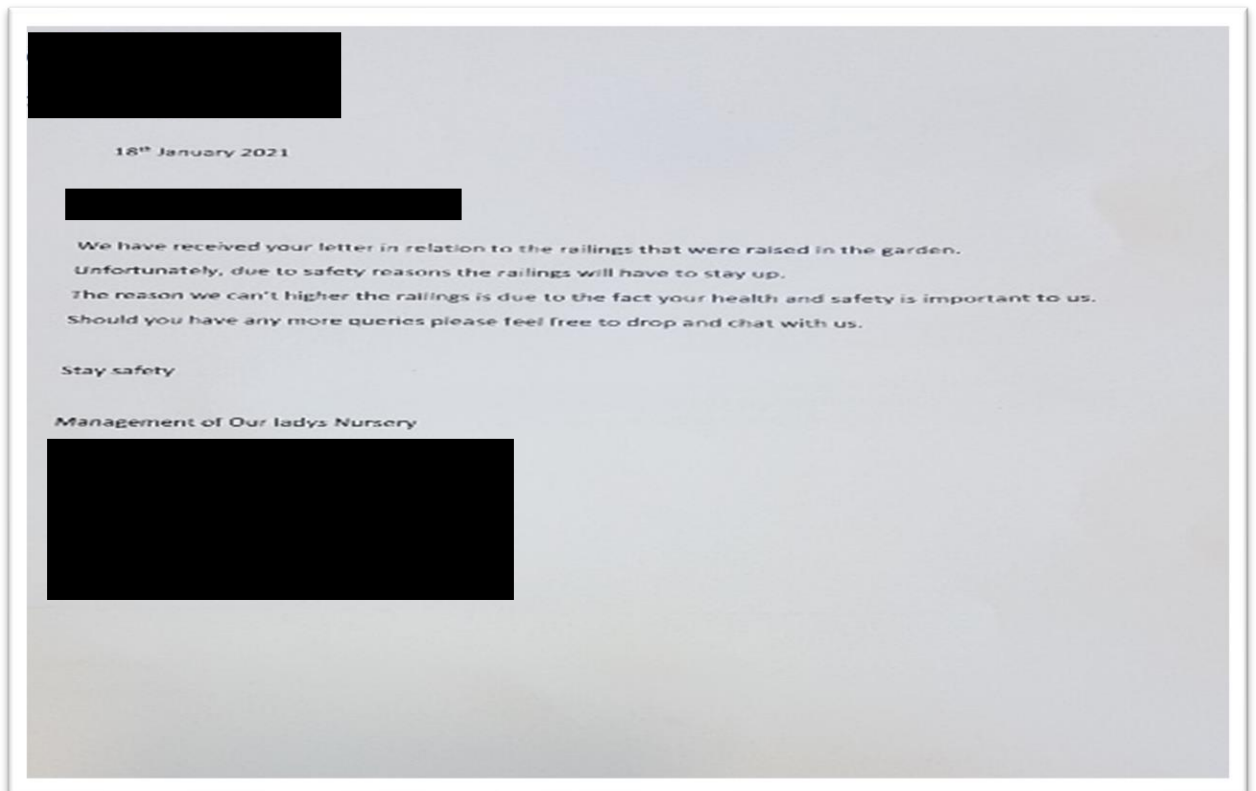


Figure 47 Response (18-1-2021)

The outcome of this situation did not change. However, the child now has memories in his IWM that he questioned and stood up for what he believed in (Bowlby, 1969).

Supporting the holistic curriculum and the voice of the children brings cycle one and two together. I decided to bring the team together noting the importance of the community of learners from cycle two (Whitehead, 1989).

Whilst listening to the child's voice, exploring with our bodies became a theme within our classroom. We came together as a community to make our bodies concrete on paper as part of a self-identity and belonging activity. See below a child drew around me want to measure how big I was.



Figure 48 Self-Identity



Figure 49 Self-Identity (20-4-2021)

Our relationships deepened over time, D lay on the ground with me in the garden and whispered '*Lydia, we'll always be friends*'. (22-4-2021)

We have a shared sensory room with lights the children use to swing around in. He stood holding the lights in his hand and H said, '*I'm really scared*' to which another child replied, '*You can do this; I believe in you*'. (24-5-2021)

We also had engagements with children that previously would have ended in a physical struggle. *D said to C 'Look my t-shirt glows in here. C replied 'Yeah, my socks are*

glowing too'. D 'No, they're not' C replied 'D Are you being mean to me? That hurts my feelings'. D 'Sorry C'. (15-3-2021)

Even the child with limited language was expressing *Hug, hug?* To his friends. The children would call me *Lydia, Look C is giving hugs*. Z expressed to her mam on departure *C loved me today*. (14-4-2021)

This will always make me laugh '*Lydia, what is your biggest fear?*' '*I can't tell you what my biggest fear is cause if you start talking about it, I'll get scared*' '*I know what your biggest fear is Donald Trump*' '*Spot on*' I replied with a big laugh (6-5-2021)

4.4 Conclusion:

Overall while we did have many challenges we grew together as a community the children and then staff. It is still a huge challenge meeting individual needs but we are remembering 'professional love' means good enough. You cannot give to the children when you have nothing left of yourself. I never went in examination, statistics, or treatment I just loved and cared for them as they are they reciprocity was the expressed (Potter, 2021; Ryle, 2002). This pedagogy is in the infancy stages within our setting, I hope to progress this further throughout the nursery.

Chapter five searches for meaning within my data collected. I outline three overarching guiding principles for my practice. Within the principles themes emerged to underpin my findings.

Discussion

5.1 Introduction:

My question was:

‘How can I foster Love and Compassionate Care as a Guiding Principles whilst working together with the Children and Educators in my Early Years Classroom?’.

This discussion seeks to make sense of educator’s question amidst the educator’s personal experiences from an interpersonal stance by examining her underpinning values and beliefs. This self-study discussion starts with the focus on my personal and professional identity and the emerging themes to come out of my data collection. What I have learned and how I have developed as a person. The first principle has presented me with a lens to challenge collective trauma through love and care. The analysis of my data collected determined my findings into three overarching themes.

Holistic Care

The Ripple Effect

Good Enough

These developing themes are broken down into sub themes which will be explained below in detail.

5.2 Holistic care

The first principle theme to emerge was the importance of holistic care in the classroom. The three sub themes emerging from holistic care is the importance of Relational Pedagogy, Environment and Children’s agency. Palmer (2007) stated normally researchers are questioned on their methodology, seeking dissection for

narratives. However, the overarching theme of Holistic Care pursuing a dynamic unity of literature combining educational and psychological theory to give a more robust analysis of educational relationships. Connecting trauma practices within holistic care (whole body) was a significant discovery for myself in this research (Van der Kolk, 2014). This leads me to see the fundamental importance of relational and holistic care cohesively. First five (2019) has recently added infant mental health to their document in the hopes of supporting children to become psychologically strong. Yet, a small number of child protection cases is leading some of early years sector with strict policy regarding no physical touch. We have vast array of research stating how important parent's touch is to the developing brain (Harlow, 1963; Gerhardt, 2004; Porges, 2017 Siegal, 2020). Some children spend the same amount of time in childcare facilities as they do at home. Leaning into love and compassionate care supports physical and psychological brain development.

5.2.1 Relational Pedagogy:

Attachment theory by Bowlby (1988) and Ainsworth (1978) was the beginning relationships theory. Potter (2020) drilled down into individualised interactions acknowledging the importance of educational relationships within the environment has on the child. The underpinning research the focus of relationality is the proximity of a significant person. I can become loving and caring we from opposite end the relational pole of being loved and cared for (Stern, 1977 Potter, 2021). The term love meaning the caregiver and child dyad has been studied in depth for decades with lots of the psychological material crossing over to the educational realm (Harlow & Hansen, 1963; Winnicott, 1964; Stern, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978; Bowlby, 1988; UNCRC, 1989; Noddings, 1994; Gerhart, 2004; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006; Szalavitz & Perry, 2011; Carter, 2012; Maslow, 2013; Porges, 2017; Coyne, 2020; O'Toole & Hayes

2020; O’Kane, 2021). The research suggest individuals are more comfortable with the terms care and nurture in education. Moreover, the term care has also been questioned in support of narrowing the curricula to outcome-based goals (Hayes & Filipović, 2018). As educators we need to push against the global neoliberal agendas taking over our children education (DES, 2018; OECD, 2021). We are living in a world where it is difficult counteract the effects of policy in the standardisation of learning for children in an outcomes-based formula in the mindset of children growing up to be able to work as an avid member of society. hooks, 2000; Freire, 1987; Palmer, 2017 acknowledge the importance of kindness and care within the curriculum and education also as a human being. My small-scale study emphasised from a parental perspective a shift in educational thinking to relationships linking educators love with *safety* and *security*. Whilst Grimmer (2021) did state she had seen love visible within many educational settings but it had not been labelled as love. Page (2018) states from a much larger cohort of parents many were afraid of an educator loving their child too much. Love and care education cannot be measured.

5.2.2 Environment:

The nurture nook stemmed from a conversation with a critical friend surrounding my values. Triangulating my values with the child’s requirements for a quiet space to co-regulate among all bustle of an early years classroom also to supporting difficult transitions for children (Delahook, 2018; O’Toole, 2016, O’Toole & Hayes, 2020). The Access and Inclusion Model AIM (2016) acknowledged children’s need for a quiet space in a highly stimulating environment. AIM have devised a small black out tent for an individual child to regulate in an overstimulating environment. There has been a movement in recent years to calm down children’s environments to enhance children’s learning and development (CECDE, 2006 NCCA, 2009; Hayes & O’Neill, 2017; DEI,

2019). However, Veilleux (2017) notes with the many stresses and the fast pace of children lives the benefits of quiet spaces is under researched within early years. Scotland have really embraced the nurture rooms ideology to support children's dysregulation as a trauma informed approach within their education system including primary schools (Treisman, 2021). Our nurture nook supported differing energy levels, it provided a supportive tool for the children wide range of emotions. The children named they like it because it was quiet, warm, and privacy, with one child acknowledging he likes to be busy in there. The children's antidotes are consistent with the literature of quiet spaces. The children brought teddies added to this space. On reflection I learned to be careful about linking in with the children for what they needed in our space. What is deemed as sensory play as these teddies were used as attachment items and sensory toys during play.

Linking our body and mind together will talk to us if we slow down and listen to it (Hocking, Haskell and Linds, 1996). It has the power to talk to the children and guide them in their journey of learning and development. The research detailed the importance of slowing down and listening to the child's voice and bodies (NCCA, 2006; Edwards et al., 2011). The third intervention was correlated with the literature surrounding the voice of the child (UNCRC, 1989; NCCA, 2009; CECDE, 2006; Clark & Moss, 2011). However, what was devised from their provocations was advanced within early years. We created a mat area within our classroom for physical movement. The Universal Design Guidelines for Early Years Settings (AIM, 2019) have created and mapped an ideal setting for early years children to grow and develop. Within this document they have mentioned the importance of a space for children to play have movement, adventure, and challenge inside as well as outside. This innovative piece is motivating to hear our setting have the literature to back our practice.

Before Covid-19 presented and there was limited prominence on children's learning and development outdoors, though we have limitless research on the importance of the outdoors. Children were spending much of their day indoors (Duffy, 2017). Many may worry the classroom would become chaotic, however having attempted this physical movement space I can say it calmed the room. As we now had a space for big movements, rough and tumble play, gymnastics. This allowed the rest of the room to be used appropriately without disruption. The children play was consistent with the trauma literature seeing the mind and body not as separate identities (Mate, 2003, Van der Kolk, 2014).

5.2.3 Children's Agency:

The literature informs us of the importance of children directing their own learning both from a psychological perspective and an educational perspective (UNCRC, 1989; NCCA, 2009; Epstein, 2014; Powel et al., 2014). Children voice was powerfully noted within the third intervention starting from the child's emerging interest. They children had ample opportunity to become physically and psychologically strong (NCCA, 2009). K internal working model IWM utilised his advocacy skills, affirming to the management team the importance of the child's voice (NCCA, 2009). Documentation of K experience in school is even more influential to his future interaction because it is concrete linking the brain connection together (Van der Kolk, 2014; Siegal, 2020). Strengthening the importance of documentation the children spoke about love, compassion, and care in a thousand ways throughout the data within their daily interactions, drawing, photography, craft, and play seen in the data collection (NCCA, 2009; Clark and Moss, 2011; Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2011). Expanding of the hundred languages of the child Chapman and Campbell (2016) explored the way children give and receive love H was seen in the data with the babies and the bird's his

love language was acts of service. D's love language was physical touch he wanted to snuggle into you like a little koala bear. K and E used the love language of gift giving their drawings were gifts to the significant person in their education. The love was spread all in unique ways. Yet all just as treasure even the birds arrive back for more food.

5.3 The Ripple Effect:

The second guiding principle to come out of my research was the ripple effect of love within the classroom and within the community. Leading to the first with co-regulation

5.3.1 Co-Regulation:

Bringing the of Bowlby (1988), Ainsworth (1978), and Potters (2021) theory together. Bowlby theory of attachment and Ainsworth's theory a child's need for a secure base from which we can explore the opening and closing of the setting was impacting the children security in the education system. Whilst we were seeing act of physical and psychological aggression children need consistency in their interactions (Bowlby,1988). They need to feel loved and cared for before they can do it for themselves or with others. Potter's (2021) reciprocal roles helped me to stay most of the connected at the other end of the interaction, stepping out of the dance of anger and aggression (Potter, 2021, Triesman,2021). K in the nurture nook wanted to push me away but what I really knew was he needed to feel safe, letting him know I care, and he is worthy of love (Bowlby, 1988). D needed a huge amount of co-regulation through his day, repeatedly being given safe and secure boundaries met with love by the end of my research he was labelling and expressing difficult emotion to decipher

'I'm jealous cause I'm going to lose my best friend'. The children were also co-regulating each other without physical aggression *'D are you being mean to me. That*

hurts my feelings'. It was the H's first time to try to swing. He stood holding the rope in his hand and H said, *'I'm really scared'* to which another child replied, *'You can do this; I believe in you'* (24-4-2021) How powerful the voice of the child was in that interaction. He took the rope and swung.

These vignettes above highlight the importance of the literature theory in practice. They are intertwined in each other with patience and remembering the child is good enough as they are (Winnicott, 1964; Rogers, 1974;).

5.3.2 The Ripple Effect:

Whilst my key findings are my learning, I cannot disregard the impact of my key learning on the children, possibly their families, my colleges and my setting noting outside stakeholders noted the importance and potential of my work (Whitehead, 1989). Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) literature is the essence of 'the ripple effect' placing learning and the influences of learning and development in the environments they are situated in (Hayes et al, 2017; O'Toole et al., 2020). The proximal processes we are engaging in daily have the potential to filter outwards as well as inwards on the child (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Todd (2014) suggests if there is too much emphasis on the transformational piece, we can lose sight of the child or learning in front of us. My research did not start as transformative piece the effects emerged from the children play activities. Examples of these is the story of the Three Little Pigs and Pinocchio. I had a sense of responsibility to explore the children's thoughts with them (hooks, 2000; Kaur, 2017;). Social justice issues are emerging within play without being actively taught as transformational. Kaul (2018) notes the importance of having empathy for someone in their times of anger. If we can see each other in society from a stance of sense of belonging as the children did, we can make the world a safer place.

Linking ‘professional love’ within the ecology of the microsystem of the child’s family Bronfenbrenner (1979) advocated for linkages between settings and systems. In this research I may have started to link children’s cultural language/traditions from home to the school environment, aiding smoother transition from the home environment to school. A child leaving for home on a Friday, and you ask the child ‘*Can I have a hug before you go?*’ the child either puts their arms out or moves into the educator’s body for a hug and may reply, ‘*Kiss*’. A child has not learned the limitations of relationships, they are still only presenting what they know (Hedges, 2014). Culturally children link hugs and kisses together from their home environment. In terms of love and care in a trauma informed approach it about the importance of giving the child a choice or agency in who or where they want to be touched. Mothers were also heard saying on arrival ‘*Have the best day, I love you with all my heart*’. (8-3-2021) also ‘*I Love You’s*’. Linkages also supports Bowlby (2007) theory that children could form several attachments if the main caregiver is liked and trusted the person. Why it was important to link in with the children’s families before the research started forming the triangle of love (Page, 2018)

The image of the child is no longer seen as egocentric (Piaget, 1954). Hayes et al., (2017) researched a study of educators meeting children individual needs, emphasising the importance children’s individual needs being met and the needs of the collective group. This was explored by myself and with my college as a preventative measure of burn out. While I found the strategy worked taken the individual time with the child. Though I found it extremely difficult meeting all the children needs all of the time. Yet, I still believe the children’s agency in our classroom is extremely positive (UNCRC, 1989; CECDE, 2006; NCCA, 2009). Similarly, Korthagen (2004) onion model situating the person the centre of their values and beliefs systems also within their environment

from a reflective capacity sometimes valued-led practices can be difficult to sustain.

5.4 Good Enough:

This brings me to my third and finale principle the importance of knowing Good Enough in terms of professional love and care. Winnicott (1964) and O’Kane (2021) challenge the idea of perfection in mothering. However, the same principle can be applied to education. O’Toole (2021) suggests the good enough educator rather than then perfect educator. See Appendix L for my personal account of my ‘Living Contradiction’ and being ‘Good Enough’.

5.4.1 Living Contradiction:

My first living contradiction is not valuing my self-worth. Brown (2019) advocates for more daring leaders to leads with their hearts. Connecting with people let them see the vulnerable side. However, that IWM voice in my head is hard to turn down telling me I am not good enough (Bowlby,1988; Winnicott, 1964). Garner (1993) stresses the importance of multiple intelligences allowing for multiple types of learning. After many hours of critical reflection, I now understand my intelligence comes in a different form through interpersonal intelligence meaning connecting with humans which is my superpower. Growing up as an extremely sensitive child I now have great empathy for people. My sensitivity was viewed as a weakness and anow I know it is my strength. This strength and confidence are relatively new feelings for me. It happened in in conjunction with my education. I always believe I was too shy to be a leader. Hearing Brown’s (2019) encouraged me to have the confidence with my heart. *You should be deemed the hero of the group’, Your presentation was like poetry’* (26-5-2021).

As mentioned in the chapter three methodology no matter how hard you try you may never be able to come out of a space or been seen Living Contradiction as restrictions of

policies or organisational barriers (Whitehead, 1989). Our work in early childhood education will have limitations I am all the more proud of what I achieved in a short period of time. However, there will always be more work to be done further questions to be answered with for leading love. We need to be careful of our own mental health when positioning living contradictions as it could lead to burn out.

5.4.2 Self-Love

What I have learn over the last year is the importance of self-love / self -care. You cannot give to others when you are running on empty. Going back to my reflective drawing letting love in gave me clarity for the future and the bases of my topic.

Journaling helped me to see growth in myself and my work also when it came to the third intervention it was easy to see the overarching guiding principle of holistic care (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Journaling has been a very real part of my self-care trying to get those thoughts and feelings out of my head and onto paper.

From a trauma awareness perspective of solidifying the body with the mind (Mate, 2003, Van der Kolk, 2014). Self-care rendered me to reflect on the importance of the adults' need for co-regulation preventing burn out. As much as the children need their safe hands as adults, we need the significant people in our lives to go back to for help (Powell et al., 2014). As a researcher part of my self-care was talking to my supervisor and my critical friends it was the sense of relief hearing them say 'Me too'. 'Shark Music' is very real for all of us. Brown (2019) stresses when we are brave enough to be vulnerable, we are empowering other to be vulnerable too. Asking for help and admitting you are not perfect is daring and courageous, especially when we are pushing yourselves out of our comfort zone. Past trauma does not have to define who you become Compassionate burn-out is very real for educators in the early years sector. The

literature defines early years education the Cinderella of the education system meaning we feel we must work harder to get the recognition we deserve for all the work we do (Dalli, 1993). However, minding your body and mind is paramount.

5.5 Conclusion:

Holistic Care

The Ripple Effect

Good Enough

The guiding principles that I have generated from this self-study research project are great starting point for future practice within my room and setting. However, transformational action outside my setting it needs to be noted within early childhood education and care that we can learn but we cannot care without the underpinning big feelings of love. It has different meaning for each individual, but it has to be there. This action research supported feelings through mapping, adequate support of literature and current research with a common language for love and understanding it can be achieved. As shown in this small-scale research it had huge impacts on my personal and professional journey with my colleagues and the children benefited from our common goal. Teasing out our values, believes, contradictions, in reflective process can become accessible with the right supports. The photographic evidence captures the unique holistic spaces the children used to grow and flourish within safe hands of their educator. Holistic care is body, mind, heart, and soul. From my reflective diary What I have learned for sure is, :

‘When our children are looking into our eyes, they are first seeking safety, security and a nurturing sanctuary.

Yet, within this look of Love

they are also in a quest for acceptance, guidance and leadership’ (Reflective diary-Murphy, 2021).

5.6 Recommendations:

The demands during covid-19 to meet all the children needs was a momentous task.

Whilst the interventions supported the children’s learning and development. I felt some children’s individual needs in the class may not have been consistently met. When educators are dealing with a magnitude of emotions there is only so any they can reach.

I am inspired to continue my loving practice into my daily practice for the future. I would love to link in caregivers in the future to embed our voices together for the child. Positioning radical love within the community.

Reflective Practice /Relational Mapping is a positive tool I will be taking with me into my future practice. Linking to my own self-care of personal mapping and journaling. I understand the trauma literature is establishing a more focused on relational practice now. While it can be meaningful for some to have vocabulary to name their struggle. However, not to be defined or have it define you as person. People generally have more strengths to their struggles.

I would seek to have revolutionary love used within educator vocabulary and new policy documents mention love within relationships and environments. I am moment I have a suggestion to re-evaluate our school policy document and mission statement inserting the attachment-led approaches.

I strongly recommend the benefits of linking psychological and educational literature together to give a robust analysis of educational relationships. Placing significant value on psychological theory within education.

References:

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M., Waters, E. and Wall, S. (1978) *Patterns of Attachment*. Hillside NJ: Erlbaum.
- Ainsworth, M. S. (1997) The personal origins of attachment theory. An interview with Mary Salter Ainsworth. Interviewed by Peter L. Rudnytsky. '*The Psychoanalytic study of the child*'. (52), 386.
- Alsup, J. (2008) *Teacher Identity Discourses: Negotiating Personal and Professional Space*. New Jersey: Taylor & Francis.
- Apple, M.W. (2013; 2012) *Knowledge, power, and education: The selected works of Michael W. Apple*. London; Routledge.
- Apperly, I. (2011) *Mindreaders: the cognitive basis of "theory of mind"*, Psychology Press. Hove; New York.
- Aslanian, T. (2018) Embracing Uncertainty: a diffractive approach to love in the context of early childhood education and care. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 26(2), 173-185.
- Ausubel, D.P. (1953) The nature of educational research. *Educational Theory*, 3(4), 314-320.
- Barnardos. (2014) *Quality Adult-Child Interactions in Early Years Services*. Dublin: Barnardos.
- Beebe, B., Sorter, D., Rustin, J. and Knoblauch, S. (2003) A Comparison of Meltzoff, Trevarthen, and Stern. *Psychoanalytic dialogues*, 13, (6), 777-804.
- Bergman, M.M. (2008; 2011) *Advances in Mixed Methods Research: Theories and Applications*. London; Sage.

Biesta, G. (2015) Improving education through research? From effectiveness, causality and technology to purpose, complexity, and culture. *Policy futures in Education*, 14(2), 194-210.

Biesta, G. (2011) Disciplines and theory in the academic study of education: a comparative analysis of the Anglo-American and Continental construction of the field. *Pedagogy, culture & society*, 19(2), 175-192.

Biesta, G. (2007) The education-socialisation conundrum or Who is afraid of education? *Utbildning & Demokrati*, 16(3), 25-36.

Bowlby, J. (1988) *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 4, A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory*. London: Routledge.

Bowlby J. (1969) *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 1: Attachment*. New York, Basic Books.

Bowlby, R. (2007) Babies and toddlers in non-parental daycare can avoid stress and anxiety if they develop a lasting secondary attachment bond with one carer who is consistently accessible to them. *Attachment and Human Development*, 9(4), 307-319.

British Educational Research Association (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. 4th ed. [online] Available at <https://www.bera.ac.uk> (accessed on: 12 Oct 2020)

Bronfenbrenner, U. Morris, P. A. (2006) The Bioecological model of Human Development. In R. M. Lerner and W. E. Damon (Eds), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. 1, Theoretical Models of Human Development*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley.

Bronfenbrenner, U (1977) The ecology of human developing development in retrospect and prospect In H. McGuirk (Ed.), *Ecological Factors of Human Development*.

London: Sage.

Brookfield, S. (2017) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, 2nd ed. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Brookfield, S. (2013) Teaching Critical Thinking: Informing your Reflective Practice.

Available at <http://youtu.be/X11cXiVB9tY?t=10m54s>. (Accessed 29 12 2020)

Brown, B. (2012) *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead*. London: Penguin Books.

Brownlee, P (2016) *Dance with me in your Heart: The Adults' Guide to Great Infant-Parent Partnership*. 2nd Edition. Thames: Good Egg Books.

Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D., and Maguire P. (2003) 'Why Action Research?' *Action Research*, (1) 9-23

Brussoni, M., Olsen, L.L., Pike, I., and Sleet, D.A. (2012) Risky play and children's safety: balancing priorities for optimal child development. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 9(9) 3134-3148.

Brooker, L (2005) Learning to be a child: Cultural Diversity and early years ideology.

In N. Yelland (Ed), *Critical Issues in Early Childhood Education* (p. 115-130)

Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

Buber, J. (2002) *The Myth of the First Three Years: A New Understanding Of Early Brain Development And Lifelong Learning*. New York: Free Press.

- Buber, M (1969) Martin Buber's Ethics and the Problem of Norms, *Religious Studies*, 5(2) 181-194.
- Burke-Harris, N. (2018) *The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects Of Childhood Adversity*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Campbell, E. (2018) *Loved into Learning: A Narrative Inquiry Exploring How Love Has Influenced Me As A Teacher*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Nipissing University.
- Carter, S. C., Porges, S (2013) The biochemistry of love: the oxytocin hypothesis. *EMBO Report*, 14(1), 12-14. Available at: <https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> (accessed on: 7 Oct 2021).
- Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) (2006) *Síolta, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*. Dublin: Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education.
- Chapman, G., Campbell, R. (2016) *The 5 Love Languages of Children: The Secret to Loving Children Effectively*. Chicago: Northfield Publishing.
- Child Care Act, 1991 (as amended). Dublin: The Stationery Office; 1991.
- Children Act, 2001. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2001
- Chomsky, N. (2012) *How the World Works*. Hamilton: Penguin Books.
- Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2011) *Listening to young children: the mosaic approach*, 2nd ed, London: NCB.
- Cook, T. (2009) The purpose of mess in action research: Building rigour through a messy turn, *Educational Action Research*, 17(2) 277–91.

Cooper, G. Hoffman, K. and Powell, B (2016) Circle of Security International [online] available: <https://circleofsecurityinternational.com> (accessed 31 October 2021).

Coyne (2020) *Love in Love out: A compassionate approach to parenting your anxious child*. London: Thorsons.

Cresswell, J.W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. London: Sage.

Creswell, J.W., Creswell, J.D. (2018) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage.

Dalli, C. (1993). Is Cinderella back among the cinders? A review of early childhood education in the early 1990s. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 3, 223–252. Available at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/nzaroe/1993/pdf/text-dalli.pdf> (accessed 21 March 2021)

Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2003

DeFehr, J.N., Infante, C.L.S., Valladares, C.I.L., (2021) *Dialogic Social Inquiry: Qualitative Research Without a Map*. Ohio: Taos Institute Publications.

Delahooke, M. (2019) *Beyond Behaviours: Using Brain Science and Compassion to Understand and Solve Children's Behavioural Challenges*. : John Murray

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2021) First Five. Available at: <https://first5.gov.ie> (accessed 12 December 2020).

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, (2019) *First Five Strategy, A Whole-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children, and their Families 2019-2028*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2017) *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. (2016) *Guidance for developing ethical research projects involving children*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. (2014) *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Dóchas, The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations (2014) *The Illustrative Guide To The Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages: Code of Conduct On Images & Messages*. Dublin: Dóchas, The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., and Forman, G. (2012) *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*. 3rd ed. California: Praeger.

Ernest, P. (1994) *Introduction to Research Methodology and Paradigms: Educational Research Monograph*. University of Exeter School of Education.

Esptien. A. S., (2014) *Essentials of Active Learning in Preschool: Getting to Know the High/Scope Curriculum*. Ypsilanti: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Felitti, V.J., Anda, R.F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D.F., Spitz, A.M., Edwards, V., Koss, M.P. and Marks, J.S. (1998) Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household

Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, *American journal of preventive medicine*, 14 (4), 245-258.

Freire, P (1987) *Freire for the Classroom: A sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching*. Portsmouth: Boyton/Cook publishers.

Foss, I.C., Ellefsen, B. (2002) The value of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in nursing research by means of triangulation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 40(2), 242-248.

Garner, H. (1993) *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. New York: Basic Books.

Gerhardt, S. (2004) *Why Love Matters*. East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge.

Gilbert, P., and Choden. (2014) *Mindful Compassion: how the science can help you understand your emotions, live in the present and connect deeply with others*. California: New Harbinger Publications.

Giordano, K., Interra, V.L., and Block-Lerner, J. (2021) Associations Between Child and Administrator Race and Suspension and Expulsion Rates in Community Childcare Programs. *Early Childhood Educational Journal*. 49, 125-133.

Government of Ireland, *Data Protection Act 1988*, S. 2B, Dublin: Dublin Stationery Office.

Greene, M (1995) *Releasing Imagination: On Education, The Arts and Social Change*. In Jossey-Bassey. San Francisco: Wiley and Sons.

Gopnick, A. (2017) *The Gardener and the Carpenter: What the New Science of Child Development Tells Us About the Relationship Between Parents and Children*. London: Vintage.

Grimmer, T. (2021) *Developing a Loving Pedagogy in the Early Years: How Love Fits with Professional Practice*. Abington: Routledge.

Hayes (2013) *Early Years Practice: Getting it right from the start*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd.

Hayes, N. and Filipović, K. (2018) Nurturing buds of development: from outcomes to opportunities in early childhood practice, *International journal of early years education*. 26 (3), 220-232.

Hocking, B., Haskell, J., and Linds. W. (2001) *Unfolding Bodymind: Exploring Possibility Through Education*. Vermont: Foundation for Education Renewal.

Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2000) *Empire* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press).

Hoffman, K. (2014) *Raising a Secure Child: How the Circle of Security Parenting Can Help You Nurture Your Child's Attachment, Emotional Resilience, and Freedom to Explore*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Kolehmainen, N., Francis, J.J., Ramsay, C.R., Owen, C., McKee, L., Ketelaar, M. and Rosenbaum, P. (2011) Participation in physical play and leisure: developing a theory- and evidence-based intervention for children with motor impairments. *BMC pediatrics*, 11(1),100-100.

hooks, b. (2000) *All About Love*. New York: William Marrow and Company.

Hultman, K. & Lenz Taguchi, H. (2010) Challenging Anthropocentric Analysis of Visual Data: a relational materialist methodological approach to educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(5), 525-542.

Husén, T. (1988) *Research paradigms in education*, In J. Keeves (ed.) *Educational Research, Methodology, and Measurement: An International Handbook*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2000). *Participatory action research*. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2nd ed., p. 567-607. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (1988) *The Action Research Planner*. 3rd Ed. Victoria: Deakin University Press.

Korthagen, F., & Kessels, J. (1999) Linking theory and practice: Changing the pedagogy of teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 28(4), 4-17.

Koshy, V. (2005) *Action research for improving practice: a practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lather, P. (2006) Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with: teaching research in education as a wild profusion. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(1), 35–57.

Lutsan, N.I., Struk, A.V., Liubyva, V.V., Kulish, I.D., Vertuhina, V.N. and Vasylyshyn, S. (2020) The Readiness of Future Specialists of Preschool Education to Creative Self-Realization in Professional Activity, *Propósitos y representaciones*. 8 (3), 1-12.

- Lewin, K. (1946) Action Research and Minority Problems, *Journal of Social Issues* 2(4), 34–46.
- Malin, B., Bion, W.R. and Aguayo, J. (2018) *Wilfred Bion: Los Angeles Seminars and Supervision*. 2nd ed. Arbingdon: Routledge.
- Maslow, A (2013) *A Theory of Human Motivation*. Radford, VA: Wilder Publications
- Matē, G. (2003) *When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- McDonagh, C. Sullivan, B., M. Glenn, M. Roche (2019) *Enhancing Practice through Classroom Research: A Teacher's Guide to Professional Development*. 2nd Edition. Abingdon: Routledge.
- McNiff, J. (2016) *You and your action research project*. 4th ed. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Meizrow, J. (1997) Transformation Theory out of Context. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48(1), 60-62.
- Merleau-Ponty, M., (1962) *Phenomenology of perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Miller, J. P. (2018). *Love and compassion: Exploring their role in education*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Miller, J. P. (2010) *Whole child education*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Miller, J. P. (2007) *The holistic curriculum*. 2nd ed. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

- Miller, J. P. (2006) *Educating for wisdom and compassion: Creating conditions for timeless learning*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Miller, R. (1997). *What are schools for? Holistic education in American culture*. 3rd ed. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Miller, R. (Ed.). (1991). *New directions in education: Selections from holistic education review*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Moon, J.A. (2006) *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development*. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis.
- Mukherji, P. Albon, D (2018) *Research Methods in Early Childhood: An Introductory Guide*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.
- Murphy, L. (2021) Reflective Journal, (EDF689) Dissertation Project, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Department of Education. Unpublished.
- Murphy, L. (2019) *A Nurturing Pedagogy: How can I foster Nurturing Relationships with Children's and Educator's in my Early Years Setting through there Lived Experiences*. Dissertation Project, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Department of Education. Unpublished.
- National University of Ireland, Maynooth (n.d) Research Ethics [online]. Available at <https://journals-sagepub-com.jproxy.nuim.ie/doi/abs/10.1177/1558689808330883> (accessed on 19 August 2020).
- National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (2009) *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Dublin: Nation Council of Curriculum and Assessment.
- NCCA (2007) *Early Childhood How Aistear was developed: A Portraiture Study*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Nicholson, J. Perez, L. and Kurtz, J (2019) *Trauma-Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Resilience in Young Children*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Noddings, N. (1994) *Caring: A feminist perspective*. In: Strike K and Ternasky P (eds) *Ethics for Professionals in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Nowak-Lojewska, O'Toole, Regan and Ferreira, 2019; O'Toole, Regan and Nowak-Lojewska, (2019) *THRIECE: Teaching for Holistic, Relational, and Inclusive Early Childhood Education*. Available at www.thriece.eu (accessed 25 September 2020).

O'Connor, A. (2013) *Understanding Transitions in the Early Years: Supporting Change through Attachment and Resilience*. Oxon: Routledge

O'Connor, A., & Diggins, C. (2002) *On reflection: Reflective practice for early childhood educators*. New Zealand: Open Mind Publishing.

O'Kane (2021) *Perfectly Imperfect Parenting: Connection Not Perfection*. Cork: Orla Kelly Publishing.

O'Toole (2020) Participant Action Research (PAR) for early childhood and primary education: the example of the THRIECE project. *Issues In Early Education*.

O'Toole (2016) *A Bio-Ecological Perspective on Educational Transitions: Experiences Of Children Parents and Teachers*. Unpublished Ph.D thesis. Technological University Dublin.

O'Toole (2015) Student-centred teaching in Initial Teacher Education. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education*, 6, 1-9.

- O'Toole, L., Hayes, N. (2020) *Supporting Positive Behaviour in Early Childhood Setting and Primary Schools: Relationships, Reciprocity, and Reflection*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Palmer, P.J., Scribner, M. (1998) *The Courage To Teach Guide for Reflection and Renewal*. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Page, J. (2017) Reframing infant-toddler pedagogy through a lens of professional love: Exploring narratives of professional practice in early childhood settings in England. *Contemporary issues in early childhood*, 18 (4), 387-399.
- Page, J. (2018) Characterising the principles of Professional Love in early childhood care and education. *International journal of early years education*, 26 (2), 125-141.
- Page, J. (2017) Reframing infant-toddler pedagogy through a lens of professional love: Exploring narratives of professional practice in early childhood settings in England. *Contemporary issues in early childhood*, 18(4), 387-399.
- Page, J. (2014) Developing "professional love" in early childhood settings. In L. Harrison, & J. Sumsion (Eds.), *Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Education and Care. International perspectives on early childhood education and development* 11, 119-130.
- Piaget, J. (1954) *The Construction of Reality in the Child*. New York: Basic Books.
- Powell, B. Cooper, G. Hoffman, K. Marvin, B. (2014) *'The Circle of Security Intervention: Enhancing Attachment in Early Parent-Child Relationships*. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Perry, B. D., Winfrey, O. (2021) *What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing*. New York: Flatiron Books.

Powell, S. and Gooch, K. (2012) Whose hand rocks the cradle? Parallel discourses in the baby room. *Early Years*. 32(2), 113-128.

Potter, S (2021) *Therapy with a map: A Cognitive Analytical Approach to Helping Relationship*. West Sussex: Luminat.

Riley, P. (2011) *Attachment Theory and the Teacher-Student Relationships*. London: Routledge.

Rita Pierson (2013) Every kid needs a champion, Ted Talk [video online] Available at: <http://youtu.be/SFnMTHhKdkw> (Accessed 5 May 2021).

Robert-Homes (2011) *Doing Your Early Research Project: A Step By Step Guide*. 2nd ed. London: Sage

Robson and McCartan (2016) *Real World Research*. 4th ed. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Robinson-Morris, D. W. (2018) Radical Love, Revolutionary Becoming: Creating an Ethic of Love in the Realm of Education Through Buddhism and Ubuntu. *The Urban Review*. 51, 26-45.

Rogers, C. R. (1974) Questions I would ask myself if I were a teacher. *Education*. 95 (2), 134-139.

Rogers, M., Dovigo, F. and Doan, L. (2020) Educator identity in a neoliberal context: recognising and supporting early childhood education and care educators, *European early childhood education research journal*, 28 (6), 806-822.

Ryle, A., and Kerr, I.B. (2002) *Introducing Cognitive Analytic Therapy: Principles and Practice*. Chichester: Wiley.

Siegal, D and Bryson, T. P., (2020) *The Power of Showing Up: how parental presence shapes who our kids become and how their brains are wired*. Victoria: Scribe.

Sohng, Sung Sil Lee. (1995). *Participatory Action Research and Community Organizing*. Seattle, WA Grant.

Soosalu, Henwood, S., and Deo, A. (2019) *Head, Heart, and Gut in Decision Making: Development of a Multiple Brain Preference Questionnaire*.

Stenhouse, L. (1981) What Counts as Research?, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 29(2), 103–14.

Stern, D. (1977) *The First Relationship: Infant and Mother*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sullivan, B., M. Glenn, M. Roche and C. McDonagh (2016) *Introduction to Critical Reflection and Action for Teacher Researchers*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Szalavitz, M., Perry, B. (2011) *Born for love: Why Empathy Is Essential--and Endangered*. Harper Colins E-Books.

Travarthen, C. (2004) Learning About Ourselves, From Children: *Why a Growing Brain Needs Interesting Companionship*. 1-36.

Travarthen, C. (1977) *Descriptive analyses of infant communicative behaviour*. In: *Studies in Mother–Infant Interaction*, ed. H. R. Schaffer. London: Academic Press.

Travarthen, C. (1980) *The foundations of intersubjectivity*. In: *The Social Foundations of Language and Thought*, ed. D. R. Olson. New York: Norton.

Triesman, K. (2021) *A Treasure Box for Creating Trauma-Informed Organizations: A Ready-to-Use Resource for Trauma, Adversity, and Culturally Informed, Infused and*

Responsive Systems (Therapeutic Treasures Collection). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Tripp, D. (1993) *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Trudge, J. R. H., Mokrova, I. L., Hatfield, B. E. and Karnik, R. B. (2009) Uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 1(4), 198-210.

Tusla (2012) National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children. Tulsa [online]. Available: <http://www.tulsa.ie> (accessed on 24 November 2021)

United Nations (1989). '*United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*,' Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 20th November 1989. (Ratified by Ireland, September 1992) Geneva: United Nations.

Valarie Kaur. (2017) 3 lessons of revolutionary love in a time of rage. Ted Talk [Video Online]. Available: http://www.ted.com/talks/valarie_kaur_3_lessons_revolutionary_love_in_a_time_of_rage (accessed 29 January 2021)

van der Horst, Frank C. P, LeRoy, H.A. and van der Veer, R. (2008) When Strangers Meet: John Bowlby and Harry Harlow on Attachment Behavior. *Integrative psychological & behavioural science*, 42(4), 370-388.

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2014) *The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body In The Healing Of Trauma*. New York: Viking.

Van Rosmalen, L., Van der Veer, R. & C. P. van der Horst, F (2020) The nature of love: Harlow, Bowlby and Bettelheim on affectionless mothers, *History of psychiatry*, 31 (2), 227-231.

Veale, A. (2005) Creative methodologies in participatory research with children. In S., Greene and D Hogan *Researching Children's Experiences: Approaches and Methods*. London: Sage.

Venkitachalam, K. & Busch, P. (2012) Tacit knowledge: review and possible research directions. *Journal of knowledge management*, 16 (2), 357-372.

Vicedo, M. (2017) Putting attachment in its place: disciplinary and cultural contexts. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 6(14), 684-699.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind and Society: The Development of Higher Mental Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Whitehead, J. (2008) Using a living theory methodology in improving practice and generating educational knowledge in living theories. *Educational Journal of Living Theories* 1(1), 103-126.

Whitehead, J. (1989) Creating A Living Educational Theory from Questions of the Kind, 'How do I Improve My Practice?' *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19 (1), 41-52.

Whitehead, J. and McNiff, J. (2006) *Action Research: Living Theory*. London: Sage

Winnicott, D.W. (1964) *The Child, The Family, The Outside World*. London: Penguin Group.

Appendices:**Appendix A: Ethical Approval:**

**Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education
Master of Education (Research in practice) (MEd)**

Ethics Approval for Master of Education (Research in Practice)



(Please read the notes in the course handbook before completing this form)

Student name:	Lydia Murphy
Student Number:	16721945
Supervisor:	Dr Leah O'Toole
Programme	Master of Education (Research in Practice) MEd
Thesis title:	Lean into Love and Compassion
Research Question(s):	How can I foster acts of love and compassion as a guiding principle within my practice to enrich the relationships with my children and colleagues in my early years classroom?
Intended start date of data collection:	6 th January 2021- 31 st April 2021
Professional Ethical Codes or Guidelines used:	<p>Dóchas, The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations (2014) <i>The Illustrative Guide To The Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages: Code of Conduct On Images & Messages</i>. Dublin: Dóchas, The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations.</p> <p>National University of Ireland, Maynooth (n.d) Research Ethics [online]. Available at https://journals-sagepub-com.jproxy.nuim.ie/doi/abs/10.1177/1558689808330883 (accessed on 19 August 2020)</p> <p>NCCA (2007) <i>Early Childhood How Aistear was developed: A Portraiture Study</i>. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.</p>

	United Nations (1989) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly, 20 November 1989.
--	---

1(a) Research Participants: Who will be involved in this research?

Participants/group (*tick all that apply*)

Early years / pre-school	
Primary school students	
Secondary school students	
Young people (aged 16 – 18 years)	
Adults	

Provide a brief description of the individuals and their proposed role in your research below [Max 50 words]:

The individuals embarking on this research with me are the three educators that I am currently working with on a weekly basis. The twelve children currently in my room aged two years eight months to five years eleven months and their families. I have chosen three critical friends also two class colleagues as my validation group.

1(b) Recruitment and Participation/sampling approach: *How will these participants become involved in your research? What type of sampling is involved? Please describe the formal and informal recruitment processes? Please describe the type of participation and level of engagement of participants? Are there gatekeepers and what is their part of sampling process?* [Max 100 words]

The context of the setting is a community setting in an outer suburb of Dublin in a DEIS area. My self-study action research sample now all the 12 preschool children aged 3-5 years and their guardians that I engage with daily Monday-Friday. My two colleagues within my classroom also one day a week an EYE covers a day off, they all have agreed to be part of the research study. The sample was selected by all the people I am engaging with.

I have selected a critical group from within my college colleagues and two critical friends both groups will review data with honest feedback. I have prior experience of working with my two critical friends from my undergraduate degree their feedback was critical and fair.

Aim and Purpose: The aim of my self-study research project is to reflect on my current practice in the hopes of instilling deeper connections of loving and caring relationships within my setting. The focus is to examine my current values, belief and assumptions in the hope of living more closely to my deeply held beliefs of relationships within education.

Research Question: How can I foster acts of love and compassion as a guiding principle within my practice to enrich relationships within my early years setting?

Research Design: The research project is being carried out with an opportunity sampling using a qualitative research method through an interpretive, relational transformative paradigm. I am critically reflecting on my current practice in a Self-study Action Research design in the hopes of improving my practice whilst working with colleagues, children and their families. I am undertaking two cycles of action research using McNiff and Whiteheads model with Korthagen and Brookfield reflective model within the research cycles. To draw conclusion and make my claim I will look for overarching themes coming out of the research data summarising the outcome of the research project.

Research Method/ Tools: The main data collection tool being used within the research project is my reflective diary. This includes personal analysis of daily anecdotal events within the setting. Data will be sourced from my colleagues through reflective mapping. The family's data will be collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Lastly the children data will introduce a small focus group and an open-ended art activity. To inquire into the depths of effect relationships has in our classroom, children and families.

3. Ethical Issues: Please outline the main ethical issues which may arise while undertaking this research. *Outline the nature of consent and assent about participants. (You should discuss these concerns and outline the responses/supports you will provide in the boxes below*

Consent was sought from the management team begin the research within the building. Questions were identified and answered to the best of my ability. To gather my opportunity, sample my colleagues were then asked would they like to participate within the research. Following guardians and children's consent and assent was obtained. Data collection is ultimately leading the researcher to draw conclusion having multiple methods provides triangulation as it helps the researcher to gather information from different viewpoints and positions. Within qualitative research authenticity is vital when drawing fact-based conclusions allowing research to be shown in its reality. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to find any common themes arising within the data. Care needs to be taken when using questionnaires that each participant has the same opportunity and information to answer the questions.

Confidentiality/Anonymity: All participants, stakeholders and the early years setting will remain anonymous throughout the research. This is to protect the identities of all the research participants. If this data is used at a later stage where anonymity and is not possible the participants will be afforded the opportunity to take part by regaining consent to allow identities to be distributed (BERA, 2018).

Throughout the data collection I must consider the participants inclination to overshare their story, perhaps leaving them feeling vulnerable in the future. Confidentiality and anonymity can allow participants to be honest without the fear of judgment or criticism in the future. The parent's data will be personal to the researcher and will not be shared. Educators and children's data will remain confidential to the educators in the room and educators will be asked to keep the children data confidential.

Vulnerability (minimising risk, discomfort, coping with unforeseen outcomes, can any aspect of the research give rise to any form of harm to participants, including the researcher?) [Max 100 words]

To negate potential risk or discomfort to any of the participant I will work within our overarching ethical guidelines of the early childhood sector (NUIM, 2020). Our early years setting have a management team and policies protect families, children, colleagues and myself it guides are daily practices and are upheld to minimise threat. Children's first guidelines must be upheld throughout the research project.

I am very aware our area-based childcare is running limited accessibility in these unprecedented times meaning our families have limited support also staff will not be able to avail of monthly reflective consultation. Research will be collected in a sensitive manner to try to alleviate any discomfort.

In terms of self-care for myself as a researcher I have guided support throughout my research by my research supervisor. Maynooth University also have supports to avail of terms of writing or mental health struggles.

Outline the potential for increased risk to participants considering changing circumstances in the school environment because of immediate closure or threat to privacy or anonymity. Consider implications for a change or changes in methodological tools (virtual formats). [Max 50 words]

Now due to the global pandemic Covid-19 there is a possibility in the midst's of our data collection we could have to revert to multimedia sources to collect data. If any participant feels uncomfortable with this method, they will be free to opt out of the research project. There is a limitation in my qualitative research as focus groups are unlikely to be able to take place in a small setting.

Power dynamics (between researcher-participants, amongst participants, insider-research, reflexivity, gatekeepers, working with your colleagues, working with students, etc): [Max 100 words]

As the researcher I am recognising my power when I acknowledge my educational privileges. However, with education comes power regardless of how I may feel. I am also in a role superior to most of the participants creating a power imbalance between me and participants. This highlights for me the importance of consistent reflection of my influences within the relationships with both the old and young participants trying to tell me what I want to hear. How I am influencing their data will make me check in with the participants to see how they are feeling within the journey.

I am also aware that I am co-researching with colleagues, guardians some I know many years and others not as long. I must be mindful of my interactions ensuring equality to all participants. The participants within my research project will not be affected if they chose to withdraw or express questions against the researchers values and beliefs. Children will be protected from issues of power being held in respect of unconditional positive regard by the researcher.

Informed consent and assent (for participants - and guardians where appropriate. Please also note any other approvals that may be required from other bodies (i.e. Board of Management.): [Max 100 words]

Informed consent and assent forms will be filled in by all participants taking part in the research study. Assent forms will be filled in with the child's guardian present. There will be no obligation to take part in the research study by any parent or child. Withdrawal from the research study will be available at any time. This will be monitored by the researcher by checking in with the participants throughout the research (Shånfors, 2009; NCCA, 2007;). If a piece of multimedia content is used within the research project the child/children and guardian will be give individual consent (Mukherji & Albon,2018).

that may be required for data collection activity in light of school closures or short-term illness of school

members (teachers/SNA) and how this may impact the research. Outline below; [max 50 words]

In the case of a long-term lockdown, illness or an event out of the researchers control in terms of accessing the family's baseline data telephones calls will replace to answer questionnaires, I will also reconnect by phone for a semi-structured interview in the second cycle. Collection of the children's baseline can be carried out via zoom meeting. To substitute the art activity, I can ask the children to draw a picture and post it to the service as the planned activity.

Children's and parental anecdotal journal documentation taken prior to January to March may have to used. Ethically consent has already been given from November. Children and guardians will be asked for reconsent of each piece of documentation that is used as data regardless of the situation in person or by zoom for visual consent of the work.

Ensure you have read University Ethics guidelines for Human Research and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) related documentation to address the above questions on data.

Data storage (where will the findings be stored; will they be published? And by whom?) [Max 100 words]

In term of GDPR permission will be sought for all data collected to be kept on a personal computer file in the researchers own home. Permission has been granted for the use of a reflective diary within the classroom. Conversations and antidotes between the staff, children and the parents are being recorded within the reflective diary this includes the researcher's personal reflections of the material.

Multimedia content will be taken and recorded within the classroom environment with the researcher recording device. The collected self-study research project will be published and read by my college supervisor the course co-ordinator and an external source for varication of grade markings.

After the thesis has been submitted data will be stored for ten years. Personal data file will be encrypted.

Attachments

Please attach, where available and applicable, information letters, consent forms and other materials that will be used to inform potential participants about this research.

Declaration (*Please sign and date*)

Lydia Murphy 26/01/2021

Supervisor use only:

Date Considered: _____

'I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of undertaking this research.' If any of the conditions of this proposed research change, I confirm that I will re-negotiate ethical clearance with my supervisor.

Signed: Lydia Murphy

(Tick as appropriate)

Recommendations:

Signature of supervisor: _____

Approved	
Approved with recommendations (see below)	
Referred to applicant	
Referred to Department Research and Ethics Committee	

Department use only: *(only where applicable)*

Date Considered: _____

Approved by Froebel Department Research and Ethics committee	
Approved with recommendations (see below)	
Referred to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)	
Referred to Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee	

(Tick as appropriate)

Recommendations:

Signature of Dept. Ethics Committee Chair: _____

Approved by Froebel Department Research and Ethics committee	
Referred to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)	

(Tick that apply)








Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee use only (*only where applicable*)

Date Considered: _____

Signed:

FSS Research Ethics Committee nominee

Checklist for students

<p>Please complete the checklist below to confirm you have considered all ethical aspects of your research.</p> <p>(Note that the consent form/s, assent form/s and information sheet/s that must accompany this application will be scrutinised and any omission or inadequacy in detail will result in a request for amendments).</p>	<p>Please tick</p>
I have attached (an) proper consent form/s, assent form/s and/or information sheet/s	
Each form and sheet is presented to a high standard, as suitable work carried out under the auspices of Maynooth University	
Each consent form has full contact details to enable prospective participants to make follow-up inquiries	
Each consent form has full details, in plain non-technical language, of the purpose of the research and the proposed role of the person being invited to participate	
Each consent form has full details of the purposes to which the data (in all their forms: text, oral, video, imagery etc) will be put, including for research dissemination purposes	
Each consent form explains how the privacy of the participants and their data will be protected, including the storage and ultimate destruction of the data as appropriate	
Each consent form gives assurances that the data collection (questionnaires, interviews, tests etc) will be carried out in a sensitive and non-stressful manner, and that the participant has the right to cease participation at any time and without the need to supply a reason	
<p>Please include here any other comments you wish to make about the consent form(s) and/or information sheet/s.</p> 	

Appendix B:

Child Assent Form:



Child's name

.....

I am trying to find out more about children and how we play and work together.

I would like to watch you and listen to you when you are in school and to write down some notes about you.

Would you be ok with that? Circle one. YES NO

I have asked your Mum or Dad or Guardian to talk to you about this.

If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them. If you are happy with that could you sign the form that I have sent home? If you change your mind after we start, that's ok too.

Appendix C:

Parent Consent Form:

Parent Consent Form:



Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

This information sheet is for **Parents and Guardians**

What is this Action Research Project about?

Educators undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University, are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a student teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observation, reflective notes and questionnaires. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What are the research questions? • What sorts of methods will be used? • Observation, Reflective Journal, Questionnaires etc.

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by myself as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with my class. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines.

Contact details: Student: Lydia.Murphy.2017@mumail.ie



Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun-
agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Parental/Guardian consent form

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to the participation of my child in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Date: _____

Name of Child _____

Child's signature: _____

Date: _____



Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath-
Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my masters, I am set a year-long research project. The focus of my research is based upon love and compassionate care in my early years classroom.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by antidoted evidence, through the art of conversation, children's art work may also be presented with permission granted from the child. All evidence collected for will be assented on a moment-to-moment basis. Meaning the child can change their mind at any time to have their work removed

The data will be collected using observations, a daily teacher journal. The children will be asked their opinions through discussing and observation. The child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Your child will be allowed withdraw from the research process at any stage.

All information will be confidential and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I would like to invite you and your child to give permission for him/her to take part in this project.

If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at Lydia.Murphy.2017@mumail.ie

Yours faithfully,

Lydia

Appendix D:

Colleagues Consent Form:



Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

This information sheet is for **Colleagues**.

What is this Action Research Project about?

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University, are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a student teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observation, reflective notes and questionnaires. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What are the research questions? • What sorts of methods will be used? • Observation, Reflective Journal, Questionnaires etc.

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by myself as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with my class. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines.

Contact details: Student: Lydia.Murphy.2017@mumail.ie

Appendix E:

Management's Consent Form:



Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

This information sheet is for **Management Team**.

What is this Action Research Project about?

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University, are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a student teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observation, reflective notes and questionnaires. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What are the research questions? • What sorts of methods will be used? • Observation, Reflective Journal, Questionnaires etc.

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by myself as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with my class. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines.

Contact details: Student: Lydia.Murphy.2017@mumail.ie

Appendix F:

Critical Friend's



Maynooth University Froebel
Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun-
agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Dear Critical Friend consent form

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to the participation in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Signature_____

Date: _____

Appendix G:

Parental Questionnaires: The questionnaires have been altered for confidentiality purposes. All children's names have been made unidentifiable.

Do you believe this statement is true: 'As a parent you are your child's first teacher?'

Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes can you tell me why you feel this way?

As a child's parent we teach them from day 1. From holding a bottle to even teaching them good sleep patterns. I believe everyone in a child's life is there teacher - from home to the environment. "Nature VS Nurture"

If no can you tell me why you feel this way?

Do you believe education has changed since you went to school?

yes, schools have ^{more} recognised that all children have different needs, & different rates of learning. I can't ever remember SAT's in my school as a child.

What does the word love mean to you?

love has many different meanings in my eyes. I love when it rains so that doesn't mean I stand in the rain for a long period of time. I love my kids dearly & for them I would do anything. Love is compassion, kindness, happiness, empathy. Love to me also means to show joy & give joy to others, Love is also an expression through hugging, kissing, cuddling & even doing something as small as making dinner &

How does it make you feel to think your child's /children's teacher loves your child?

It makes me feel Safe, Secure and content knowing that they are loved as much as in school & at home.

Do you believe us as teachers care for you as well as your child/children?

yes most definitely. Updates are giving on a regular basis. Communication is key & I think all teachers have been great.

What do you hope your child achieves by the end of this year?

I hope she is prepared as much as she can be for primary school. I hope she makes lots of friends and I hope she can socialise a bit easier compared to the start of the year.

Is there anything you have not told me about your child that you would like me to know?

After easter holidays, I think emma may become a bit withdrawn, I don't know! She loves her daddy & unfortunately our family home has been split. I'd like you to know that she may need more emotional support from everyone involved in her life.. ♡

Any other comments?

Thank you for all you do.

Questionnaire:

Do you believe this statement is true: 'As a parent you are your child's first teacher?'

Yes

☒

No

☐

If yes can you tell me why you feel this way?

I feel this way because as a Mother I am my Child's first Impressions of life. A Child becomes a product of their Environment and a mother is the primary Adult to Influence this.

If no can you tell me why you feel this way?

Do you believe education has changed since you went to school?

Yes, it has completely changed. As Internet has opened up every person's reach of information has too.

What does the word love mean to you?

Love means showing you care in everything you do and going above and beyond for the child or person. Protecting and Nurturing and showing affection.

How does it make you feel to think your child's /children's teacher loves your child?

It makes me feel safe and lucky.
I know Lydia loves my child and he loves her too. It's an amazing feeling to know I'm dropping him off everyday to people who love and truly want the best for each child.

Do you believe us as teachers care for you as well as your child/children?

Yes. I feel like the teacher's really care and listen to the parent's. The communication and help they have offered me during my two children's time in the creche has been so caring and generous. I feel so happy my both kids got to experience an amazing start to the school/education system.

What do you hope your child achieves by the end of this year?

I hope he achieves to remain the happy, smart caring little boy he is..

Is there anything you have not told me about your child that you would like me to know?

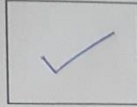
He really has improved in himself since being back in after the last lockdown. His routine is better and his mood is even happier. It has a vital role in keeping kids happy I feel.

Any other comments?

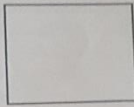
Questionnaire:

Do you believe this statement is true: 'As a parent you are your child's first teacher?'

Yes



No



If yes can you tell me why you feel this way?

A parent teaches their child from birth to smile, crawl, walk and encourages them to talk.

If no can you tell me why you feel this way?

Do you believe education has changed since you went to school?

Yes, children now have more choices with their education

What does the word love mean to you?

Love is my children, to protect them, teach them and guide them

How does it make you feel to think your child's /children's teacher loves your child?

This puts my mind at ease as a teacher spends as much time with my child as I do.

Do you believe us as teachers care for you as well as your child/children?

Yes, teachers support parents as much as they support children

What do you hope your child achieves by the end of this year?

I hope his speech has improved ready for him to attend big school.

Is there anything you have not told me about your child that you would like me to know?

As you know A struggles with some of his speech and language, Thank you for encouraging him with this.
I also feel he gets embarrassed easily if he is upset and gets angry or frustrated when he does not understand his words.

Any other comments?

Questionnaire:

Do you believe this statement is true: 'As a parent you are your child's first teacher?'

Yes

☒

No

☐

If yes can you tell me why you feel this way?

as a child grows since birth you need to teach them everything. how to use a bottle soother and then to talk walk and eat.

If no can you tell me why you feel this way?

Do you believe education has changed since you went to school?

yes a little

What does the word love mean to you?

Love means no matter what you will always have someone to count on. its unconditional you can trust the person you love & are comfortable around them. Its like your heart tells you its good for you. love never hurts or makes you cry.

How does it make you feel to think your child's /children's teacher loves your child?

very happy at least I know my child is safe.

Do you believe us as teachers care for you as well as your child/children?

Sometimes but not necessarily as we wouldn't have that bond the way our kids would.

What do you hope your child achieves by the end of this year?

Better Speech

Is there anything you have not told me about your child that you would like me to know?

nope

Any other comments?

Questionnaire:

Do you believe this statement is true: 'As a parent you are your child's first teacher?'

Yes

☒

No

☐

If yes can you tell me why you feel this way?

We teach our children how to walk, talk
our values + beliefs.

If no can you tell me why you feel this way?

Do you believe education has changed since you went to school?

yes, education has improved.
children are heard more now.

What does the word love mean to you?

Love is wanting the best for someone
to guide + protect them.
make their lives as happy + easy
as possible.

How does it make you feel to think your child's /children's teacher loves your child?

It makes me happy, makes me feel
my child is as safe + happy as
when they're with me

Do you believe us as teachers care for you as well as your child/children?

yes, my daughters teachers are
very kind + understanding

I feel I can confide my worries about
my girls to them.

What do you hope your child achieves by the end of this year?

To be secure + confident in themselves

Is there anything you have not told me about your child that you would like me to know?

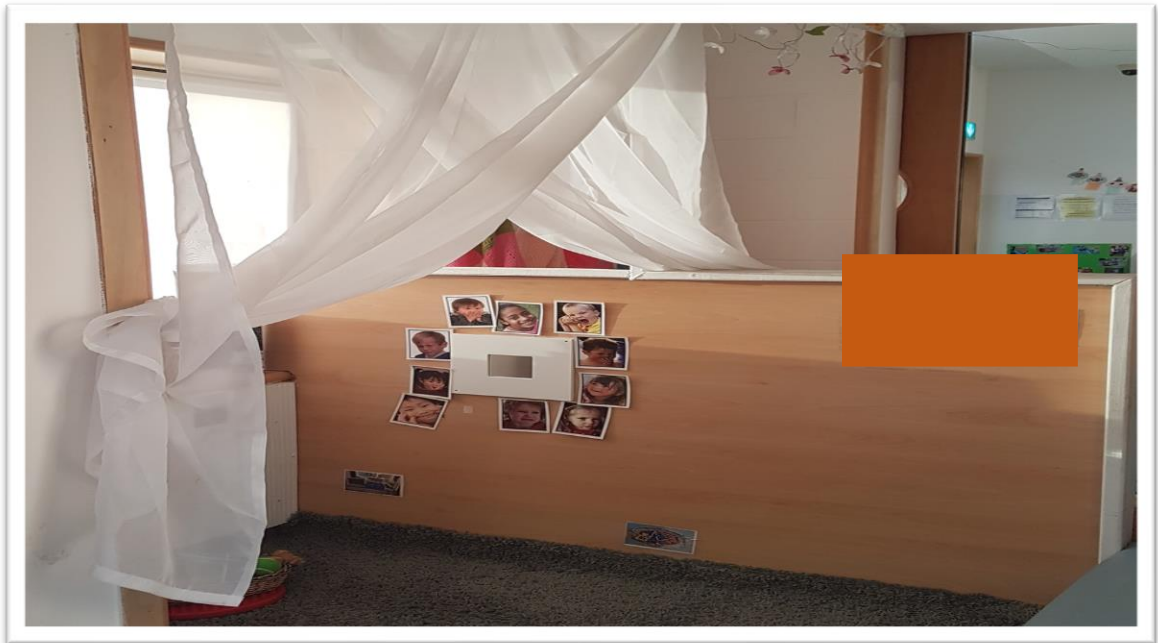
~~Kiana + Kary~~ do not want to go to
big school in September.
Kiana gets quite upset talking about
it.

Any other comments?

my girls are very happy when
they are in school.
I love to hear all the stories they
have about their teachers + friends

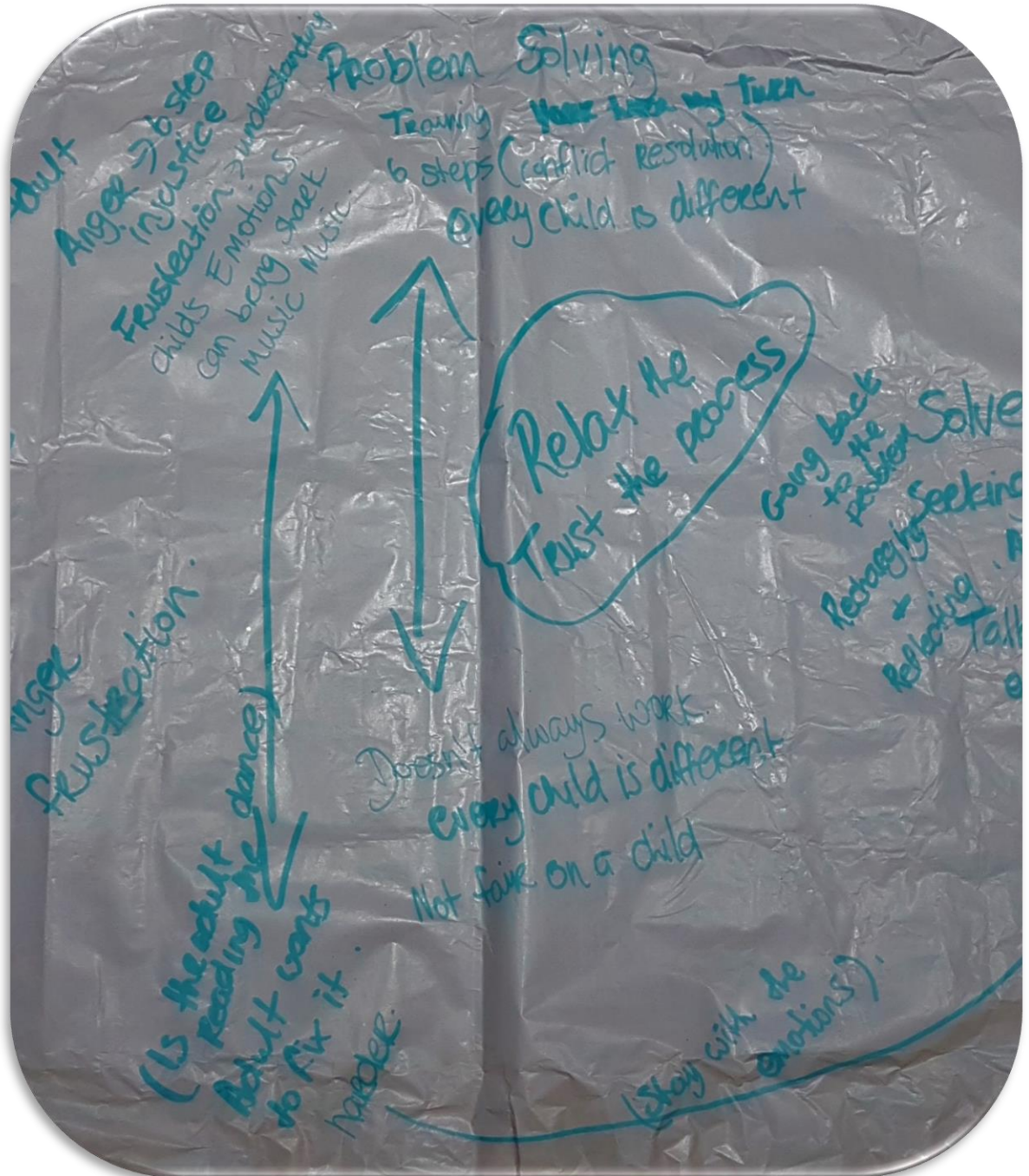
Appendix H:

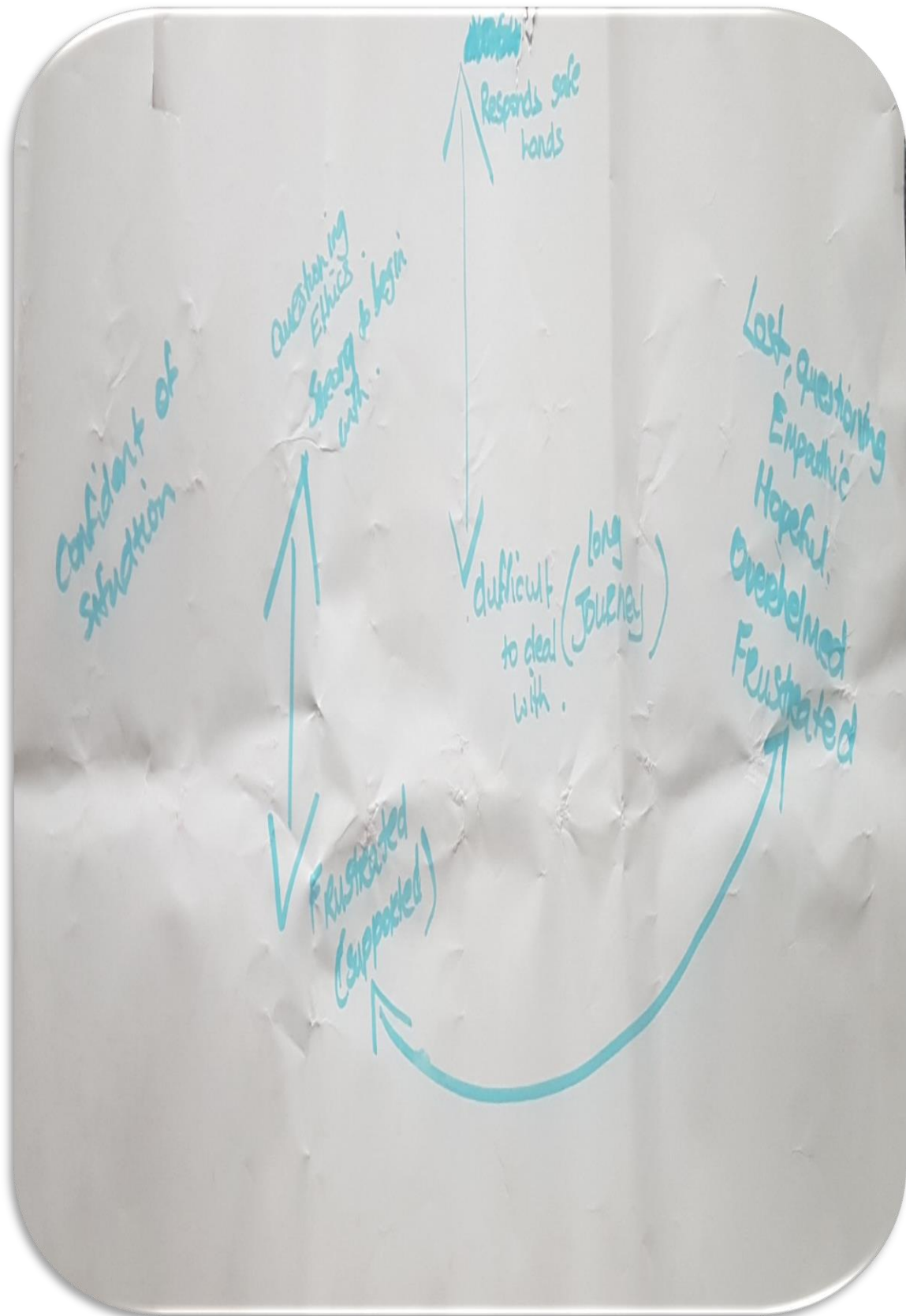
Intervention 1



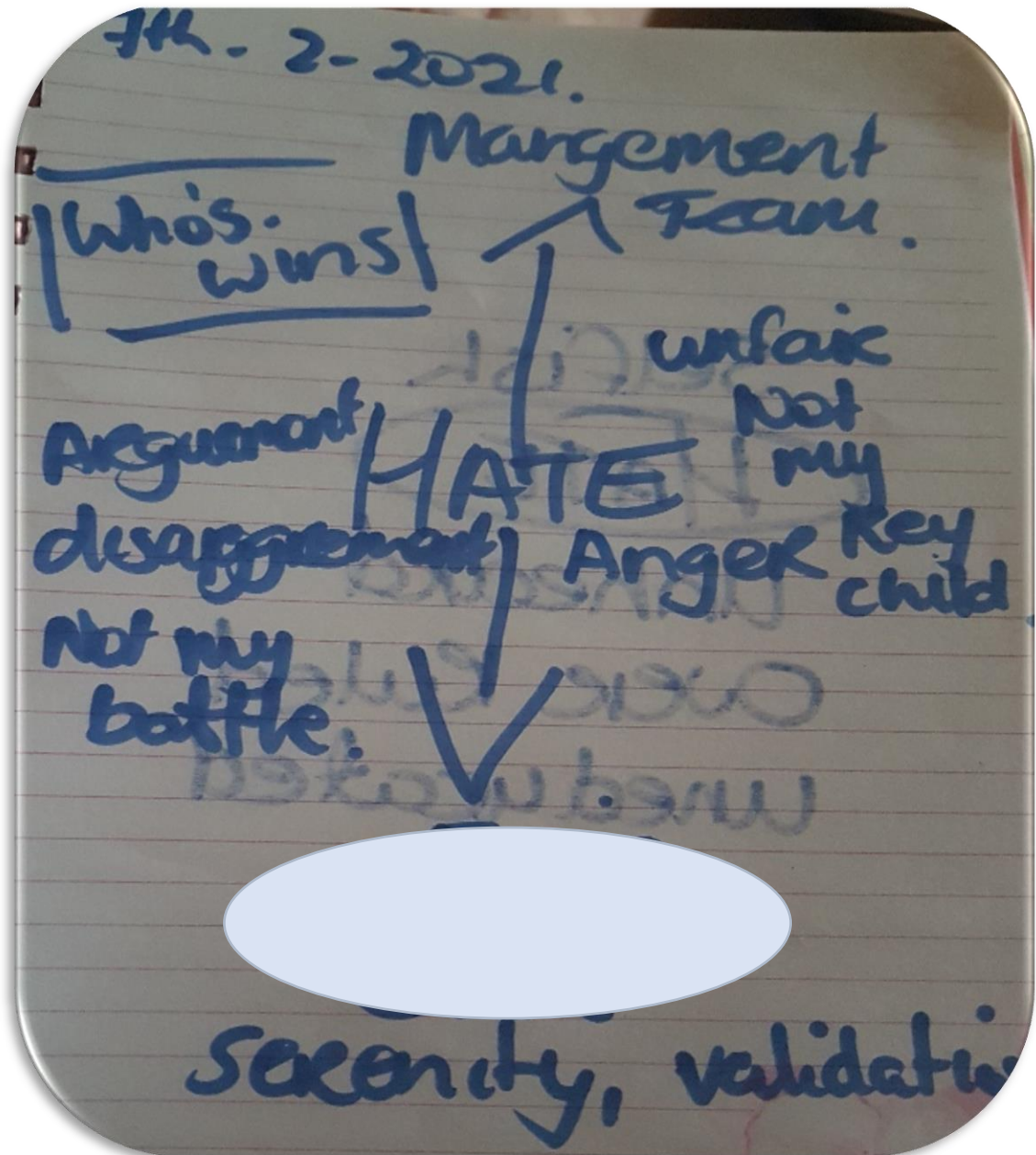
Appendix I:

C.A.T. Relational Mapping









My own map

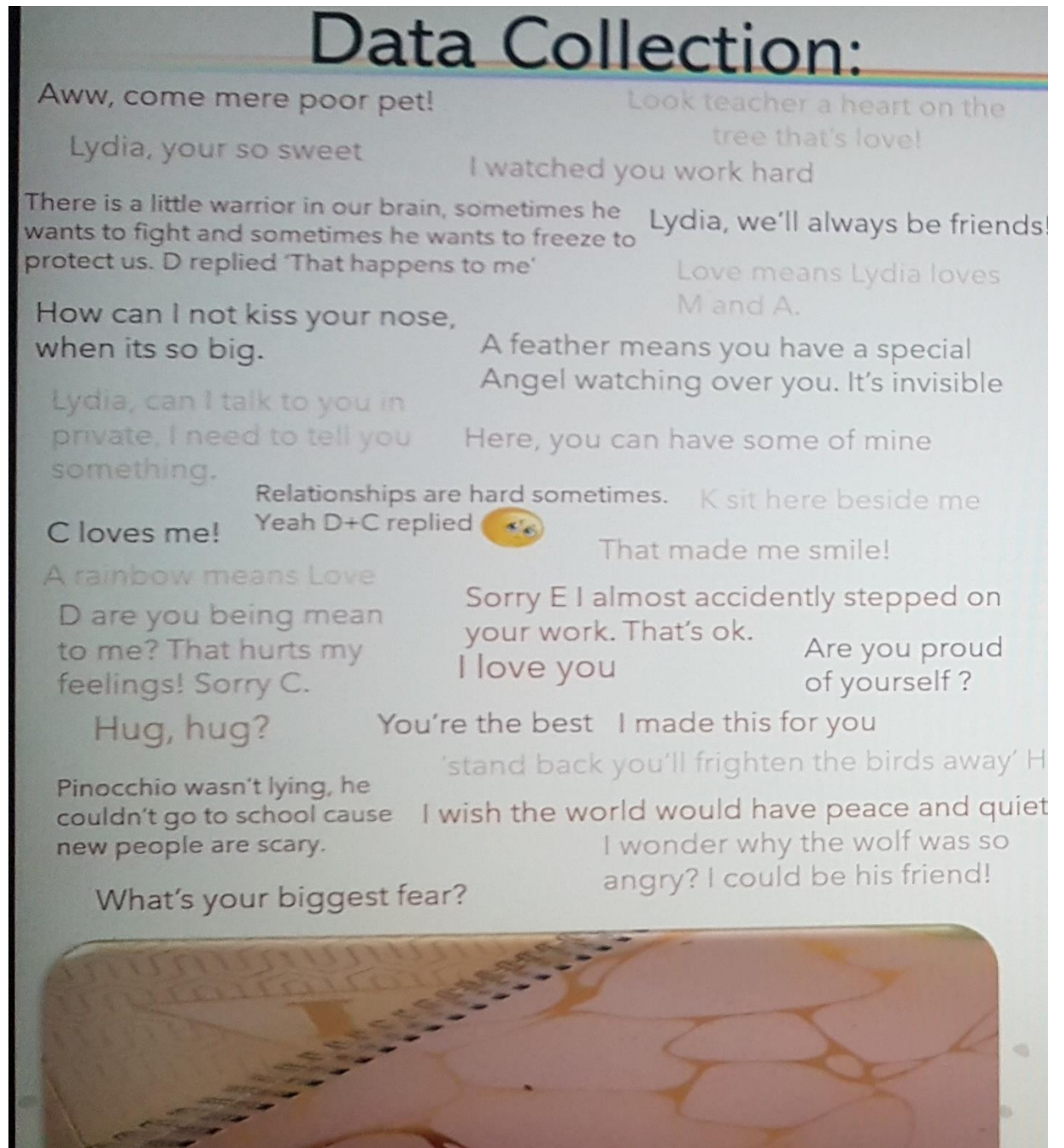
Appendix J:

Intervention 3



Appendix K:

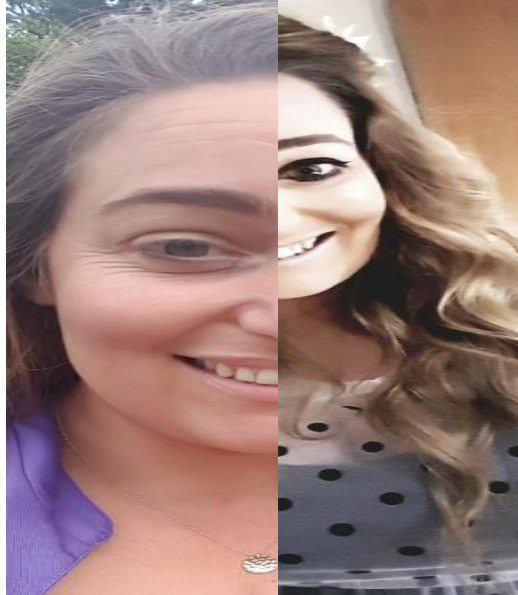
Children's relational evidence



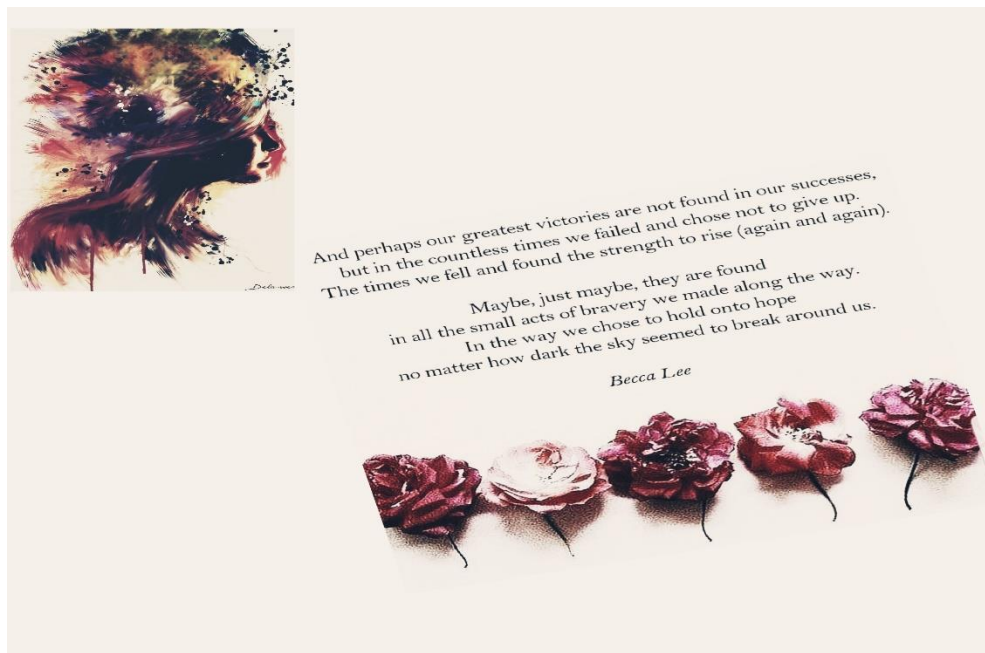
Appendix L:

Patricia Reflective Task

'My Living Contradiction'



This is me : REALITY v's INSTAGRAM



Looking back on these pictures of myself renders reflection on my life. People in the past have called me the 'Ice Queen' or 'Little Miss Perfect' in the moment I would brush it off not showing how deeply hurt I was. 'Everything rolls off you like water off a duck's back' they would say. It could not have been further from the truth. I spend years dealing with the pain of their words.

The pain no longer stings as bad because I now understand what they were looking for was authenticity and connection. Focusing on the first picture everything looked perfect my lines and wrinkles on my face are faded my grey hair is covered, those bits of me tell a story of where I have been. Yet, I could not give that to them being painfully shy. The beginning of taking down that wall I had up for so long came with the introduction of my education. It felt like my first High/Scope facilitator opened a can of worms I could not close again! For the first time I began to express emotion, I spent so long holding it all inside it was like the flood gates opened. Did I keep those friends in my journey to authenticity? The answer is no not really. Do I have deeper friendships now that I have taken down the mask? Absolutely. I have also learned those comments were probably not about me in the first place, the only who was harshly judging me was me.

However, those comments started a journey that I am grateful for. Taking down that mask has deeply improved my relationships in my practice. I am not scared anymore to express how I feel whether it is positive or negative. I am not fearful of standing up for what is right, even if I must stand alone. The person in the filtered pictures did not even have a voice, an opinion, literally the shield of perfectionism silenced me. I was 'Little Miss Perfect' and everything everyone else wanted me to be 'A Puppet'. My living

contradiction, I always had this power inside me but was so afraid to let it out for fear of being negatively portrayed or judged. I remember how difficult it was to say goodnight to anyone because it meant expressing emotion.

Brown (2019) stresses perfectionism is like wearing a ten-ton shield of amour. Since I started my degree and took off the mask, I have probably had more doors closed to me than opened. Been told no Lydia not this time, you are not ready yet. Looking back, they were the times I thought I would never get through - rejection after rejection. All I wanted to do was put that filter back on even stronger and build that wall higher. Yet, something inside said no stay true to yourself, the right people love you for who you are.

My education and reading my inspirational leaders such as Brené, Glennon and Oprah certainly helped me keep that filter off. I love being able to express kindness, empathy, vulnerability, have diverse and challenging perspectives with a fire inside me. My research topic title is lean into love and compassion and boy what journey it has been. Nobody talks about how hard it can be to express kindness, this is what I spent years contending with.

Now, I do my best now to show the children all of me, I tell them when I make a mistake, I say sorry when I need to. Relationships are built on a foundation of trust. How could they really trust me to show me all of them, when all I was showing them was a filter. Could they really trust me when I said it was ok to make a mistake? Now I would argue they could not. Children are reading body language first and foremost. I now modal transparency, sincerity, and most of all my imperfections.

I still wear make-up because I enjoy putting it on. If I am honest, I still need it in certain situations. Do I still use filters yes? Baby steps my journey continues. However, the 'Ice

Queen' has very much faded away, regardless of what is on my face I lean into and stand up for my values and beliefs. Finally, my heart is aligning with my head and voice.

