International Perspectives on
Early Childhood Education and Development 12

Sophie Jane Alcock

Young Children Playing

Relational Approaches to Emotional Learning in Early Childhood Settings

Springer

Young Children Playing

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 12

Early childhood education in many countries has been built upon a strong tradition of a materially rich and active play-based pedagogy and environment. Yet what has become visible within the profession, is, essentially a Western view of childhood, preschool education and school education.
It is timely that a series of books be published which present a broader view of early childhood education. This series seeks to provide an international perspective on early childhood education. In particular, the books published in this series will:

- Examine how learning is organized across a range of cultures, particularly indigenous communities
- Make visible a range of ways in which early childhood pedagogy is framed and enacted across countries, including the majority poor countries
- Critique how particular forms of knowledge are constructed in curriculum within and across countries
- Explore policy imperatives which shape and have shaped how early childhood education is enacted across countries
- Examine how early childhood education is researched locally and globally
- Examine the theoretical informants driving pedagogy and practice, and seek to find alternative perspectives from those that dominate many Western heritage countries
- Critique assessment practices and consider a broader set of ways of measuring children's learning
- Examine concept formation from within the context of country-specific pedagogy and learning outcomes

The series covers theoretical works, evidence-based pedagogical research, and international research studies. The series also covers a broad range of countries, including majority poor countries. Classical areas of interest, such as play, the images of childhood, and family studies, will also be examined. However, the focus is critical and international (not Western-centric

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/7601

Sophie Jane Alcock

Young Children Playing

Relational Approaches to Emotional Learning in Early Childhood Settings

Springer

Sophie Jane Alcock
Victoria University of Wellington
Wellington, New Zealand

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development
ISBN 978-981-10-1205-1 ISBN 978-981-10-1207-5 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016942775

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer Science+Business Media Singapore Pte Ltd.

Foreword

In *Separation and Creativity* (1999), psychoanalyst Maud Mannoni notes that "[a]n area of play is necessary between the subject and the other so that the imagination can be accepted and the subject can take up speech" (p. 102). In my own work as a child analyst, I constantly see children who lose the vitality of language and miss out on opportunities to develop a fertile imagination because of the constricted contours of the emotional environment of schooling, even in the earliest years. This cannot be attributed to the callousness or indifference of teachers. Rather, as Vivian Paley demonstrated in *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (2005), the increasing shift toward accountability and putatively *evidence-based practices* has sharply delimited the space in North American schools in which there is room for play, fantasy, or even conversation. The pressure from high-stakes testing is now infiltrating even preschools, with an increasing push toward sedentary, worksheet-based tasks rather than experiential learning, social interchange, and fantasy play. And what of those young children who lack the cultural capital and sophistication to sit for hours engaged in "academic" tasks? On May 16, 2015, the *New York Times* reported that more than 10,000 two- and three-year-old children in the United States are currently being medicated for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Tellingly, the medication is administered to children of families who are economically marginal. Is this repression our best answer to a young child's demand for engagement, activity, and presence? Sophie Alcock's work in this book is motivated by concerns that the push for an academicized curriculum, and an accompanying focus on rote learning and test preparation, is beginning to infiltrate early education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The fault does not lie entirely with policymakers and bureaucrats, however. Early education is built upon principles drawn from developmental psychology, a field of study that has persisted in viewing the child as a decontextualized, narrowly cognitive being. There are few nods in developmental psychology to the social nature of children; to the embeddedness of thought in social praxis and performance; to the intrinsic connections between thought, emotion, fantasy, and physicality; or to the

possibility of an unconscious. This is the reductionist doctrine our teachers are taught. The ideology of early childhood teacher education, constructed on a developmental psychology foundation, often dresses its curriculum in a humanistic rhetoric of care, but underneath children are viewed as atomized, culture-free, and needing indoctrination into predetermined forms of knowledge and ways of being. The rhetoric of the curriculum appears designed to appeal to the altruism of teachers and the aspirations of parents for love and care and then to betray them both with an implementation that can leave children annihilated, teachers dispirited, and parents pressuring their children to become winners in an achievement race where some will be winners and many will be losers.

Child psychoanalysis is a field of study that has made an enormous contribution to our understanding of the emotional experiences of children and the harmful ways in which the mechanisms we have created for indoctrinating children into the symbolic worlds of school learning, behavioral conformity, and the singular pursuit of academic "excellence" through performance on tests create an endless set of *demands* that squelch the possibility of a child experiencing *desire*, simply because their is no time or space for the child to experience being and becoming. The demand from schools that insist that a child *be a certain way* as opposed to experiencing *being* offers a prescription that is the inverse of what psychoanalysts and all good teachers of young children know to be facilitative of child growth. What of the possibilities of the existential encounter between a young child and a curious and passionate adult? What if instead of a place structured by obligations and demands, schooling became a place for *meeting*? What if what the child needs from us is not an expectation, an obligation, a directive, or an answer but an invitation to pose questions and experience unencumbered thought? If a child's life matters existentially, surely some thought needs to be given to the provision for *existential meeting*. Is it possible for a pedagogic space to offer invitation, hospitality, and phenomenological validation of personhood? Surely the existential mirroring that comes from *being in relation* is restorative and promotes personhood. A child's subjectivity can be *animated* by what psychoanalysts call a holding and reflective environment. Similarly, by extending such holding and validation to children in a group, the children come to experience the powerful possibilities of a community of learners or more precisely the possibility of a group of people who experience communion with each other.

It is these weighty matters that are of concern to Sophie Alcock in this moving work. Using a sympathetic psychoanalytic frame of reference, she brings us into the room with children as they seek communion and validation and as they reach toward question, desire, and possibility. As Maud Mannoni noted in *Separation and Creativity*, "The more painful reality is for the child, the more important is the ability of the parents to dream along with him [sic] of a different world in which the wondrous has its rightful place, its place as the inspiration for the poet and the storyteller in search of the lost language of childhood" (1999, p. 156). These words are even more true for those wondrous and often underappreciated care workers and

teachers, who seek to devote their professional lives to assisting young children in holding onto the precious gift of wonder and possibility. I hope this book will give such teachers courage and heart to stay true to this important mission.

Adelphi University
New York, NY, USA

Michael O'Loughlin

Contents

Part I Introduction and Methods: Relating and Feelings at the Heart of Play

Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing 3
Introduction 3
Why Explore Young Children's Relationality, Play and Playfulness? 4
Brief Introduction to Theory Informing Interpretations of Events 5
Activity Theory 5
Relational Psychology 7
Aotearoa-New Zealand Context 8
Curriculum: Te Whāriki 8
The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Settings 9
Event 1: Windy Waterspout Play 10
Analysis and Discussion 11
Mediating Artefacts: The Tools, Signs and Symbols that Connect Players 11
Analysis and Discussion 13
Mediation: Houses, Shelters, Security and Windy Weather 13
Analysis and Discussion 15
Distributed Imagination: Playful Synergy 15
Field as Context 17
Summary 18
References 19

Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III) 23
Introduction 23
The Two Projects 23
Ethnographic Methods 24
Observing Experience 25
Perezhivanie: Emotional Experience 26
Events 27

Event 2: Contagious Laughter 28
ECCE Setting 28
Analysis and Discussion 29
Procedures 32
Ethics and Access 32
Data Generation 33
Data Analysis 33
Phases of the Research 35
Overview of Part III 35
Introduction to Puriri Centre (Part III) 36
Puriri ECCE Setting and Background 37
Event 3: Being Left and Reassuring Grandmother 38
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 38
Summary 39
Chapter Structure for Part II and Part III (Chapters "The Intersubjective In-Between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness", "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together", "Becoming Selves Relationally", "Imagining While Playing", "Feelings Felt in Bodies", "A Holding Environment" and "Relational Fields and Context") 40
References 41

Part II Young Children Being Playful in Three Early Childhood Care and Education Settings: Connecting and Communicating

The Intersubjective in-between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness 47
Introduction 47
The Feeling Tone in the Relational Field 48
Event 4: Water-Play in a Containing Paddling Pool-Puddle 50
Analysis and Discussion 50
Analysis and Discussion 51
Event 5: Contained Water Play with Toddlers 52
Analysis and Discussion 53
Containers Mediating Context 53
Analysis and Discussion 55
Event 6: Peek-a-boo I See and Hide from You 56
Analysis and Discussion 57
Summary: The Third Space Between in Playfulness 59
References 59

Words Connecting Children Playfully Together 61
Introduction 61
Event 7: Badjelly 63
Analysis and Discussion 64
Event 8: Joking 65
Analysis and Discussion 66
Event 9: Teacher Initiated Humor: Subversive Child Response 67
Analysis and Discussion 67
Event 10: Multiple Overlapping Dialogues 68
Analysis and Discussion 69
Event 11: Numbers in Narratives 71
Analysis and Discussion 71
Analysis and Discussion 72
Event 12: Teacher as Clown 73
Analysis and Discussion 74
Analysis and Discussion 75
Summary 76
References 76

Becoming Selves Relationally 79
Event 13: Transformational Roles and Boxes 80
Analysis and Discussion 81
Event 14: Babies, Beds, Planes and Power-Play 82
Analysis and Discussion 83
Event 15: From Jack-in-the-Box to Posting Parcels 84
Analysis and Discussion 84
Event 16: Playfulness Within a Game with Rules 86
Analysis and Discussion 87
Analysis and Discussion 88
Analysis and Discussion 89
Analysis and Discussion 90
Analysis and Discussion 91
Event 17: Aesthetic Word Play 93
Analysis and Discussion 93
Summary 95
References 95

Imagining While Playing 97
Introduction 97
Event 18: Playful Teacher Chasing 98
Analysis and Discussion 99
Analysis and Discussion 100
Analysis and Discussion 101
Analysis and Discussion 103

Event 19: Making Poisonous 104
Analysis and Discussion 104
Analysis and Discussion 106
Analysis and Discussion 107
Event 20: Tricks and Magic 108
Analysis and Discussion 108
Analysis and Discussion 109
Event 21: Teletubbies 110
Analysis and Discussion 110
Summary 111
References 112

Feelings Felt in Bodies 115
Introduction 115
Event 22: Chanting Rhyme Together 116
Analysis and Discussion 117
Analysis and Discussion 119
Event 23: Name Play 120
Analysis and Discussion 121
Event 24: Playful Music Session 121
Analysis and Discussion 122
Analysis and Discussion 123
Analysis and Discussion 124
Analysis and Discussion 124
Event 26: Friendship in a Tyre 125
Analysis and Discussion 126
Analysis and Discussion 127
Event 27: Toddling and Falling 128
Analysis and Discussion 129
Analysis and Discussion 131
Event 28: Sliding and Hiding 132
Analysis and Discussion 132
Analysis and Discussion 134
Summary 134
References 135

Part III Infants and Toddlers Relating and Playing: Layers of Holding

A Holding Environment 139
Introduction 139
Puriri Centre 139
Wondering 140
Feeling Held 141
Experience as Thinking Feelings in Play 141

Container-Contained 142
Event 1: Doll Wrapping 142
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 144
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 144
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 145
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 146
Event 2: Holding-Carrying 147
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 148
Event 3: Holding, Standing, and Sitting 148
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 149
Event 4: Holding While Lying with 149
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 150
Event 5: Eating-Feeling Sticky Rice 151
Analysis, Discussion and Wondering 151
Event 6: Basket Play 151
Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering 152
Analysis, Discussion and Wondering 153
Event 7: Holding on While Letting Go 154
Summary 156
References 157

Relational Fields and Context 159
Introduction 159
Sustainability as Care 160
Interconnected Care 160
Community Connections 161
Mixed-Age Child-Care with Flexible Boundaries: Tuakana/teina 161
Event 8: Opening Doors: Crossing Boundaries 162
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 162
Event 9: Boundaries: Caring for and About Babies 163
Discussion, Analysis and Wondering 164
Event 10: Accountability, Sustainability and Documentation 165
Event 11: Sustained and Sustainable Pretend Play 166
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 167
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 168
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 169
Event 12: From Water Play to Plant Watering 169
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 170
Event 13 A: Pens and Mark Making; Literacy and Time to Play 171
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 171
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 172
Event 13 B: Mark Making: The Feeling of Finger-Painting 173
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 173
Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering 174
Summary 174
References 175

Part IV Implications for Teachers: Observing Subjectively, Reflectively, Relationally and with Feeling

Implications: Teachers Being Relationally Aware 179
Observing Lilly: Reflecting Awareness 180
Relationality with Feeling (In Bodies) 181
Reflective Relational Observation 182
Mindfulness; Awareness 183
Emotional Awareness (of Feelings Felt in Bodies) 186
Self-Other 186
Centre Ethos 187
Mindfulness of Experiencing Feelings in Bodies 187
Good-Enough Teachers: Holding in Mind and Body 188
Relating and Regulating Emotions with Rhythm and Play 189
Play as Narrative-Like Sense and Meaning-Making 190
Summary 192
References 192

Part I
Introduction and Methods: Relating and Feelings at the Heart of Play

Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing

Abstract Young children's emotional wellbeing in early childhood care and education settings is the overarching focus of this book. Children's play is at its heart. Narrative events, thematically arranged and presented throughout the chapters of this four-part book, illustrate issues related to emotional wellbeing in young children playing and relating, in ECCE settings in Aotearoa- New Zealand. Themes, issues, and the case study settings are introduced in Part I. Parts II and III respectively explore significant themes and theory through narrative events that are grounded in two research projects. Chapter titles and headings pick up on the complexities observed in these play-based events.

Introduction

Young children's emotional wellbeing in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings is the overarching focus of this book. Children's play is at its heart. Narrative events, thematically arranged and presented throughout the chapters of this four-part book, illustrate issues related to emotional wellbeing in young children playing and relating, in ECCE settings in Aotearoa- New Zealand. Themes, issues, and the case study settings are introduced in Part I. Parts II and III respectively explore significant themes and theory through narrative events that are grounded in two research projects. Chapter titles and headings pick up on the complexities observed in these play-based events. Thus headings address: the intersubjective in-between-ness in children's playfulness; words and musicality connecting children playfully together; children as relationally becoming subjects, imagining and playing; feelings felt in bodies; relational fields and holding environments. Events illuminate these broad issues and themes by illustrating children moving and relating with feeling, playing and alive to the world.

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_1

Why Explore Young Children's Relationality, Play and Playfulness?

I vividly recall from many years ago, 3 year old Cecily arriving at kindergarten and proudly announcing: "my dad called me a silly sausage!", to which I responded with something like: "oh and what did you do?". "I called him a silly potato". Cecily giggled as she told me. I remember her feelings of triumph, her loud proud voice and small yet staunch body stance, combined with a tone of clever satisfaction and my open warmth towards her. I felt almost honoured at being accepted and in this sense included in her story. It is these feelings that I recall most intensely; they gave sense and vitality to her cleverly meaningful and playful words. This short story overflows with potential interpretations and implications yet it was the emotional-feeling tone in this event that struck me most then and that causes me to remember it now. I still love engaging with children in such playful child initiated and affirming ways. Emotions, thoughts and feelings in children's play are thus a central focus in this book.

As an early childhood teacher, researcher and academic I am attracted to young children's play, perhaps following the playful child in me. Children, like young animals everywhere play, unless severely traumatised. It is the feelings in play that intrigue me. Play is relational; it involves children connecting within themselves and with others in historical and cultural contexts that include the physical environment as well as fields of feelings that extend well beyond the physical place of play. Hence, another reason for this books' focus on young children's emotions and feelings, in playing and relating.

Cecily's playful exchange, described above, exemplifies her making connections between self, home, place and others (myself). She connected with me in the ECCE setting by describing playing with words at home and with her father. In this way she brought feelings from home into the ECCE setting, actively connecting these different places and people. Though just 3 years old Cecily spoke in meaningful and complex ways that involved free association with word feelings and meanings. With wonderful open-to-the-world style Cecily playfully explored connections between word patterns. As her teacher I loved hearing her stories and gently reciprocating, inviting her expressive ways of relating, connecting and communicating.

In such fundamentally relational ways children playing together exemplify patterns of interconnectedness. The image of Indra's Net, from the Buddhist Avatamsaka Sutra, (Cleary, 1993) is a metaphor for this fundamental interconnectedness of all phenomena. Indra's Net extends infinitely in all directions. A vast network of precious jewels is attached to each of the intersecting knots of the net. Each jewel contains and reflects the image of all the other jewels so that, if you look at one, you see all the others reflected in it. Similarly each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object in itself: "… the beings and aeons which are as many as all the dust particles, are all present in every particle of dust." (cited by Loy, 1993, p.482). All phenomena (all matter: people, other animals, plants and things) interpenetrate, are interdependent and connected. This image of complex interconnectedness is not only a metaphor. It is also consistent with environmental

and ecological dynamic systems views of the underlying interrelatedness of matter and all living things. This intra-inter-connected awareness that I want to convey at the start of this book is fundamental to understanding young children playing together in ECCE (early childhood care and education) settings as relationally connecting within wider relationally systemic contexts (Capra, 1979).

The many diverse ways in which young children in early childhood settings interconnect through play, are presented in this book, in the form of 39 narrative-like events. These events show children (and adults) as feeling-thinking, mind-body, subjects and objects, inter and intra-connecting and communicating, while living in and with the world. They exemplify children's many ways of connecting and communicating with feelings and play, which is the central focus of this book.

Not constrained by any one theoretical or philosophical paradigm this book draws on the fields of relational psychology and socio-cultural psychology as well as play research to explore young children's relational play (Engeström, 2015; Engestrom, Reijo, & Punamaki, 1999; Fleer, 2013; Goncu, 1993; Goncu & Gaskins, 2007; Mitchell, 1991; Ogden, 2009; Paley, 1990, 2010; Stern, 1985, 2010; Trevarthen, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, 2004; Wertsch, 1991; Winnicott, 1974). These different theoretical perspectives add to understandings and views of children's play which, by its very nature, is also full of paradoxes and inconsistencies.

Relational and socio-cultural theories share fundamentally important social constructivist beliefs that individual, social and personal realities are co-constructed in relationships with our selves, with others and with the wider world, over time. However theorists differ in the emphases they do and don't place on non-verbal, inter and intra-psychic, body-based and affective aspects of relationality. Young children's bodies exude feelings and emotions. The non-verbal, embodied and affective ways in which young children relate and play are therefore a focus in this book. And because we never really know what others think and feel, drawing on different theoretical perspectives adds depth and breadth to ways of seeing and understanding children and ourselves relationally.

In this book, it is the actual events of children playing and relating that are the primary source for illuminating understandings of children playing and relating. Theoretical interpretations are secondary, enhancing understandings in diverse ways that may also potentially change how we view children and ourselves, relationally.

Brief Introduction to Theory Informing Interpretations of Events

Activity Theory

References to socio-cultural theory have become common-place in early childhood writings over the past decade, with the important recognition that social, cultural and historical contexts are integral to people's psychological growth and that the

conditions which shape people's growth are mediated, emerge and evolve within social, historical and cultural contexts. CHAT (Cultural Historical Activity Theory) has been concisely described as: "…the study of the development of psychological functioning through social participation in socially organised practices" (Chaiklin, 2001, p. 21). Practices and activity are synonymous terms. In this book the terms *CHAT*, and *activity theory* are sometimes used interchangeably. Though the CHAT acronym sounds more distinctive, the phrase activity theory feels less intimidating and does better represent the research methods used here than does the longer, more methodologically purist, CHAT label.

The events presented throughout this book are also systems of activity, with a specific focus on young children's playful and relational activity. The events are also a central unit of analysis for investigating and interpreting children's play. Activity theory analyses emphasise the transformational, dynamic and ever-changing, artefact-mediated nature of these events.

As a simple example of how events serve as units for analysis: Cecily, introduced in paragraph two, used her body with words to reciprocally communicate her story telling with me. Our words, movements, feelings, gaze, tone, stance etc. all mediated how we related and connected together. Spoken words with body-movements and the feeling-thoughts that emerged between us are examples of the focus of analysis in events presented throughout this book. Importantly, we investigate the whole event, rather than the individual parts or participants, like Cecily, or myself, or our words without context. Thus we focus on the connecting spaces in-between people, rather than viewing people as separate individuals. This focus on connection and artefact-mediation is important for teachers, because teachers can change the connecting conditions, including the mediating artefacts, such as words, in-between children and themselves. Aware teachers can alter the ways in which children and teachers relate and therefore how and what they learn, by changing the mediating conditions. For example: how might Cecily have responded if I had ignored and not spoken with her? Words and body-talk with feelings, motivated, mediated and engaged us in communicating and connecting, furthering our relationship and her ways with language, words and stories, all of which are implicit in learning (Fleer, 2013; Goncu & Gaskins, 2007; Nicolopoulou et al. 2009; Nicolopoulou, 2010; Paley, 1990, 2010).

This shift of researcher lens, from focusing on separate individuals to noting the felt spaces in-between and the artefacts, (signs, symbols and tools, invisible as well as visible) that mediate and connect individuals, is also a paradigm shift; it changes the way we see things. The world resembles Indra's inter-connected Net.

From an activity theory perspective interconnectedness is mediated, transmitted, transformed, co-created, via artefacts and particularly words. Culture and society evolve and change through artefact-mediated processes (Wartofsky, 1979; Wertsch, 1991). Activity theory enhances awareness of the invisible and visible spaces in-between children playing together. Furthermore it has enhanced my awareness of the invisible, yet felt, spaces in-between myself, and the children I observe. I have learned to look out for any artefacts that might be mediating children's playfulness in any number of ways, including by disrupting as well as connecting children relating and playing.

Over time I've become increasingly aware of the emotional tone, the feelings, energy and vitality in children's play. Cecily, in the earlier story, exuded vitality. This emotionally felt dimension of being did not feature in my readings of activity theory, perhaps reflecting the historical dominance of cognitivist perspectives in educational psychology, which have tended to avoid exploring the interconnectedness of feelings with thought and minds with bodies. While Vygotsky (1978), as a foundational socio-cultural theorist, did prioritise emotional experience in psychological growth and development, the affective domain has been largely overlooked in educational socio-cultural theory and in mainstream education generally (Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013). Hence this books' focus on children's feelings and emotions in play.

Relational Psychology

Relational psychology prioritises emotions. This connection between emotions and relations in children's play stands out in many of the events in this book. Emotions are understood as embodied in relationships with our-selves and with others. Relationships are fluid, complex and dynamic; echoing the word e-motion, they move us. Relational understandings of feelings and emotions contrasts with simplistic behaviour-based views of children's social-emotional development that have, like similarly naïve understandings of play, dominated ECCE understandings of children in group settings.

In this vein relational psychology calls attention to the significance of unconscious (out of awareness) as well as conscious processes around behaviour and the feeling of emotions, an area that is also of interest to neuroscientists such as Damasio, 2000; Gallese, 2009a; Panksepp, 2010; Panksepp, Asma, Curran, Gabriel, & Greif, 2012. Though this book does not delve deeply into the complexities of neuro-scientific theories, they are cited for readers to investigate further.

The field of relational psychology has its origins in the field of relational psychoanalysis, an eclectic blend of post-Freudian psychoanalytic traditions and schools which share a view of people as fundamentally feeling-thinking beings, open to others and highly motivated to (re) connect with others from birth and before, so relational through and through. Object relations theory adds to our understandings of the complexities of emotional relationality by emphasising the intra as well as the inter-subjective nature of relating. From birth humans are understood as open-minded and object-seeking, so relational from the start (Mitchell & Aron, 1999; Trevarthen, 2005; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). Beginning with nurturance and the breast (or bottle) as emotional objects the infant's subjective mind comes to be peopled with a complexity of internalized objects that are fundamentally emotionally and relationally constructed.

Infants construct their subjective selves through internalizing the complex qualities (the feeling-tone) associated with these object-images in their significant nurturing, caring and intimate relationships. Thus relationality includes both internal

and external relations with others. This multi-peopled notion of Self is echoed in the dialogical self-theory of Hermans (Hermans & Salgardo, 2010) though with an emphasis on dialogue and narrative rather than the more basic emotional feeling-states, emphasised in object relations theory. The important point is that infants and young children's subjectively felt sense of Self is co-constructed relationally, through mediated interactions with emotionally significant others (Beebe, 2004; Gallese, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Siegel, 1999; Stern, 1985; Zinchenko, 2001). So in playing and connecting intersubjectivally with her father and later with me, it is likely that Cecily was also growing internally, learning about words, humour, and her subjectively felt sense of self.

This inner-person matters. Awareness of the intra-psychic dimensions of relationality and the significance of hidden and unconscious emotions and feelings adds depth and complexity to observations and interpretations of children relating and playing. How young children feel emotions, in their bodies, effects how children live, love and learn, both in childhood and through life. This awareness has implications too for ECCE teachers' being emotionally self-aware in relation to the children they teach. This last point is addressed more fully in chapter "Implications: Teachers being Relationally Aware".

Aotearoa-New Zealand Context

Curriculum: Te Whāriki

The Relationships principle of Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum in Aotearoa-New Zealand adds credence to the focus on relationships of this book (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). As one of the four curriculum principles it lightly states: "Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things" (p. 14). Such a strong pedagogical emphasis on relationality is grounded in socio-cultural theory, echoes relational psychology, and fits with complex views of care (Hollway, 2006), including care as curriculum. This pedagogical valuing of relational learning resonates with the ECCE teachers' values, for which socio-cultural theory provides professional credence. The language of ECCE teachers and researchers in New Zealand Aotearoa reflects these socio-culturally based views of relationality with references to connecting concepts such as *co-construction* where children and teachers are viewed together as active learners. Related notions of intentional teaching and active learning have also become more common-place with the recognition that all parties – children and adult teachers – are actively relating learners (Anning, Cullen, & Fleer, 2009).

Furthermore, the New Zealand Māori concept of *ako* brings together teaching and learning as one, much like the Russian word *obuchenie* (Cole, 2010). Similarly the Māori concept of *tuakana: teina* resonates with aspects of the Vygotskian (1978) *zone of proximal development* in emphasising learning processes that emerge

through interactions between older and younger children. The Holistic development principle of Te Whāriki also refers to "the holistic way children learn and grow" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 14). Thus, children's growth and learning are understood as interconnected and relational in the text of Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Despite curriculum principles espousing the relational and holistic nature of learning, split views of children's learning as primarily cognitive and measurable have become increasingly common in policies and practices in New Zealand, and internationally. Children's emotional wellbeing and the activity of play are frequently overlooked as governments attempt to prioritise academically narrow understandings of literacy and numeracy in ECCE programmes (Alcock and Haggerty, 2013; Nicolopoulou, 2010). Though the impact of neoliberal policies on ECCE is not a direct focus of this book, it adds weight to the need for this book's focus on relationality as epitomised in children's play, playfulness, feelings, emotions and learning. In this sense the book advocates for children's rights to live, play, learn and relate as children.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Settings

The events presented in chapters "The Intersubjective In-Between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness", "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together", "Becoming Selves Relationally", "Imagining While Playing", "Feelings Felt in Bodies", "A Holding Environment" and "Relational Fields and Context" are located in four different early childhood centres, purposely selected to reflect a range of ECCE centres within the New Zealand cities of Auckland and Wellington. Easy access to the outdoors was a feature of all four settings and is traditional in New Zealand, though this pattern may be changing.

These four centres complement each other in their diversity while having features in common including large outside sandpits with adjacent access to some form of water-play such as a tap, hose or water-trough. Access to the water was monitored and controlled by teachers, reflecting awareness of water conservation, as well as child safety. Common in-door activities included areas for painting, drawing and collage construction, play-dough, finger-paint and clay spaces, as well as book-reading, block-play and dress-up areas.

The settings also all had in common good indoor – outdoor flow. This easy access to the outdoors greatly expanded children's play opportunities in offering natural light and space, the feel of sun and wind, with the sky as the rooftop far above. In the case of Eastbridge ECCE centre, the outside area was a building roof-top. Sand, soil and plants had been added to the large roof-top; it was surrounded by other concrete building structures, so the greenery made quite a difference to the feeling of being outside, several stories above ground, in a green concrete jungle.

The three ECCE centres presented in Part II (Northbridge, Eastbridge and Southbridge) felt and looked very busy and noisy a lot of the time. The smothering, covering, and crowded ways in which children's art works were displayed on walls and sometimes ceilings, as in many ECCE centres in Aotearoa-New Zealand, seemed to add to the busy ethos, as well as possibly creating literacy-rich environments.

In contrast, the fourth ECCE centre presented in Part III, (Puriri centre) was a generally quieter setting, catering for a smaller number of children (up to ten), all under 2-years old. Soft translucently flowing fabrics hung from ceiling adding to the calm ethos.

Like many early childhood education centres in Aotearoa-New Zealand, Northbridge, the setting of the following windy waterspout event, was an old converted house, a once grand single level Victorian villa with an overgrown garden. This possibly added to the family-like atmosphere. Though controlled by the teachers, children's access to the outside area was fairly free and easy. The attractively green and treed garden provided shelter from the sometimes burning sun and strong Wellington winds, while the semi-covered verandah and deck area created another outside play space, with long wooden steps also functioning as seats, between the in and outside areas. Children were allowed free access to the outside sheds containing much of the outside play equipment such as trolleys, wooden planks, small ladders, and sandpit implements such as diggers, toy trucks, buckets, spades, and cooking utensils. Swings and a slide surrounded by large wooden boxes and an old wooden climbing construction added to the possibilities for imaginative play outside.

The inside space of Northbridge consisted of the usual activity-based painting, play-dough, clay, collage, construction, book, block, and dress-up-family play areas with blending across these activity areas. As in many ECCE centres in Aotearoa-New Zealand part of the painting, drawing, play-dough area doubled as an eating together area, so those activities were cleared away for meal times and reset up, often with slight variations, following mealtimes.

Event 1: Windy Waterspout Play

Background

Northbridge: windy, outside, early summer. Though outside, this event involves imaginary water, real wind, essential props and children being imaginative together, sharing their imaginations in an elaborately evolving dramatic play event. The age span of these children is wide, from 2 years, 2 months to 4 years, 9 months. Over half an hour (the time of the event) the number of children involved in staying with the play grows from three to six.

> A large blue plastic tarpaulin cloth and a dome-shaped climbing frame mediate the play as primary artefacts. The previous day the teachers had covered the dome with the tarpaulin and the younger children (2–3 year olds) had fun, playing hiding games, inside and outside the tent-like covered dome ("our house").

Today Zizi (4 years, 7 months), Dani (4 years, 9 months) and Sally (4 years, 8 months) are together pulling a large blue tarpaulin over the dome-shaped climbing frame; they make "oooooo" sounds in unison, imitating the wind, intersubjectively in tune with each other, and connected by the tarpaulin. They laugh together as it blows off. The activity involves them coordinating their moves while crawling, climbing and pulling the tarpaulin up and over the dome, against the wind. The wind blows it off again and they laugh contagiously. The climbing frame literally grounds, unites and holds the children together while the tarpaulin, at the mercy of the wind, allows them to blow away and to lose control.

Analysis and Discussion

Mediating Artefacts: The Tools, Signs and Symbols that Connect Players

In recalling this event I am struck by the energetic busy activity of these children coming together in play, rather like the wind in the air on that blustery day. I am interested in how and what artefacts mediate these children's experiences of relating and of communicating playfully and why does this matter? From a socio-cultural perspective culture is mediated, transmitted, transformed, represented, created, or re-created via artefacts which are in turn culturally, historically, and socially constructed. The term *artefact* includes the tools, symbols and semiotic signs (Wartofsky, 1979) that mediate young children's playful communication. Artefacts thus come to mediate the transmission and re-creation of societal values and beliefs. Furthermore artefacts mediate intersubjectivity. In various ways signs, symbols and material tools such as the climbing frame, the wind, their bodies and sung sounds all mediated these children communicating and connecting together as individuals, intra and inter-subjectivally. Awareness of artefact mediation processes is useful for teachers in planning for children's growth and learning; it is through these processes that children learn and grow.

But simply categorising signs, symbols and tools as artefacts and mediation as a connecting communicative process is too simple for what are complex intersubjective and representational processes. The philosopher Wartofsky (1979) has expanded understandings of artefacts in ways that enable the concept of artefact mediation to expand understandings of children's relational play. He described artefacts as "… anything which human beings create by the transformation of nature and of themselves: thus also language, forms of social organisation and interaction, techniques of production, skills …" (p. xiii).

Alongside this materially representational definition of artefacts Wartofsky (1979) proposed three categories of artefacts that emphasise how the representational role of artefacts mediates relatedness through activity. The first level of primary artefacts describes material objects as they are used directly. In this event water, the climbing frame and the large blue canvas and words are primary mediating artefacts. Secondary artefacts include symbolic representations of primary arte-

facts with the addition of a historical dimension. In this event the fact that this activity was begun on another day and carried over in the outside play routines of the following day along with the rules around outside play times, makes these artefacts simultaneously secondary level artefacts. Wartofsky (1979) referred to tertiary artefacts as "…a class of artefacts which can come to constitute a relatively autonomous 'world', in which the rules, conventions and outcomes no longer appear directly practical, or which, indeed, seem to constitute an arena of non-practical, or 'free' play or game activity" (p.208). Tertiary artefacts are symbolic and, with the addition of emotions and imagination, they mediate how we see or perceive the world. The entire play world of this event becomes a tertiary level artefact as individual children bring their imaginations into shared play in the following excerpts of this event. The children co-create imaginary water with blue tarpaulin which becomes a waterfall, held up by the climbing frame and a waterspout with a doorway underneath it. Together these children co-construct an imaginary play world (Lindqvist, 1995).

The emotional feeling-tone – the energy and vitality – that the children expressed in this artefact mediated play stands out. The emphasis on feelings with imagination that is implied in tertiary artefacts is particularly pertinent to studying children's play, opening up the field of play beyond the concreteness of material artefacts. From a socio-cultural perspective the important point is that the feelings and imagination associated with children's play become connected to the material artefacts such as the blue tarpaulin, children's words, the wind and the climbing frame in the play. While these material artefacts grounded the play, children too brought feelings-emotion and imagination into the play and together co-created a tertiary artefact – a play world – mediated also by secondary and primary level artefacts (Fleer, 2013; Lindqvist, 1995; Wartofsky, 1979).

Most of the events presented in the following chapters also become worlds of play as complex systems of playful activity that also mediate further play, growth and learning as tertiary artefacts. This categorising of mediating artefacts as primary, secondary and tertiary can support teachers to understand the complexity in play and to see avenues for changing and creating conditions that might extend and complicate children's play, thereby also enhancing children's learning. Conditions might simply involve teachers being present and adding words, or pieces of string, as in this windy waterspout play. Words as primary artefacts can be a play focus in themselves, as well as contributing complexity to pretend play scripts, as in the following sections of like this water play event. While the children's body language mediates semiotically adding to their communication with complex signals expressed, for example, in gaze, rhythm, vitality affect, and physical positioning.

Event 1 continues:

> The children leave for a few minutes then return to the task re-energised possibly anticipating the fun of working in the wind. This time teacher Rae offers them pieces of string to fasten the tarpaulin. They cover the frame but don't use the string as they don't all want to make a fixed tent-house.
>
> Teacher Rae: "Well you'll have to negotiate,…are you using your words Dani"?
> Dani: "No, no, no Zizi no no…" [Zizi has pulled too much to her side].
> Oscar: "Well I want to build a house". [(4 years, 9 months), joining in]

Another gust of wind takes the tarpaulin off the frame. Laughter, glee and a lot of movement; they battle the wind with the tarpaulin.

Younger children drift over towards the action, Eliza (2 years, 2 months), and Milly (3 years, 2 months) (six players now). Oscar picks up bark chips from the ground where he stands and drops them on his hat. Eliza, seeing this, also picks up bark chips; she drops them on the tarpaulin [imitating]. Dani climbs to the highest point on top of the frame and tarpaulin, while Eliza busily picks up more bark chips and smiling, throws them onto the tarpaulin [repeating]. At this point the play changes direction.

Analysis and Discussion

Mediation: Houses, Shelters, Security and Windy Weather

This house re-creation illustrates how the broader socio-cultural-historical context provides motivation and inspiration for children's play. From an evolutionary perspective too houses and huts can allow humans sheltering together to feel secure from the wild outside world. In trying to make a house these children intended to re-create a pretend version of the adult real world (El'Konin, 1989/2000) as well as a secure containing space to feel safe in (Bettleheim, 1976; Bion, 1962). On several occasions children were observed creating shelters or nests. These were sometimes simply safe hiding places and sometimes places for re-playing the domestic dramas of real home life. Houses and smaller shelters can also create and mediate feelings of belonging that are part of feeling secure, having a place, a space to call home and a sense of belonging. Repeated play themes and scripts (Cole, 1996; Nelson, 1996), such as house building are also examples of tertiary artefacts that are both playful and mediate further play.

As primary artefacts the tarpaulin and the dome-shaped climbing frame mediated the imaginative house construction. Children used their creative imaginations collectively to construct the tent-like house from these materials. Together they imaginatively transformed the climbing frame and the tarpaulin from being separated artefacts, bringing them together, initially as a house. Later the blue tarpaulin became water falling down the dome frame. Thus the materials mediated communication on several levels simultaneously, imaginatively and concretely, in pretend play and in reality.

Artefact mediation is the central concept in activity theory. As Miettinen (2001) explains "… through the use of cultural artefacts and participation in collective activities, subjects assume the qualities of the environment. Ways of doing and properties of things are objectified in tools and cultural artefacts" (p. 301–302). The transformational qualities of the artefacts combined with the imaginations of the children steered this event; decisions emerged in and from children playing together and along-side each other. The windy weather was also a powerful natural mediating force influencing and transforming the course of the play. At times children and tarpaulin seemed to move with and in response to the wind. Only the climbing frame held its ground.

Event 1 continues:

The play turns as Dani falls through the frame, with the tarpaulin beneath, carrying and holding her; she laughs and screeches with glee. The tarpaulin falls in folds through the gaps in the dome frame as she sits on it. Zizi, Sally, Dani laugh and scream, like fire engines, under the tarpaulin,

Zizi explains excitedly to the watching researcher:

"We jumped down the waterspout, we're going down the waterspout".

The blue plastic tarpaulin becomes a visual metaphor for the concept of water as the children purposefully fall through the gaps in the dome frame and slide down the tarpaulin waterspout [waterfall].

Oscar: "I came down again". [to Zizi, Sally, Danni]
Zizi: "We've got two waterspouts". [excitedly, to researcher]
Oscar: "Zizi, in here, in here".

Sally beside Oscar, laughs a lot and watches the others. Dani is all activity, totally absorbed. Elli follows the older ones and drops through the dome, hanging by her arms, teacher Rae rescues and lowers her. Zizi and Oscar lie next to each other in a hammock like structure.

Teacher Rae: "Sunhats on"!
Oscar: "Woweee, Here's the doorway".
Zizi: "Lets play hide and seek Rae". [teacher]
Teacher Rae: "Well I know where you all are, Okay, what shall I count to?"
Zizi: "10".
Teacher Rae: "1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10".
Zizi: "Shut the door, shut the door".
Teacher Rae: "Mmm I wonder where they could be"?

[Screeches of laughter from inside the tarpaulin water spout]

Teacher Rae: "Oh here you all are, hiding in the water spout, Woweee, Here's the doorway".
Oscar: "That's the water spout". [to teacher Rae]
Teacher Rae: "Are you wet"?
Oscar: "No".
Teacher Rae: "Why not"?
Oscar: "It's a dry waterspout".
Zizi: "Come into the waterspout".
Zizi: "Sophie you count". [to researcher]
Zizi: "Hide, everyone hide, Sophie count".
Oscar: "Zizi, in here, in here".
Researcher: "1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10.

I wonder where the children are"?

Screams of laughter as the waterspout "door" (the waterspout has some house-like attributes; the door is the overlapping edges of the tarpaulin) opens and six children emerge laughing wildly, almost falling over each other.

Analysis and Discussion

Distributed Imagination: Playful Synergy

These children together were particularly playful. They laughed, screamed and giggled while their bodies moved excitedly, with enthusiasm, highly motivated to have fun together. This play, like all pretend play was spontaneously improvised, developing and changing to reflect children's feelings and ideas, as they emerged in the play activity.

The teacher did not become directly involved in their imaginative play. She stood outside the play in a supervisory mediating role, offering pieces of string, which were rejected, and reminding children of social rules such as using words to negotiate the play process. Teacher Rae did enjoy mediating the children's play in this way; she joined in at times including laughing responsively with them. Tensions in the children's playful activity motivated their continued play as an evolving activity system, with for example Dani falling through the climbing frame with the blue tarpaulin holding her from below. Instead of ending the play, this accident contributed to the creation of a water-spout. The initial house play was transformed into pretend water play. Children's negotiating talk, the wind and the materials added complexity to the activity and connected children together in playfully physical activity. As a tertiary artefact the play in the waterspout activity mediated these children together further developing their play.

This motivation to feel connected, to belong, is also a fundamental human need (Ogden, 2009; D. Stern, 1985; Trevarthen, 2009; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). Furthermore, through a sense of belonging children can feel securely free to share feelings and imagined concepts, such as a waterspout. Shared imagination became increasingly apparent in this study as I observed children being playfully imaginative together and learning from each other. The imaginary concept of a waterspout became a central mediating artefact and focus for the collaborative play of these children, yet it was initially suggested and imagined by just one child, Zizi. The concept of a waterspout was probably unfamiliar to most of the children. The name is appealing. It conveys the image of the falling blue tarpaulin and captures images of waterfalls and whirlpools too. In this event imagination became distributed via communication around artefact-mediated activity.

The physically playful body feelings that became aroused and expressed in the imaginative play seemed to carry the imaginative ideas, expressed in words, forward. For Zizi one waterspout became two as more children fell through and with it. When a gap emerged in the folded tarpaulin it became a door for Oscar to enter and then a house for more children to hide inside. The words of Zizi and Oscar contributed to co-creating an imagined third space, which held the play of half a dozen children.

Imagination allows children to think and feel beyond the concrete present reality and to be playful, particularly with sounds and words. Just as narrative structures create meaning, words too create generalized thinking structures in the mind

(Vygotsky, 1986). Words without meanings are empty sounds. As the King says in Act 3, scene 3 of Shakespeare's Hamlet, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go." In this event words named images of houses, water and waterspouts that in turn contributed to meaningful, imaginatively and creatively distributed and shared play narratives (Alcock, 2010).

Children's prior experiences with words and the world provided motivation for this play (El'konin, 1989/2000). The word *waterspout* may also be interpreted as an exotic label or concept from the adult world that the children played with. Oscar, cleverly blending word meanings with his world experiences, referred to the construction as a *dry waterspout*, a contradictory concept. The combination of words, sounds (ooooo), the climbing frame, the tarpaulin, wind, children's imaginations and physical bodies, all mediated the shared playfulness. The original house focus was transformed to the concept of a waterspout. Words, as artefacts, mediated in metaphorically naming the imaginary waterspout. The youngest children, Eliza and Milly, didn't speak. Neither did Sally who spoke very little English, having newly arrived from Sweden. However these three, like the others, understood the play; they used their bodies to communicate ideas and feelings and relate to each other implicitly, intersubjectively, in tune with each other and the play (Ruthrof, 2000).

Reflecting much later, I wondered about the involvement of these children with limited verbal language. How involved were they in the play and how much were they semi-silently watching from the side-lines apparently playing alongside, yet possibly simply following the louder leaders, not fully present or connected with the main players? It is easy to overlook these less involved children who may appear to be fully engaged in the play. They may follow slightly, initiate little, watch a lot, imitate actions initially as if trying them out before sometimes fluently blending and fitting into the group activity, going down the waterspout, hiding, laughing and following.

The older and more confident children directed the play with words and bodies, while the younger ones immersed and enmeshed themselves in the tarpaulin, imitating others, repetitively throwing bark chips and re-creating the previous day's house play in new ways. So using their imaginations the children metaphorically re-created their earlier experiences creatively (Lindqvist, 1995). These processes of imitation and repetition mediate the internalization of children's developing feelings and thoughts that are triggered around the play. While the youngest children continued with the play of previous days the small older group seemed to transition fluidly together into the new waterspout play. This involved them internalizing associated feeling-thoughts while imitating each other and themselves as they together and in sequence repetitively climbed up and fell down inside the blue tarpaulin waterspout.

This climbing, falling, hiding, pretend-water play activity communicated physical fun and playfulness. Children used their bodies purposively and intelligently almost in unison, climbing up and falling down, getting caught in the tarpaulin, hiding and being found, imitating and repeating everything. Their bodies spoke with movement (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Body movements became centred on the image of a waterspout that they were either in, on, or some part of, though they had to

imagine what a waterspout might be like. In repeating the actions, with slight variations, children were internalising the associated feelings. Each child experienced the same waterspout play uniquely, bodily and personally. In this way the diversity in their individual experiences became distributed and shared in the unity of the play activity.

In a gestalt-like connected way the children's playful activity evolved also as an intersubjectively shared third space (Benjamin, 2004; Ogden, 2004), a transitional space of play (Winnicott, 1974, 1960) where free association, improvisation and imagination ruled. In the emergent and changing flow of their play these children were free to simply "carry on being" (Winnicott, 1974, 1960; Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 1968; Ogden, 2004; Stern, 2004; Trevarthen, 2002; Wertsch, 1998). The imaginative words that evolved within and further extended this play space had in common the surreal and wild imaginative qualities of dream space. Yet this transitional third was also a social relational third where individual children's embodied feelings contributed to the intersubjectivally shared group play. Such intersubjectivity commonly emerges in young children's pretend play (Goncu, 1993). It sustains the relationships that create the playing *field*.

Field as Context

This matrix-like concept of *field* usefully emphasises the interpersonal relationships in play (Stern, 2013). Field alerts one to the flow of feelings, conscious and unconscious, that permeate contexts, contributing to the atmosphere, or ethos, of the physical place and space. Field emphasises the interpersonal relationships that emerge and change and also reciprocally affect the physical context. Intersubjective, and embodied ways of relating were experienced within and between individual children as well as the teacher and myself as an observer in the waterspout event 1 and in other events. Feelings of freedom pervaded the air – field – exacerbated by the wild wind that blew the outside air. Children in Northbridge ECCE centre were generally encouraged and empowered to be confident communicators. For example a child, Zizi, asked me to count while the children hid. Despite consciously assuming a passive observing researcher role I became included and drawn into the play. My role changed from being a peripheral observer to having a central role in the children's play, as a mediating counting artefact, in the children's play field. Though their play was fascinating to watch I also appreciated and felt honoured to be of use perhaps because, by conditioning, I am a teacher as well as a researcher. Together the interplay in roles of children and adults constituted the wider felt field of this windy waterspout play. In such empowering ways the values, relationships, style, rules, of the ECCE centre affect the field both implicitly and explicitly.

Feelings, felt visibly and invisibly, contributed to the creation of this interpersonal field. Thus field includes the style, tone and ethos of the ECCE centre as a place; this mood is expressed interpersonally in the rhythm, rhyme, tone, energy and patterns in relationships. In many of the events presented in this book the figures of children and teachers moving together seemed at times to blend in with the physical

context. The felt rhythm and vitality in children's ways of being, mediated this perceived integration. In a sense the 'inter', in the interpersonal field, refers to these felt phenomena that emerge, shift and change in gestalt-like ways between figure and ground.

Self and Other are intertwined in this field and connected by artefacts, such as the blue tarpaulin and the actual play, that mediate and are also integrally interconnected parts of the wider context epitomised in the metaphor of Indra's Net.

Summary

This chapter has elaborated on the emotional-relational focus of this book by including an event from the research, and a story from my teacher past, to exemplify the emotional and relational foundations in young children's everyday ways of playing, communicating and connecting. Aspects of theory and the research methods were woven into both the story and the event, which also introduced the New Zealand context, which is the setting of all the events in this book. Young children's outside play, as in this event, is generally valued in New Zealand and is implicitly endorsed by Te Whariki, the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996).

In addressing the books relational focus, artefact mediation has been explained as fundamental to socio-cultural theory. Children's play is understood as consisting of complexly interconnecting systems of activity, which in this book are presented as events. Relational understandings of the felt in-between space of play add to this complexity and to the rationale for focussing on emotions and feelings as felt and expressed in the bodies of children playing and relating. The interpersonal field as context further extends understandings of context as including relational feelings in children's fields of play.

An emphasis on affect, feelings and emotions pervades this introduction and later event analyses. This affective emphasis is consistent with and reflects the feeling qualities in observations of infants and young children making sense and meaning while relating through play. Importantly, the prioritising of affect in this writing does not discount the importance of children's thinking processes. Rather thinking is viewed as combined in and with feeling (Bion, 1962; L. S Vygotsky 1978, 1986).

Questions around artefact mediation and intersubjectivity (the spaces in-between children playing) that have been introduced in this chapter persisted throughout all phases of the research, reflecting the socio-cultural bases of a research focus on investigating young children playing and relating together with feeling. The broad understanding of intersubjectivity presented here resonates with the very inclusive image of the Indra's Net as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of all phenomena, with a focus here on young children's play, playfulness and relationality.

The events with discussions, wonderings and interpretations, that are presented in chapters "The Intersubjective In-Between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness", "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together", "Becoming Selves Relationally", "Imagining While Playing", "Feelings Felt in Bodies", "A Holding Environment"

and "Relational Fields and Context" add to research emphasising young children's emotionally relational ways of playing and communicating, within systems of activity, in ECCE settings. The themes identified and discussed throughout the book involve children relating and playing in diverse ways while coming to shared understandings of themselves in relation to others within inter- and intra- subjectively experienced fields of play. Chapter "Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III)" further explains the research methods of the two research projects that inform the events, discussions, wonderings and analyses presented throughout this book.

References

Alcock, S. (2010). Young children's playfully complex communication: distributed imagination. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 18*(2), 215–218.

Alcock, S., & Haggerty, M. (2013). Recent policy developments and the "schoolification" of early childhood careand education in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Early Childhood Folio, 17*, 21–26.

Alcock, S., Cullen, J., & St George, A. (2008). Word-play and musike: Young children learning literacies while communicating playfully. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 33*(2), 1–9.

Anning, A., Cullen, J., & Fleer, M. (2009). *Early childhood education: Society and culture*. London/Los Angeles: Sage.

Beebe, B. (2004). Faces in relation: A case study. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 14*(1), 1–51. doi:10.1080/10481881409348771.

Bettleheim, B. (1976). *The uses of enchantment*. New York: Knopf.

Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: An intersubjective view of thirdness. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXXIII*(1), 5–46. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x.

Bion, W. R. (1962). *Learning from experience*. London: William Heinemann.

Capra, F. (1979). *The tao of physics*. London: Fontana.

Chaiklin, S. (2001). The institutionalization of cultural-historical psychology as a multinational practice. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 15–34). Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Cleary, T. F. (1993). *The flower ornament scripture*. Boston: Shambhala.

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Cole, M. (2010). The perils of translation: A first step in reconsidering Vygotsky's theory of development in relation to formal education. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 16*, 291–295. doi:10.1080/10749030902795568.

Damasio, A. R. (2000). *The feeling of what happens: Body, emotion and the making of consciousness/Antonio Damasio*. London: Vintage.

El'konin, D. B. (1989/2000). The development of play in preschoolers. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, *37*(6), 31–70.

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding:An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Engestrom, Y., Reijo, M., & Punamaki, R.-L. (1999). *Perspectives on activity theory*. Cambridge, MA/New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fleer, M. (2013). *Theorising play in the early years.* Retrieved from http://unitec.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1543620

Gallese, V. (2009a). Mirror neurons, embodied simulation, and the neural basis of social identification. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 519–536. doi:10.1080/10481880903231910.

Gallese, V. (2009b). The two sides of mimesis: Girard's mimetic theory, embodied simulation and social identification. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 16*(4), 21–44.
Gallese, V. (2009c). We-ness, embodied simulation, and psychoanalysis: Reply to commentaries. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 580–584. doi:10.1080/10481880903231928.
Goncu, A. (1993). Development of intersubjectivity in social pretend play. *Human Development, 36*(4), 185–198.
Goncu, A., & Gaskins, S. (2007). *Play and development: Evolutionary, sociocultural, and functional perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaüm.
Hermans, H., & Salgardo, J. (2010). The dialogical self as a mini society. In S. R. Kirschner & J. Martin (Eds.), *The sociocultural turn in psychology* (pp. 183–204). New York: Colombia University Press.
Hollway, W. (2006). *The capacity to care: Gender and ethical subjectivity*. London/New York: Routledge.
Lindqvist, G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools* (Uppsala studies in education 62). Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
Loy, D. (1993). Indras postmodern net. *Philsophy East & West, 43*(3), 481–510.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Signs*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Miettinen, R. (2001). Artifact mediation in Dewey and in cultural-historical activity theory. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 8*(4), 297–308.
Ministry of Education. (1996). Te Whariki: he whariki matauranga mo nga mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum. (9780478029802; 0478029802). Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
Mitchell, S. A. (1991). Contemporary perspectives on self: Toward an integration. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 1*(2), 121–147. doi:10.1080/10481889109538889.
Mitchell, S. A., & Aron, L. (1999). *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
Nelson, K. (1996). *Language in cognitive development: The emergence of the mediated mind*. Cambridge/England: Cambridge University Press.
Nicolopoulou, A. (2010). The alarming disappearance of play from early childhood education. *Human Development, 53*(1), 1–4.
Nicolopoulou, A., Barbosa de Sá, A., Ilgaz, H., & Brockmeyer, C. (2009). Using the transformative power of play to educate hearts and minds: From Vygotsky to Vivian Paley and beyond. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 17*(1), 42–58. doi:10.1080/10749030903312512.
Ogden, T. (2004). The analytic third: Implications for psychoanalytic theory and technique. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXX111*, 167–195.
Ogden, T. (2009). Rediscovering psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives, 6*(1), 22. doi:10.1080/1551806X.2009.10473034.
Paley, V. G. (1990). *The boy who would be a helicopter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Paley, V. G. (2010). *The boy on the beach: Building community through play*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Panksepp, J. (2010). Affective neuroscience of the emotional BrainMind: Evolutionary perspectives and implications for understanding depression. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience, 12*(4), 533–545.
Panksepp, J., Asma, S., Curran, G., Gabriel, R., & Greif, T. (2012). The philosophical implications of affective neuroscience. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 19*(3–4), 6–48.
Ruthrof, H. (2000). *The body in language*. London: Cassel.
Siegel, D. (1999). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are*. New York: Guilford Press.

Stern, D. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
Stern, D. (2004). *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life*. New York: W.W. Norton.
Stern, D. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.
Stern, D. B. (2013). Field theory in psychoanalysis, Part I: Harry Stack Sullivan and Madeleine and Willy Baranger. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 23*(5), 487–501. doi:10.1080/10481885.2013.832607.
Trevarthen, C. (2002). Origins of musical identity: Evidence from infancy for musical social awareness. In D. H. D. M. R. MacDonald (Ed.), *Musical identities* (pp. 21–38). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Trevarthen, C. (2005). First things first: Infants make good use of the sympathetic rhythm of imitation, without reason or language. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy, 31*(1), 91–113. doi:10.1080/00754170500079651.
Trevarthen, C. (2009). The intersubjective psychobiology of human meaning: Learning of culture depends on interest for co-operative practical work–and affection for the joyful art of good company. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 507–518. doi:10.1080/10481880903231894.
Trevarthen, C., & Aitken, K. (2001). Infant intersubjectivity: Research, theory, and clinical applications. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 42*(1), 3–48. doi:10.1017/S0021963001006552.
Vadeboncoeur, J. A., & Collie, R. J. (2013). Locating social and emotional learning in schooled environments: A Vygotskian perspective on learning as unified. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 20*(3), 201–225. doi:10.1080/10749039.2012.755205.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 42*(1), 7–97.
Wartofsky, M. W. (1979). *Models, representation and the scientific understanding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Reide.
Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Winnicott, D. W. (1960). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 41*, 585–595.
Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
Zinchenko, V. P. (2001). External and internal: Another comment on the issue. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 135–147). Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III)

Abstract Continuing with the style established in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing", this chapter also uses a story and an event to further explain the research methods that inform the two research projects that in turn also inform this book. Both projects used ethnographic methods to investigate the experiences of young children playing and relating in ECCE settings in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Emergent themes from both projects are also addressed.

Introduction

Continuing with the style established in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing", this chapter also uses a story and an event to further explain the research methods that inform the two research projects that in turn also inform this book. Both projects investigated young children playing and relating in ECCE settings in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Emergent themes from both projects are also addressed.

The Two Projects

The next section of this book is Part II (chapters "The Intersubjective In-Betweenness in Young Children's Playfulness", "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together", "Becoming Selves Relationally", "Imagining While Playing" and "Feelings Felt in Bodies"). Part II draws on the richly detailed observational data from my original dissertation thesis (Alcock, 2005), and re-interprets those observations, with a clearer focus on children's relations and emotions. This includes the playfulness that was my original research focus. More detailed explanations of that project may also be found in Alcock (2005, 2008, 2010). Part III (chapters "A Holding Environment" and "Relational Fields and Context"), of this book draws on a similar smaller project focussed on emotional relationality among infants and toddlers in one ECCE centre.

These two interpretivist research projects used similar reflective ethnographic methods to broadly explore young children playing and relating in urban ECCE

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_2

settings in New Zealand. Both studies present data and findings as narrative-like observation-based events, intended to re-present and illuminate significant themes and patterns in young children's experience of playing and relating. The project described in Part II was the larger project. Sited in three centres, it was an investigation of young children's (1–5 year olds) experience of playful (and humorous) communication. The main research question for that original dissertation was:

How do young children experience playfulness (and humour) in their communication?

The smaller project, addressed in Part III focused on the relationality of preverbal infant-toddlers (6 to 24 months-old) in one small ECCE centre. The main question for that project was:

What is the nature of the relational environment for the infants and toddlers (children under 2-years-old) in this ECCE centre where 'eco-sustainability' is an overarching philosophical principle?

As an early childhood teacher I enjoy young children's playfulness and humour, hence the doctoral focus. However my interests have shifted sideways to also include emotions and relationality in play. I've become intrigued by the interconnecting invisibly felt spaces between young children relating and playing (Alcock, 2010, 2013b). I've also become alarmed by a growing emphasis on narrow academic learning at the expense of young children's emotional wellbeing and freedom to play (Alcock, 2013a; Alcock & Haggerty, 2013). Hence this book.

Ethnographic Methods

Ethnographic methods formed a basis for observing and interpreting children relating and playing in both projects. Although these projects were not ethnographies, (time in the field being insufficient), reflexive ethnographic methods were used to observe and interpret how cultural artefacts mediated children relating and playing. Detailed observations ensured that this research retained an experience-near perspective. As explained in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing", my observations initially focussed primarily on the mediating roles of tools, signsand symbols that, through activity, connected children (Engeström, 2015; Engestrom, Reijo, & Punamaki, 1999; Wartofsky, 1979; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). The feeling-tone of observed children's play was explicitly included in my written observations, which were divided into three columns: *observation*, *artefacts*, and *my interpretation-feelings*. With a focus on play, which by definition defies tidy categorisation, interpretation involved deeply reflective processes ofre-visitingand re-interpreting those detailed observations. As Schwandt (2000) points out "for all post empiricist philosophies of the human sciences, understanding is interpretation all the way down" (p. 209). The events in this book re-present the observations with interpretations discussion and analyses – that add to understandings of the original observed experience.

Observing Experience

Observation is traditional to early childhood research as Tobin (1995) explains: "Since its beginnings, scholarship in early childhood education has been characterised by a belief in the authenticity of firsthand experience and knowledge" (p. 225). Experience is however more than the written words can convey, though words can also evoke experience. The events presented in this book attempt to do just that, to evoke the experience. Experience is sensation before reflection and before representation, such as words, can describe it (Jackson, 1989, 1996). Experience also evolves in response to activity and is mediated, by tools, signs or symbols (Wartofsky, 1979; Wertsch, 1991). Both of these perspectives add to the understandings of experience in this study where young children's spontaneous body-language was interpreted as both communication about, and expression of, playful experience. Attention to children's bodily-expressed, and sensed, vitality and aliveness, seems especially important when the research participants are pre-verbal infants and very young children (Stern, 2010; Trevarthen, 2011).

I enjoy the experience of observing children playing. Visiting a student teacher on placement recently I became intrigued by 4-year-old Jade's gymnastics display. The student and I were sitting at the child-sized table and talking together. Jade spontaneously approached and began performing gymnastic-like moves in front of us, announcing: "See I can do this", as she began twisting her legs and mid-body into a contorted yogic-like position. Then she balanced on one leg and flipped herself over and around. She continued her performance, but what really fascinated me were the plastic construction sticks she held and fiddled with, in the gaps between postures, when she wasn't concentrating on twisting her own body into complex shapes. With the plastic sticks in her hands she was constructing complex shapes and patterns that resembled her own body-bending shapes. Because I was very interested in how she might respond I commented to her: "It looks like you're making your body shapes with these sticks in your hands?" She ignored my words, as if she either could not, or did not, want to hear what I was really saying. My words did not make sense or meaning to her.

The student and I talked later and his explanation resonated with my feelings. "It was her unconscious, she was making the shapes unconsciously". I later discovered that this student had studied philosophy before coming into early childhood teacher education. Whatever motivated Jade's double act, constructing shapes with both her body and the plastic sticks, it felt important that we observed and respected her as a subject, a person. She had asked for our attention by creating a body-bending performance for us, with wonderfully enthusiasm. Throughout her performance Jadeexuded confidence in her flexible and strong physique. The shapes and moves she re-created with the plastic construction sticks in her hands seemed to reinforce these self-feelings. Perhaps the plastic stick construction mediated her implicit and unconscious understandings of her body-self capabilities.

Jade's story, exemplifies perezhivanie, (translated as emotional experience) as do many of the events in this book where children's experienced feelings in activity

motivate their continued growth and learning. The example of Jade is particularly interesting because she was not aware of how she was recreating her own flexible body shapes with the plastic construction sticks, yet she was passionately engaged in a complex gymnastic display. Both her body and the sticks mediated her fascinatingly energetic activity and the intensity in this activity cried out for attention and extension by teachers.

Perezhivanie: Emotional Experience

The concept of perezhivanie acknowledges the primacy and unity of experience, emotion and cognition (Vygotsky 1998, cited by Van de Veer, 2001) and may be understood as an interactionist unit for analysing the interplay of thinking-feeling children and environment in activity-experience. Recently Marilyn Fleer (2013) and others at Monash University have explored using perezhivanie in investigating links between children's imagination, motivation, and learning of scientific concepts (Fleer, 2013; Quiñones & Fleer, 2011). Imagination is informed and motivated by emotions. Imagination is also a fundamental quality in abstract thinking and is integral to children's play. Jade seemed to imagine her gymnastic moves and body shapes while creating them. A teacher's interest and words, spoken with feeling and meaning, might aid her awareness and her imagination.

Jade's story, like the events that form the core of this book, re-present observations of children feeling-thinking-experiencing being playfully active, so are also about perezhivanie. While the interpretations prioritise feelings, emotions and thoughts in action, these events are also open to further interpretations. Thus the windy waterspout and the contagious laughter events included in chapters "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing" and "Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III)" are intended to evoke further responses. It is useful for teachers to also realise this point; that interpretations, knowledge and understandings change and grow, reflecting teachers' own awareness, knowledge and experiences.

"Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Processes of growth and learning are based on accumulated experiences. These patterns of remembered experiences create narrative-like ways of feeling and thinking about the world (Bruner, 1986). The narrative form brings some coherence to conscious and unconscious ways of feeling and thinking. Children's experiences of playfulness and of relating are represented here narratively, in events showing children connected to each other and to social, historical, and cultural contexts.

Events

The observations that inform the events in this book have been collated as a series of narrative-like events, purposely selected to illuminate the diversity in young children playing and relating. Narrative-like structures avoid reductionism, highlighting the complexities that were present in the play, while retaining the unity in the complex activity of the event. As with frame play (described by Goffman (1974) and Bateson (1980), these events have observable beginnings and ends, though they were sometimes not apparent until the whole event was analysed. Events overlapped and were not tidy structures (Ochs & Capps, 2001). As unpredictable units of activity, events interconnect and are situated within wider social, cultural and historical contexts. This image of interconnectedness is epitomised in the metaphor of Indra's Net, described earlier in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing".

Though the events in Parts II and III both involve children playing and relating, Part II emphasises children's playfulness, while Part III emphasises younger children's relationality (under 2-years-old).

Events in Part II usually began with children announcing, in various meta-communicative ways, that playfulness was beginning. Children used words, sounds, gaze and other bodily expressions, as well as material artefacts like water and sand in this communication. Events in Part III also began with children's meta-communicative signals expressing their desire to connect and relate with other people or things, such as finger-paint. Timing and structure of events was further influenced by routines, such as eating-times, and outside-play times. The use of meta-communicative signals continued throughout events as an integral element in the ongoing negotiation that helped sustain children's activities of playing and relating.

The events presented here offer a range of interpretations that are not exclusive. Interpretations in this book reflect my observer-writer-researcher, interests, curiosities and experience-informed understandings of young children playing (Part II) and relating (Part III). These events have also been purposely selected to present a range of situations. With story-like framing, eventstructures avoid simplistic and artificial categorising of wholes into parts. They also convey the systemic nature of activity theory.

The use of activity theory for interpreting narrative-like events enabled further in-depth analysis and understanding of children experiencing playfulness in their communication. As explained in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing", activity theory prioritises mediated activity (events) as the unit of analysis. The research process involved identifying the motivating aim of the event (activity system), and exploring how that aim changed during the play (activity system). This process also involved identifying mediating artefacts and looking out for how contradictions motivated, and in turn mediated, the continued activity-event. Play usually brimmed with motivating contradictions. That is the nature of play.

Briefly, the components that complicate and mediate the relationships in the activity system (event) include: artefacts, rules, roles, and the community of the involved participants (children and teachers in early childhood centres) (Engeström, 1987, 1999). Mediating artefacts include tools, semiotic signs and symbols on all levels (Wartofsky, 1979), and can also include people. Artefacts can be simultaneously material and conceptual, the main point being that communication is mediated (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978), and that relationships between the components are complex, changing and contradictory. The dynamics of the relationships are in continual flux, like the usual seemingly chaotic patterns in children's play. Activity, like play, is never static. It is the activity that unites the diversity in play. The windy waterspout event introduced in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing" epitomises these dynamic qualities.

Children at play are active. They move a lot and as systems of activity, events integrate these dynamic and holistic qualities (Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2015; Engestrom et al., 1999; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). This view of play as activity acknowledges the tensions and contradictions that motivate and contribute to the ongoing activity and the artefact – mediated experiences of children being playful together. Events present this playing-relating activity.

The following event illustrates young children relating with energetically playful activity. Together the children have constructed a see-saw-like catapult that mediates their play. The wooden plank with bottle-tops become mediating tools. These children communicate with their whole bodies; they laugh contagiously without spoken words, their laughter further connecting them intersubjectively in shared feelings of hilarity, expressed with vitality in their jumping laughing bodies.

Event 2: Contagious Laughter

ECCE Setting

Southbridge is a community-based sessional ECCE centre, with mainly 4-year old children. It was purpose-built almost a century ago as part of the development of the kindergarten movement in New Zealand. Children here have free access to the outdoors with the usual large shade covered sand-pit and a wide range of climbing equipment including big wooden boxes, ladders etc. Tucked into a corner space to one side the main centre building and right next to the outside woodwork table, three four- year-old boys have built a catapult contraption on the ground. It operates by jumping on one end of a plank of wood, which is balanced on a fulcrum in the middle (like a see-saw). When a child jumps on one end the other end flicks up in the air sending the bottle tops balanced on the other end flying. None of the children speak English as a first language, though one boy, Lau, can speak some English; Ali and Mal are recent immigrants. Lau comes from Iraq, while Ali and Mal are from Somalia, (though they speak different Somali dialects-languages). Today is Ali's

first morning session. He had previously been attending the afternoon sessions with younger children.

> Ali arranges three bottle tops on one end of the plank.
>
> Mal gives high pitched squeaks as he sees Ali do this. Mal then fetches two more bottle tops, which are lying nearby on the ground, (possibly they've fallen off the nearby carpentry table).
>
> Lau is also watching: "Uh ooh"
>
> Meanwhile Ali uses one leg to stamp firmly on the upright end of the plank, sending the three bottle tops flying, he laughs, Mal giggles and watches as Ali repeats the jump three times. All three boys laugh hysterically, glancing at each other and bending over helplessly, using no words.

Analysis and Discussion

Bodies and Laughter in Communication

These children were totally involved in the activity of catapulting bottle tops to see how far they could fly. They seemed connected intra – and intersubjectively by the shared activity, the rhythm in their bodies, and their gleeful laughter, expressing huge enjoyment. They laughed after each catapult, their bodies almost doubling over with glee as they looked alternately at each other and the flying bottle tops. The laughter energised and increased their motivation for this play. I had to hold myself back from laughing also. It felt contagious. I wondered if these children, with no verbal language in common, were instead using laughter as a means of communicating and connecting emotionally using voices, bodies, and the mediating catapult activity. I had observed this group of boys being very gleeful together on several occasions, so I asked the teachers how they interpreted this very playful, happy, amusing, and almost hysterical, gleeful behaviour.

Teacher Cath: "Yes, they laugh as a way of talking. That's where humour's great, because it breaks down the barriers… These children are all Muslim and all play together, yet they speak three different languages".

These children used their bodies a lot, jumping on the catapult, almost falling over laughing, and stumbling around, epitomising the energetic feeling tone described as *vitality affect* (Stern, 2010) as well as the rhythmic tone associated with *communicative musicality* (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). The three of them seemed to become one unit of wildly rhythmic activity, connected in their dancing movements by their African historical and ethnic cultures, religion and gender. Laughter, with associated body movements (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) united and motivated them instead of a common spoken language. They moved synchronously and rhythmically together as a unit, blending their jumping shifting figures with the grounded wooden catapult, and the flying bottle-tops, their figures fluidly and chaotically connecting with the surrounding ground.

From Subjectivity to Intersubjectivity

The dynamic and dialectical nature of such activity precludes the existence of any external – internal boundaries (Zinchenko, 2001). Responding to this issue of how the external world becomes the internal mind, Zinchenko (2001) pragmatically points out that: "… if internalisation is understood as a transition from intersubjective to intrasubjective, which is performed by mental functions … Such an explanation eliminates the opposition between external and internal and, consequently, both visible and invisible at the same time" (p 137). The dialectical dynamics inherent in activity unite subject (playful child) and object (environment, including artefacts).

Subjective blends into objective and vice versa, inter- and intra- subjectively. The wooden plank as an object did become an extension of the children's bodies while the flying bottle tops also seemed to connect the children with the surrounding air space. In this way the see-saw plank with flying bottle-tops and jumping bodies mediated the blending of subject and object in this activity which also became a tertiary artefact, a play-world (Wartofsky, 1979). Artefacts such as this event embody cultural, historical, and social experiences and these children had several common cultural elements, despite speaking three different African languages.

Mediating Bodies

Artefact mediation is key to understanding communication. Mediation works in the spaces between communicators. Children interpret and learn the meanings of mediating tools, signs, and symbols from their social experiences in the world, including in play. Via engagement in activity the felt meanings associated with these tools, signs and symbols are internalised. What is initially socially known becomes personal as it acquires first personal sense and then social meaning. While my initial research focus on mediation included identifying mediating tools, signs, and symbols, I also following and interpreting patterns in children's playful activity. I worked towards understandings of children's felt experience by systematically observing and reflecting on children's playful activity including the artefact-mediated dimensions. I pondered reflective questions such as: how does this play activity affect these children? How does the external activity influence children's internal selves and vice versa? The metaphor of Indra's Net is a useful reminder to view play activity as complex systems of interconnecting parts.

Young children and adults communicate with bodies by using a wide range of signs besides words. These children communicated and experienced playfulness physically, emotionally and cognitively, in their bodies and with their catapult activity. Though this event exemplifies non-verbal, playful communication such a focus does not detract from the importance of play with language and words that was also a strong feature in other events in this study. I suggest that rather than categorising communication as either verbal or non-verbal, a research focus on the purpose of

young children's playful communication is a more useful way of understanding their communication. Verbal, non-verbal and pre-verbal ways of communicating flow into one another.

Thus mediating artefacts extend well beyond words, to include everything that mediated children playing and relating. And, though words may be the tool of tools, activity, including all movement, is prior to words. Despite his prioritising of words, Vygotsky (1986) wrote: "To the biblical 'In the beginning was the Word' Goethe makes Faust reply, 'In the beginning was the deed'…the word was not the beginning – action was there first; it is the end of development, crowning the deed" (p. 255). Activity rules in this sense.

Researcher Positioning

As an observer I moved between positions of objectivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity in a series of cycles that began with passively observing children being playful and humorous, while simultaneously retaining an awareness of the impossibility of total researcher objectivity. As I developed rapport with the teachers and children, those relationships also developed degrees of intersubjectivity and shared understandings.

I became increasingly aware of how I was also always part of the observed mix. This was particularly obvious when infants showed fear of me as a stranger, or I was asked by children to take a role in their play. This mixing had implications for how I interpreted observations, including what I saw and heard, filmed, wrote, and felt. Generally however, the children treated me as an adult, somewhere between a teacher and a parent, and I tried to maintain a passive responsive role using "reactive strategies" (Corsaro, 1985). Thus, I responded to child- and teacher-initiated communication, relating to children and teachers authentically with feelings, intersubjectively rather than as an objective outsider. My position as a visitor, and the process of simultaneously reflecting while observing, ensured I didn't become too overtly subjectively immersed in centre playfulness. Being there, reflecting while watching did however affect me inwardly, though I tried not to show my excitement or curiosity too much. Watching children relating and having fun was an enjoyable experience.

Participants

The children in Northbridge and Eastbridge ECCE settings were a mixture of ages, between from 6 months and 5 years, while the children in Southbridge were all 4 years old. The children in Puriri centre (Part III- chapters "A Holding Environment" and "Relational Fields and Context") that were included in the project in this book, were between 6 months and 2 years old. English was the dominant language in most

of the children's families, apart from the families at Southbridge centre. They included a diversity of ethnic and cultural family backgrounds included Somali and Iraqi refugees, and Samoan, Rarotongan, Indonesian, Chinese, and European families. Thus English was not the dominant language for all these families. Some children and parents at Southbridge understood and spoke very little English.

Procedures

Ethics and Access

Gaining access to the teachers in all four ECCE centres, in both projects, was uncomplicated. This was partly because as an early childhood teacher I understood centre systems, and also because the research foci on playfulness and relationality were perceived by teachers and parents as positive and non-threatening for parents, teachers and children.

Ethics approval involved several stages. Initial explanatory meetings were held with the ECCE supervisors, before approval for the research was obtained from the respective University and Polytechnic Human Ethics Committees. I distributed information sheets and consent forms to teachers and to parentsin all four ECCE centres, as well as having informal conversations with parents and teachers. Teachers also helped to ensure that all parents received the information forms, and collected the signed consent forms on my behalf.

The informed consent of child participants was by proxy consent from parents, yet the child's interests were a foremost concern. My passive, reactive role (Corsaro, 1985) of not interrupting children's play or other activities, yet responding to children's requests and queries, caused a minimum of disruption to the centre processes. When the occasional child did enquire about what I was writing, or doing, I responded honestly, usually explaining that I was interested in children's play. The children seemed pleased that they and their play were acknowledged and respected. I enjoyed my time quietly wondering, while reflectively watching children play. While being mindful of not interrupting play, I usually asked 4-year olds if it was okay to video them. As part of the familiarisation process I supported interested children to play carefully with using the video camera. In this way any novelty value soon dissipated, though occasionally children would still ask and be allowed to use the camera, perhaps adding to their acceptance of this videoing observer visitor.

Data Generation

Tools used for gathering and generating data consisted primarily of participant observation, with the essential aid of a mini video-recorder as well as a laptop computer. Note-taking alone was inadequate for capturing the complexity and spontaneity of children playing, hence the reliance on technological aids. The equipment was not overly obtrusive being a small sized camera which I frequently simply held at waist level in order to record conversations as much as visual body language. Perfect focusing was not a priority, whereas ensuring that staff, parents and children remained relaxed was a priority. The children in all four centres were used to staff videoing and photographing, so they were familiar with the equipment and I tried to fit in as naturally as possible. This sometimes meant responding to children's questions and conversations while simultaneously videoing them. For example, in event 1 (chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing") the children asked me to count to ten while they hid, which I did while continuing videoing and feeling very much the participant observer.

The older, more verbal, children at Southbridge ECCE centre did show initial interest in the technology and when some children there expressed interest in videoing, I helped them to use the camera for one session. After that the occasional child would ask to look through the lens, then resume playing.

The research produced approximately 10 h of video from each ECCE centre, a lot of which provided contextual information. Children's ways of playing and relating were largely spontaneous and unpredictable. Hence videoing was a relatively random and intuitive process of tracking individuals and small groups of children playing.

The original typed field notes were divided into four columns: one for date, time, place, weather and such conditions; another for literal *objective* observations; the next for *subjective* interpretation; and the fourth listed the material-mediating artefacts. This list of artefacts was important in using activity theory, which prioritises the tools, symbols and signs that mediate the activity. I also kept a reflective journal and regularly wrote reflective analytic memos, as well as anecdotes told to me by parents and teachers. In this way the data generation, writing, reflecting, and transcribing processes formed the first levels of data analysis. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents added to the multiple methods used to generate data.

Data Analysis

The development of theory from data requires systematic processes and caution. I was wary of not defaulting to the more common observer focus on individual children rather than their interactions (Graue & Walsh, 1998). My focus was on the felt spaces between children playing and relating, including the artefacts and feelings

that filled these spaces. One way of not jumping to premature theoretical conclusions is analysis that includes context. Events go some way towards including context. The concept of the relational field as described by Donnel Stern (2013) is useful here because it emphasises the felt interpersonal dimensions of context, thus interpersonal dimensions are implicit in references to field in this book. The mix of tools (video, eyes, pen, paper) and methods (observing, interviewing, reflecting, checking out) enabled full detailed descriptive and contextualised observations of children relating and being playful.

Inductive data analysis occurred as data were generated, so that initial data generation was also the first phase of data analysis. This initial analysis accompanied the construction of a data record that included: dating, filing, and re-filing observation notes, transcripts and tapes, and making back-up copies of everything for safekeeping. Inductive data analysis was ongoing during all phases of the research.

Theoretical analysis (the next level of analysis, Pollard, 1996) followed the same sequential order, of describing and analysing, so that analyses from each phase of the research informed subsequent phases. These analyses developed out of repeated viewings of the video footage, multiple re-readings of interview, observation and video transcripts, reflecting critically and ruminating over memos (writing more) and looking for paradoxes, patterns, gaps, and contrasts in the data (Delamont, 2002).

This analytical process was simultaneously informed by ongoing and extensive reading of related literature. Literature on play became an important resource, as did writings on activity theory and, in the more recent phases, writings from the field of relational psychology. Data and literature together provided substance for critical and theoretical reflection. This deeply reflective approach enhanced my awareness of challenges around being both an *objective* outsider and a *subjective* participant observer.

Themes around playfulness were identified from patterns and regularities, including contradictions, contrasts, gaps, and paradoxes in the data. These themes were compared across and within centres as a form of cross-checking the primary data.

To summarise, the process of data analysis moved inductively from descriptive to theoretical, though always grounded in the actual descriptive data. I was working towards balance in description, analysis and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). While the use of narrative-like event structures was initially descriptive, with interpretation and analysis, events also became explanatory. Narrative-like events, ensured a balance of theoretical interpretation with pragmatism, in understanding and representing young children in ECCE settings playing and relating. The ethnographic style emphasised in-depth understandings of the interactive processes of children being playful. This depth allows the results to be generalised in two ways (Delamont, 2002), firstly across the early childhood centres and secondly, the results of this study may be generalised to the development of theory about young children in ECCE settings, playing and relating. In the latter case theory development is informed by activity theory and relational psychology. This research legitimates the

importance of studying everyday practices in order to understand children holistically.

Phases of the Research

The research in Part II (chapters "The Intersubjective In-Between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness", "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together", "Becoming Selves Relationally", "Imagining While Playing" and "Feelings Felt in Bodies") was sited in three different ECCE centres and involved four successive phases of data gathering, with each phase addressing questions that had developed out of the previous phase. Questions and themes also emerged within each phase adding to the cumulative character of the research process.

The main question in the original research (Part II) was:

- How do young children experience humour and playfulness in their communication?

Related sub-questions that emerged out of the four successive research phases and have relevance to this book included:

- What mediates children's playful communication?
- How do young children communicate intersubjectively when having fun together?
- How do pre-verbal children interact and communicate playfully with each other, with talkers and with teachers?
- How do children use narrative structures and words when being playful?
- What role do the teachers play in children's playful narratives?

The writing of this book is yet another phase in a never-ending research process. It reflects my continuing curiosity and interest in connections between children's emotional relationality and play.

Overview of Part III

Part III of this book is a more recent phase in this research journey. It picks up on the questions around artefact mediation, intersubjectivity, and non-verbal communication, with a specific focus on babies and toddlers relating and playing.

The main research question in Part III asks:

What is the nature of the relational environment for the babies in this ECCE centre where eco-sustainability is an overarching philosophical principle?

Sub-questions that emerged during this phase of the research process focussed on how these very young (pre-verbal) children related and included:

What *things* and people in the environment attract and distract these pre-verbal children?
(Things include material artefacts as well people.)
How do artefacts mediate and connect these pre-verbal children inter and intra-subjectively?
How do teachers and pre-verbal children communicate and connect reciprocally? (focussing on the in-between space and agency)

With time I became increasingly aware of Puriri ECCE centre as a community – a public family – nestled, matrix-like within complex networks of interconnecting systems, influenced by trends and policies operating locally, nationally and internationally. Ecological sustainability was a dominant discourse and driver in policies and in espoused teacher practices for Puriri centre.

Questions shifted towards:
How are wider sustainability values played out with babies' and toddlers' in the setting?
How are issues of sustainability mediated for babies and toddlers in this setting?

Introduction to Puriri Centre (Part III)

Puriri ECCE centre explicitly emphasised relationships across the extended community of families, teachers, the local geographical community and the wider physical environment. Puriri's relational philosophy was grounded in a prioritizing of ecological sustainability, interpreted by them to broadly include caring for self, others and the environment. This view of sustainability is congruent with indigenous New Zealand Māori world-views that emphasise the interconnectedness of all phenomena, echoed also in the metaphor of Indra's Net that underpins ideas in this book and is described in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing".

The implications of this sustainability philosophy meant that rather than implementing key (primary) caregiving processes all staff – and to a degree some children – were included in caring for all the babies, as well as for each other and the environment. A model of primary caregiving where each child is allocated one specific caregiver, was understood as overly individualistic and not in keeping with the interconnectedness of being.

As mentioned, the central question framing the project was:
What is the nature of the relational environment for the babies and toddlers in this ECCE centre where 'eco-sustainability' is an overarching philosophical principle?

The research focus on relationality including feeling was important because sensory feelings dominate infants ways of being (Damasio, 2000; Music, 2011; Trevarthen, 2011; Stern, 1985, 2010). Emotions/feelings emerge through early relationships; attachment theory is about emotional patterns learned in these early

relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008). Emotions are viewed in this book as "relational experiences lived through bodies; bodies that co-regulate their movements with the movements of others" (Fogel & Garvey, 2007, p. 17).

Observations focused on these very young (pre-verbal) children's relationships. The use of video added huge detail to my observations. Video enabled me to review and revisit observations, to question and to reflect critically on the images and my interpretations.

The research methods, including ethics approval, data generation and analyses were similar to those described for Part II. This interpretive, ethnographic research approach fitted with the exploratory, open-ended and reflective nature of a research focus on the meaning-making relational experiences of mainly preverbal children (6–20 months old) (Fogel & Garvey, 2007; Renn, 2010; Shotter, 2010; D. Stern, 1985, 2010; Trevarthen, 2011; Winnicott, 1960a, 1960b, 1974).

Puriri ECCE Setting and Background

Puriri was a small, urban, privately run centre in Auckland catering for up to ten children under 2-years old. Up to 25 children between 2 and 5 years old occupied the adjoining semi-separated rooms and outside area. Wall windows and low fences ensured that the under-twos area, where this project was focussed, felt connected to the larger, noisier over-twos area, yet was also a separate and quieter space. Several of the infants had siblings in the over-twos area. Government policies in New Zealand use 2-years-old as a marker, for funding and regulatory purposes, hence the two separate, yet connected, mixed-age groups in a mixed-age ECCE centre.

As in Part II gaining access to teachers, families and children involved building relationships before, during and following the ethical approval process. This project was initiated by the manager, who was keen to investigate how their babies fared relationally without a primary caregiving system. I was approached and the research proceeded from that initial meeting. Both teachers and children's parents were familiar with observational research, the centre having participated in several centre-based research projects.

This project also became an important part of my transition to living in Auckland having very recently moved there from Wellington. Families in my neighbourhood were also connected with Puriri centre as both past and present users. Perhaps I caught their feelings of belonging to Puriri too.

Relationships between infants, young children, teachers, families, the local community, things, and place – the ecological, environmental, sociological, historical, cultural and psychological systems within which we live – pervaded the philosophy and practices of Puriri centre, seemingly driven and sustained by the experience and aspirations of the centre owner-manager's strongly held philosophy around sustainability.

The following short event exemplifies an ethos of care as relationality including community, while also highlighting points around teachers supporting children to

feel and express emotions. I make connections between attachment, feeling securely held and children learning to regulate emotions. Though brief this event offers many more interpretive possibilities.

Event 3: Being Left and Reassuring Grandmother

Being apart, connecting and reconnecting on a regularly repetitive basis with familiar people and places is in the nature of ECCE daily life.

Ed was crying and seeming very distressed when his grandmother left him in the under-twos area at Puriri. She sadly said "bye-bye" and told Ed that she'd be back to collect him later that day. Teacher Van held and tried to comfort Ed, talking soothingly with him, nestling him tightly in her arms against her body, but still he screamed and cried loudly. Grandmother too looked distressed. As soon as grandmother was out the door Ed calmed down physically and ceased crying. He now looked relaxed and comfortable, listening to the tone in teacher Van's words and feeling her soothing holding arms. Manager Mary was preoccupied yet she noticing the change she asked another available teacher to go quickly after grandmother and tell her that Ed had stopped crying and settled down. Ed slid down from Van and began toddling around, exploring, playing.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

This attitude of reassurance, accepting and understanding of the grandparent's distress, as well as the child's, was common in Puriri, as it also is in other ECCE centres. Small thoughtful actions added to creating a caring ethos, where grandmother, child, family, teacher relationships all matter.

Caring also includes teachers accepting and supporting children to feel a range of feelings, so accepting Ed's cries, rather than expecting instantly controlled containment from upset children. In feeling physically and psychologically held, Ed was able to feel and express distress and anger at being left. In Van's holding arms Ed was supported to safely feel the power of feelings. This self-awareness of feelings is the substance of emotional self-regulation. In physically holding Ed and accepting his distress Van held his feelings with him, enabling Ed to feel himself and to become calm. Without this emphasis on shared awareness of feelings, the concept of emotional self-regulation can be narrowly mis-understood as rigidly individualistic self-control without the feeling of emotions. Yet it is the feeling of emotions that contributes to people's psychological wellbeing, openness and joy in living and in life.

This incident caused me to reflect further on how children also being given space to safely feel, can begin to think, recognise, understand and regulate their feelings, thus contributing to emotional self-awareness. Teachers trying to soothe and calm

crying children, as in this event, may also be unwittingly smothering children's feelings, if they don't support children to express feelings. Crying can also become contagious particularly among babies. Emotions are contagious. Angry, sad or otherwise upset children learn to regulate their emotions by feeling them and by becoming aware of the, sometimes overwhelming, feelings while also feeling safely held, so sharing the feelings safely. Ed recovered himself by coming to some sort of feeling of connectedness, with another (Van) and him-self, in this self-regulatory way.

While observation involved reflexively reading children's and teacher's bodies relating, infants can be extra sensitive to the presence and feelings of others, so I also focussed on reflectively and reflexively reading and developing awareness of my own body feeling-thoughts while observing. I too felt reassured when Ed calmed down, ceased crying and began playing.

Though I observed Ed being physically held, I could only imagine his feelings of security in feeling safely held. I made hypothetical connections between his feelings and his learning to self-regulate emotions. These links and others, emerged inductively from in-depth examination of, and rumination on, the raw observation-based data. They are also informed by reading a wide range of relevant research. One never really knows how another is thinking-feeling, however I can theorise, wonder, reflect and interpret.

While the meanings in words go someway towards bridging the intersubjective spaces between people, it was the calming soothing tone of the words almost sung and combined with Van's holding arms and warm body that soothed and supported Ed emotionally. Van did this intuitively. The spontaneity in her body-language initially appeared more responsively feeling-ful than thoughtful. But the feeling body is also an intuitively thinking body (Merleau Ponty, 1968). Body-language is thus an important observational focus for interpreting understandings of relationality throughout the events in this book.

Summary

Part I of this book has introduced several observed themes in young children playing and relating, including: sensory body-language, intra and intersubjectivity, artefact mediation, the relational field as context and children's relational play as interconnecting systems of activity. These and other themes are revisited throughout this book. The ethnographic research methods used in the two projects that inform this book have also been introduced.

Chapter Structure for Part II and Part III (Chapters "The Intersubjective in-between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness", "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together", "Becoming Selves Relationally", "Imagining While Playing", "Feelings Felt in Bodies", "A Holding Environment" and "Relational Fields and Context")

Each chapter in Parts II and III provides a different yet complementary lens for appreciating the complexities in events of children being playful and relating. This progressive way of working with themes is one way of clearly conveying the complexity in the activity of children relating and playing. Thematic analyses should not obscure the very complex multilayered and fluid nature of the children's activity as represented in events.

For purposes of portraying these complexities the next five chapters (chapters "The Intersubjective In-Between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness", "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together", "Becoming Selves Relationally", "Imagining While Playing" and "Feelings Felt in Bodies") present a wide range of events grouped thematically into five clusters of related affective themes that stood out in the observations. Chapter "The Intersubjective In-Between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness" addresses the very relational topic of inter and intra subjectivity while also emphasising the mediated nature of inter-subjectivity. Chapter "Words Connecting Children Playfully Together" focuses on the power of verbal language, of words, for young children communicating playfully. Chapter "Becoming Selves Relationally" emphasises the growth of children's subjectivities, their developing feelings of being and becoming selves, while also communicating and connecting playfully together and with others. Chapter "Imagining while Playing" explores children playing imaginatively with links to myth, creativity and complexity in dramatic playfulness. Chapter "Feelings Felt in Bodies" returns to the very fundamental focus on feelings as felt in bodies, by focussing on musicality, rhythm, and embodiment in children's playful communication.

The focus on bodily felt communication in chapter "Feelings Felt in Bodies" flows smoothly into Part III which focuses on very young children playing and relating, before they have many or any words.

Chapters "A Holding Environment" and "Relational Fields and Context" further explorethemes that emerged in the study of babies' and toddlers' relationality in Puriri ECCE centre. These themes are broadly clustered as: feelings of being held in chapter "A Holding Environment" and the field as context and tone in chapter "Relational Fields and Context". The final chapter "Implications: Teachers Being Relationally Aware", focuses on possible implications for ECCE teachers developing understandings and awareness of children playing and relating.

References

Alcock, S. (2005). *A socio-cultural interpretation of young children's playful and humorous communication: A thesis presented in the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand*. (Dissertation/Thesis).

Alcock, S. (2010). Young children's playfully complex communication: Distributed imagination. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 18*(2), 215–228. doi:10.1080/13502931003784404.

Alcock, S. (2013a). Toddlers' complex communication: Playfulness from a secure base. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 14*(2), 179–190. doi:doi.org/10.2304/ciec.

Alcock, S. (2013b). Searching for play in early childhood care and education policy. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 48*(1), 19–33.

Alcock, S., & Haggerty, M. (2013). Recent policy developments and the "schoolification" of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Early Childhood Folio, 17*, 21–26.

Bateson, G. (1980). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds/Jerome Bruner*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. (2008). *Handbook of attachment, second edition: Theory, research, and clinical applications*. Retrieved from http://VUW.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=360938

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Collins. (1998). *Collins English Dictionary* (4th ed.). Glasgow: Harper Collins.

Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Damasio, A. R. (2000). *The feeling of what happens: Body, emotion and the making of consciousness/Antonio damasio*. London: Vintage.

Delamont, S. (2002). *Fieldwork in educational settings: Methods, pitfalls and perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *The handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity – theoretical approach to developmental research*. Retrieved May 12, 2002 from http://lchc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Paper/Engeström/expanding/toc.htm.

Engeström, Y. (1999). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, & R.-L. Punamaki (Eds.), *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 19–38). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research.*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Engestrom, Y., Reijo, M., & Punamaki, R.-L. (1999). *Perspectives on activity theory*. Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fleer, M. (2013). Affective imagination in science education: Determining the emotional nature of scientific and technological learning of young children. *Research in Science Education, 43*(5), 2085–2106.

Fogel, A., & Garvey, A. (2007). Alive communication. *Infant Behavior and Development, 30*(2), 251–257. doi:10.1016/j.infbeh.2007.02.007.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Graue, M. E., & Walsh, D. J. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods, and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jackson, M. (1989). *Minima ethnographica: Intersubjectivity and the anthropological project.* (pp. 1–36). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jackson, M. (1996). *Things as they are: New directions in phenomenological anthropology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Malloch, S., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Music, G. (2011). *Nurturing natures: Attachment and children's emotional, sociocultural and brain development*. Hove, East Sussex, New York: Psychology Press.

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pollard, A. (1996). *The social world of children's learning: Case studies of pupils from four to seven*. London: Cassell.

Quiñones, G., & Fleer, M. (2011). "Visual vivencias": A cultural-historical tool for understanding the lived experiences of young children's everyday lives. In *Educational research with our youngest* (pp. 107–133). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Renn, P. (2010). Psychoanalysis, attachment theory and the inner world: How different theories understand the concept of mind and the implications for clinical work. *Attachment: New Directions in Psychotherapy and Relational Psychoanalysis, 4*(2), 146–168.

Schwandt, T. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. D. Y. Lincoln (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Shotter, J. (2010). Inside our lives together: A neo Wittgensteinian constructionism. In S. R. Kirschner & J. Martin (Eds.), *The sociocultural turn in psychology: The contextual emergence of mind and self* (pp. 45–67). New York: Columbia University Press.

Stern, D. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.

Stern, D. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Stern, D. B. (2013). Field theory in psychoanalysis, Part I: Harry Stack Sullivan and Madeleine and Willy Baranger. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 23*(5), 487–501. doi:10.1080/10481885.2013.832607.

Tobin, J. (1995). Post-structural research in early childhood education. In J. A. Hatch (Ed.), *Qualitative research in early childhood settings* (pp. 223–243). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Trevarthen, C. (2011). What is it like to be a person who knows nothing? Defining the active intersubjective mind of a newborn human being. *Infant and Child Development, 20*(1), 119–135. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/icd.689

Van de Veer, R. (2001). The idea of units of analysis: Vygotsky's contribution. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 93–106). Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wartofsky, M. W. (1979). *Models, representation and the scientific understanding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Reidel.

Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Winnicott, D. W. (1960a). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 41*, 585–595.
Winnicott, D. W. (1960b). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; a study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 34*(2), 89–97.
Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
Zinchenko, V. P. (2001). External and internal: Another comment on the issue. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 135–137). Aahus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Part II
Young Children Being Playful in Three Early Childhood Care and Education Settings: Connecting and Communicating

The Intersubjective in-between-ness in Young Children's Playfulness

Abstract This chapter presents ways of interpreting and understanding intersubjectivity in young children's playful communication. This research focuses on the in-between spaces; the area in and between children connecting, communicating and relating together in play. This is a complex area open to a diverse range of interpretations, as alluded to earlier in chapters "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing" and "Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III)". This chapter explores the nature of the intra- and inter-subjectively mediated feeling-thoughts that emerge, and are co-created within and between children communicating playfully is a complex focus. Events illuminate processes at play in children's play. We focus on awareness of conscious and unconscious feeling-thoughts that are co-created, emerge, and change in a range of events (Benjamin J, Psychoanal Q LXXIII(1):5–46. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x, 2004; Kirschner SR, Martin J, The sociocultural turn in psychology: the contextual emergence of mind and self. Columbia University Press, New York, 2010; Ogden T, Psychoanal Q LXX111:167–195, 2004; Psychoanal Perspect 6(1):22. doi:10.1080/1551806X.2009.10473034, 2009; Vygotsky LS, Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1986; Wertsch JV, Voices of the mind: a sociocultural approach to mediated action. Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1991; Mind as action. Oxford University Press, New York, 1998).

Introduction

This chapter presents ways of interpreting and understanding intersubjectivity in young children's playful communication. This research focuses on the in-between spaces; the area in and between children connecting, communicating and relating together in play. This is a complex area open to a diverse range of interpretations, as alluded to in earlier chapters "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing" and "Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III)". This chapter explores the nature of the intra- and inter-subjectively mediated feeling-thoughts that emerge, and are co-created within and between children communicating playfully. Events illuminate these processes at play in children's play. We focus on awareness of conscious and unconscious feeling-thoughts that are co-created,

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_3

emerge, and change in a range of events (Benjamin, 2004; Kirschner & Martin, 2010; Ogden, 2004, 2009; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1991, 1998).

References to the unconscious include those felt-thoughts that are outside of conscious awareness. The story of Jade, presented in chapter "Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III)", illustrates the unconscious at play in Jade's lack of conscious awareness of how her shape-making with the plastic sticks also resembled her body making shapes. In using the phrase *feeling-thoughts* emotion and cognition are positioned as two sides of the same coin, connected in the activity of children meaning making and feeling sense. Singular references to feelings and thoughts, or mind and body, in this book, implicitly include thinking and feeling, mind and body. Jade further exemplified these connections with her body-based thinking-feeling, shape-making, performance-play. This holistic understanding of thinking as integrated with feelings and bodies is important for understanding and appreciating the place of cognition within children's meaning and sense making activity generally, as well as in the events presented in this book.

The Feeling Tone in the Relational Field

Relational terms and concepts such as *transitional phenomena* and *third space*, are used in this book because they address the feelings that are observed and felt in the spaces between children playing. The term *field*, as explained earlier, is used because it includes the invisible and visible, conscious and unconscious feelings that pervade the wider context of children playing. These terms add depth and breadth to ways of seeing, interpreting and understanding children playing and relating. Such inclusion feels refreshingly authentic and close to the original observed and felt experience. It also fits with the contagiously felt and difficult to dissect nature of playfulness, communication and relatedness.

The related terms *intersubjective third* and *thirdness* as used by Benjamin (2004) also usefully capture elements of the shared feeling-thinking tone that emerges between children, changing as the play shifts. I find these references to *thirdness* useful for focussing my awareness on the spaces in-between. Thirdness avoids the potential fall into emptiness that the word space, which is frequently used in the literature, can signify. The spaces between children communicating playfully usually feel very full and busy, far removed from any empty space.

However, thirdness too has limits as a word, particularly when referring to groups of more than two players as in most of the following events. It's useful to think of thirdness (and space) metaphorically, rather than literally. In this sense thirdness refers to feelings that emerge and create the relational field that connects children communicating playfully. Almost paradoxically this unifying togetherness raises awareness of children's individual separateness. Thus children playing together are both connected together, yet separate individuals. Our focus is on the third spaces

in-between, the thirds that both separate and hold children together intra- and inter-subjectivally, in play.

From an attachment theory perspective the intra – intersubjective qualities in the interpersonal field of early infant – caregiver relationships, set the tone for infants' future relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008). Securely attached infants tend to become securely attached adults, with well-grounded feelings of belonging and openness to others and the wider world (Music, 2010). Awareness of attachment as evolving relationally from within interpersonal fields of thirdness, both focuses and expands researcher perspectives. Thus in the analyses of events presented in this book, my researcher position shifts between focussing on individual children while also watching for patterns within, between, and among children, teachers and myself. The third transitional spaces in-between players fascinate; these are the places of attachment, connection and disconnection, where meanings and feelings emerge and are co-created within and between children connecting and communicating with themselves and with others and things in the wider world.

Understandings of in-between and the to and fro-ness of inter- and intra-subjectivity in early infant – caregiver relations, open up ways in which children's playful activity is viewed in this book. Thus the synchronously attuned dance-like patterns in early infant-caregiver relations exemplify the complexities of thirdness as a dynamic transitional phenomenon (Benjamin, 2004; Winnicott, 1974). The transitional and transformational in-between space also becomes a space for play and playfulness, where objects and subjects may be transformed playfully (Winnicott, 1974). Importantly, these playful transitional and transformational play processes are actively mediated, involving co-constructive processes, within third spaces.

Socio-cultural activity theorists have tended to emphasise the artefacts that mediate and connect people, in the third spaces between players, rather than the invisibly messy feelings and emotions (unconscious and conscious) that emerge in these interactive spaces (Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2015; Engestrom, Reijo, & Punamaki, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978; Wartofsky, 1979; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). A relational lens emphasises the feelings, emotions and meanings that are also co-created in these spaces, via mediated processes.

Events throughout this chapter and the book show children intersubjectively relating, connecting and communicating through the medium of play. Visible, invisible, rational, irrational, imaginative and real dimensions of feeling, thinking, being, and becoming all have a place in the in-between spaces of children's play, as events in this book illustrate.

The following three events are typical examples of children being playful, relating intra- and inter-subjectively together. Coincidentally water, both real and imagined, mediates this playfulness in events 4 and 5. In a sense water contributes to the felt qualities in the shifting changing third spaces between the observed players (children and teacher-adults). Underlying themes of power and resistance also feature (Corsaro, 1997).

Event 4: Water-Play in a Containing Paddling Pool-Puddle

Background
It is early summer. The children are playing outdoors more. A sense of freedom seemed to pervade the relational field, perhaps exacerbated by the elements of warm equinoctial windy days, sunshine and a lot of outside sand and water play.

A paddling pool has been set up in the shade of trees.

Three older children (4 year olds) are in the pool, water half way to their knees, bending over, holding onto the pool side bars, jumping heavily, splashing huge splashes, giggling, squealing and laughing gleefully. Tom stops jumping momentarily. He lies down in the shallow water, wriggling his entire body as if to feel the water tickling, touching him all over. He continues laughing and smiling, then resumes jumping and splashing. Zizi and Peta do likewise, battling the water. Few words are spoken. The fluidity of the water with their bodies mediates playful, joyful communication that blends loud splashing energy with episodes of gentle, relaxing lying in the water quietly soothing energy. The children's actions in and with the water express feelings in bodies with water. The experience is sensory and shared, the water connecting them. This episode lasts five minutes until the teacher tells the three to get out and let the younger children (2–3 years old) have a turn.

The four younger children are, despite their sensori motor age/stage, far more subdued and unconnected with the water and each other. They simply stand still hesitantly and quietly feeling the water on their legs for a few minutes, or perhaps not feeling it. The teacher tries unsuccessfully to relax them with words and gentle splashes. So, when she suggests that they might like to get out these toddlers immediately climb out of the pool and toddle away back to familiar safe and secure surfaces. With the pool empty of children, Tom, Zizi and Peta hop back into it and resume jumping and wildly splashing with much laughter and group joy, or glee. The teacher pours buckets of water over them, adding to the playfulness.

Analysis and Discussion

Playfulness: Containing Space

The playful communication of the 4 year olds in this event engaged and united them as feeling and thinking individuals in ways that resonate with notions of situated (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997) and distributed (Salomon, 1993) cognition, yet here emotions and feelings are also situated and become distributed across the group. The timid un-playful feelings of the toddlers also became distributed across them as a unified group and together they remained seriously wary of being in the paddling pool-puddle.

The relationally distributed nature of these children's feelings may have reflected unconscious implicit bodily responses felt (and expressed pre-symbolically before thought) with bodies and shared across the group, in ways that resonates with notions of distributed cognition (Salomon, 1993) but instead involves distributed

emotion, so fitting with notions of thirdness that connects and creates an interactive interpersonal field that is also an activity system. This analysis fits with the mediating sensory qualities of water itself. In this event pre-symbolic relational feelings spread across both groups of children, the younger ones with no words, and the older talkative children in evolving interpersonal fields (Stern, 2013).

Analysis and Discussion

Mediating Artefacts

The paddling pool filled with water, like a very large puddle, was a primary mediating artefact (Wartofsky, 1979). The water enabled the jumping, splashing, gleefulness, and the gentle, calm, peaceful communication of the older children as well as the silent numb reactions of the toddlers.

A noticeable feature of early childhood centres in New Zealand is the equipment, materials and activities that have historically dominated the programmes. While paddling pools are not common probably for reasons of safety and supervision, water-play, with hands in waist-high water troughs, is traditionally regarded as a staple activity, alongside sandpits and a range of other less *natural* materials and activities, such as finger-paint, paint, wooden blocks, picture books, jigsaw puzzles and the ubiquitous family corner. Though the activity of filling purpose-built waist-high containers with water for children's play is arguably natural, water itself is natural. All these typical early childhood activities involve children using their hands and sometimes their whole bodies as tools for manipulating and feeling other tools and materials.

Water is a transformative and intriguing element, widely associated with symbolizing emotions and feelings in eastern and western esoteric, early philosophical, and religious, traditions. It is a versatile and sensory material element that invites sensory activity. As well as being an exploratory medium in itself, water, like heavy air, also mediated communication between children, connecting them with each other, themselves, and the world beyond their bodies. Water was integral to the feelings that emerged in the interpersonal field. In this study, water often mediated playfulness, fun, loudness and excitement. Play with water was also observed to mediate soothing, calming, internally felt emotions. The almost fearful reactions of the younger children in the paddling pool were unusual. Perhaps the younger children were intimidated by the boisterousness of the older children. They may also have been intimidated by the newness of the paddling pool set-up and the vulnerability of being physically contained inside a pool, as opposed to the familiar position of standing outside a water trough with only their hands in it. Or it may have been the intuitive danger that water poses for young humans in drowning. Inside the shallow pool entire bodies, as well as hands, could get wet, and sink into heavy water. For the older children their physical containment inside a pool with edges, which they could hold, possibly contributed to them letting go and simply being together

intersubjectively united in wild splashing. The edges of the very shallow pool provided boundaries enabling them to feel safe enough to be able to relax and be wildly playful together. This event exemplifies the shared consciousness, unconsciousness, and unity in activity for both groups: the timid toddlers and the playful 4 year olds. Feelings – pre-symbolic -without and before words characterised both groups' wordlessly felt actions.

Event 5: Contained Water Play with Toddlers

Background

Eastbridge: outside, early morning, (7.20 am). The group of children are toddlers (18–36 months), their number varying from two initially, to five later, plus one older child and the teacher Vi.

Lau and Tim, attracted by the sound and sight of Teacher Vi tipping up and hosing out the round water trough, run, toddling towards it. For a few seconds they stand, stock still, and watch the water spurting from the hose. Then Lau puts his foot on the wet ground where Teacher Vi has just sprayed.

Teacher Vi: "Careful, you might get wet, ooh".
Lau: "Ooh"! [imitating Teacher Vi]
"Aaahhh"! [looking at his feet, gently stamps where the water is]

[Tim moves closer to the water, points and exclaims, in a singsong voice]

Tim: "Uh oh". [his favourite repeat phrase]
Teacher Vi: "Water". [to Tim slowly and clearly]
Tim: "Or ar". [responds]:

A pattern starts where Teacher Vi says "Ooh" as she squirts the hose towards the children's hands and they respond with squeals, pointing, jumping and laughter.

Teacher Xia: "Tim come and change your nappy".

While teacher Vi openly welcomed the children into play with water squirting from a hose, a routine nappy change interrupted and stopped this circle of connection where Tim and Lau joyfully imitated and repeated teacher Vi's sounds while also moving bodies towards and away from the water.

Two hours later (9.30 am):

Teacher Vi filling the water trough notices Tim wandering aimlessly.

Teacher Vi: "Tim, come over here darling, Tim haere mai". ["come here" in Māori]

Others also come, Lau, Viv, Max, Milli, all two to three year old toddlers, attracted by the activity. As the water squirts from the hose they scream and laugh, running towards the spray, hands stretched out in front, ready to catch and feel the water. The water attracts and repels as they run to and from it, both wanting and not wanting to be caught by the hose spray. Teacher Vi plays with them, tricking and sometimes catching them with water spray. Lau opens his mouth seeming to want to swallow the water as he toddles jerkily towards the spray, taking excited steps forward and back, accompanied by screams of joy and some laughter. The hose is turned off and the five children space themselves around the round shaped water trough and begin swishing and splashing gently with their hands.

Analysis and Discussion

Communicating Experiences: Mediating Intersubjectivity

As in event 4, water and children's bodily felt implicit feelings mediated communication around a water containing space. However, in contrast to the toddlers in the paddling pool, these toddlers did relax and play with the water. Why? Reasons are multiple. Perhaps they felt some control over the water, helped by familiarity with this sort of water play. They were also in control in being involved in the process of setting up the water play and in that process. This included watching the water trough being hosed clean and later filled, as well as playing with the water during the setting up process. Rather than feeling their whole bodies immersed in the water this group used their hands to play with the water feeling it as separate from their whole bodies; the water was contained apart in the waist high trough and initially inside the hose. Possibly these children felt safe and in control with the water contained separately. They could not dissolve or drown into it. Water can feel unsafe inducing sinking drowning bottomless feelings.

Something, be it symbols and signs expressed in words and body language, pre-symbolic (unconscious) feelings not yet thought, or material objects and substances, such as water, always mediates communication. In this study the initial focus was narrowed to those primary artefacts that mediated playful and humorous communication (Wartofsky, 1979). Thus, water with containers was a joint, artefact-mediating, focus for playfulness in events 4 and 5.

Containers Mediating Context

The water containers, a paddling pool, a waist large round water trough (and the hose) both established boundaries that contributed in important ways to creating a context for the feelings that emerged in each water-play scenario. The paddling pool seemed to welcome the bodies of the older children who lay down and immersed themselves in the water, yet the pool aroused fear in the younger children when they stood in the water and inside the paddling pool frame. The water trough and hose attracted the younger toddlers' attention like a large magnet; they were pulled towards this activity of setting up and playing with separately contained water that did not swallow and envelope their whole bodies as water contained in a pool could. When children felt at ease with elemental materials such as water and how these were framed and contained they seemed more able to let go of any traces of fear and anxiety and be playful together. Sandpits – large framed outside areas containing sand – share some similarities with the water; both are natural and open-ended substances that encourage open-ended play, within a contained area. Dependent on the design sandpits may allow children (and adults) to sit on the edge or to get right into

the sand, to dig, bury and to add water. Several later events in this book are situated in and around sand pits.

The children in the water play events 4 and 5 seemed to relate to and with the water as much as to each other. At times Lau and Tim, the toddlers at the water trough, appeared to be intersubjectively in tune with each other, perhaps partly because teacher Vi had earlier played with them together. Lau glanced towards Tim several times, seemingly checking him out, within the context of their water play. All the children in both events showed most interest in this shared water focus, even when afraid as the toddlers in event 1 appeared to be. The water, contained and framed in pool, trough and hose, mediated and connected the children. The signs they signalled, consciously and unconsciously, also connected them in a third intersubjective and transitional space that was both materially and psychically shared (Bateson, 1980; Winnicott, 1960, 1974). Thus they listened to and felt each other squeal and chaotically imitated and alternated squealing, laughing and giggling, echoing and signalling messages of fun to each other with their bodies, voices, and splashing and stilling actions. The water, the containers (pool, trough and hose), the teacher Vi, and children's signs and feelings all simultaneously contributed to mediating the water play experiences and the children's evolving intersubjectivity and self-other awareness that is part of togetherness and collaboration.

In these events the unique qualities of water connected the children intersubjectively with each other. It did this concretely under the shared hose spray and when they immersed their hands in the water trough together. In their unique and diverse playful ways all the children experienced the feelings of water on skin and responded actively with body movement and sound (laughter and joyful screams). Questions around mediation and intersubjectivity persisted throughout all phases of the research, reflecting the socio-cultural bases of a research focus on the interconnectedness of individuals and objects and how this interconnectedness was experienced and represented by the participants.

Though these toddlers shared the water it seemed to mediate communication with the teacher more than with each other, perhaps because the teacher held the hose, so was in control of the mediating artefact, the water. Tim and Lau showed some intersubjective awareness on a few occasions, in their glances towards each other, their imitation of sounds that teacher Vi initiated and their shared laughter. However, most of the younger children, though responding together, seemed more aware of and interested in, the teacher and the water than each other. The older children in event 1 seemed more consciously intersubjectively aware. They expressed this togetherness with their bodies as they jointly, collaboratively, and with shared bodily awareness and understanding, played with the mediating water. In the language of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968) their bodies expressed intercorporeity. The 4 year olds appeared to understand the separateness of others expressed in their shared joy in playfully splashing each other.

Event 5 continues:

> A short while later teacher Vi allows Mai (4 years) to hold the hose, to add more water. Mai plays with the power of the hose water, shooting out jet streams, creating whirlpools. [She

also has potential power to splash others; she is older and bigger than them.] The toddlers joyfully play with the whirlpools and spray, laughing, giggling, squealing and responding.

Teacher Vi: "Okay, I think that's enough now".

[taking the hose, she turns it off and goes to put it away]

Meanwhile Mai drinks a mouthful of water and instead of swallowing spurts it out, like a fountain. Mai laughs. Younger children watch and begin to imitate, spitting out water, giggling, squealing, laughing.

Teacher Vi: "Mai, that's a bit gross. All your germs get spurted everywhere. If you're going to drink it, fine, but swallow and don't spit".

Mai knows she has broken a rule. Tim squeals, giggles, stamps quickly, excitedly, on alternate feet, and continues drinking and pouring water into different sized containers. Teacher Vi doesn't notice Viv quietly drinking and spitting out water.

Analysis and Discussion

Mediating Power and Agency

As well as mediating group connectedness, water also mediated subversion and feelings of power, agency and control (Corsaro, 1985, 1997), in several ways. Mai was definitely in control when she created whirlpools with the hose jet and somewhat defiantly spurted water from her mouth. The 4 year olds in the paddling pool (in event 4) had controlled the water directly by splashing and jumping in, on, and through it using their whole bodies including their laughing, screaming, voices. This group's control was more restricted. The hand-held hose in event 5 mediated some control over the water, as did the hands splashing in the trough and the water spitting.

In a sense the play with water metaphorically mediated aspects of children's social and psychological positions. Thus, their water play around oppositional concepts such as: wet-dry, catching-chasing, spitting out-swallowing in, may be interpreted within a power play framework. From this perspective playfulness, in these events, involved children asserting power or agency (Bandura, 2001) in relation to a mediating artefact (Wertsch, 1998), the water, as well as in relation to each other and the teacher. Agency and power are always situated and relational processes; they are integral and attached to the event as much as to individuals and the group. The researcher wondered whether Viv, quietly imitating Mai's water spitting, was being subversive and/or enjoying the water spitting sensation.

Intersubjectivity and intercorporeity were features in the water play events when the water mediated children playing with feelings, rules and roles around the water, spitting, splashing and jumping together, for example. In these events the spontaneous, sensual, and implicit language of bodies played a critical role in the children's playful communication.

In contrast to the social water play the following event centres on one very young child, Eliza, using a material artefact (silver foil wrap) in various ways that enhance

her body and psychic space and her ability to initiate and anticipate relating enthusiastically and powerfully with teachers in this centre.

Event 6: Peek-a-boo I See and Hide from You

Northbridge: 8.30 am (arrival time), all children are indoors.

Teacher Sue is seated on a child sized bed in the family play area, reading (a book of traditional rhymes) to Frank (2 years, 8 months) who sits beside her; Eliza (1 year, 11 months) arrives with a large piece of shiny silver plastic wrapping foil wrapped around her. I stand quietly nearby, observing the scene.

Eliza: "Bboooo"! [to me, she jumps while surprising-greeting- pretend-frightening me]

Teacher Sue says something [inaudible], responding to Eliza about loud noises. I smile, trying to maintain a neutral position where I won't become an important part of the play, aware that my presence has been acknowledged. I like Eliza. She's a wonderfully alive engaging and active young child; in greeting me she seems to be responding to my unspoken feelings towards her. Were I not a researcher I might respond more playfully. However I am trying to be a participant observer who doesn't get too involved and potentially alter children's play to fit my possibly unconscious intentions. Accepting my quietly smiling acknowledgment, Eliza redirects her attention towards teacher Sue.

Eliza: "Grrrr, brrrr". [responding as she moves towards teacher Sue]

Teacher Sue pretends to be frightened and hugs Frank, who's holding the book.

Frank: "Grrrr, brrrr". [to Eliza]
Teacher Sue: "That was so funny". [to Eliza]
Eliza: "Lala lala lalaa". [jumps with glee, smiling all over]

Eliza wraps the foil around her shoulders like a scarf and moves to the nearby painting area.

Eliza: "Paint, me paint, paint". [pointing to the painting easels, which are occupied by other children].

A child finishes and teacher Rae puts an apron on Eliza, who becomes engaged in painting.

Pete (3 years, 6 months), approaches teacher Sue and sits beside her on the bed. She teaches him an old action rhyme.

Teacher Sue: "Knock on the door, and peep in, chin chopper, chin chopper, chin chin chin".

Pete repeats the actions on teacher Sue's face and vice versa, three times. Frank, still sitting on the bed on the other side of teacher Sue, watches.

Eliza finishes painting and returns to teacher Sue. Eliza laughs as teacher Sue recites the same rhyme and does the actions on Eliza's face.

Teacher Ali arrives and Eliza rushes up to her, with the wrapping foil. She hides her face behind it.

Eliza: "Grrrr…" [laughter]
Teacher Ali: [laughs crouching down to Eliza's height]

Teacher Ali gently throws the wrapping foil up in the air. Eliza copies this action and becomes interested in the floating quality of the foil. (The foil does resemble those shiny

metallic looking hydrogen balloons, only this one is squashed flat). Eliza laughs at the floating foil. She smiles and laughs a lot.

Charlie (3 years, 6 months) catches the falling foil and runs off with it, Meg (2 years, 11 months) joins in and follows him. So does Albert (2 years). Eliza tries unsuccessfully to retrieve the foil.

Later in the morning Charlie leads Eliza in cutting the foil up and pasting it on paper, in the art area.

Analysis and Discussion

Initiating Connections: Being Powerfully Playful

This event involved explicit joking humour initiated by a very young child, Eliza (1 year, 11 months) and directed – powerfully and aggressively – towards adults/teachers perhaps as a way of initiating contact and getting their attention. The possibly angry lion growling adds to the aggressive sub-text in Eliza's powerful play.

Although I as the researcher responded passively when Eliza first played her peek-a-boo game with me, my response didn't deter her from persisting and repeating the peek-a-boo game with two other adults who were also her teachers. They responded with fake fear and laughter. In this safe space Eliza could experiment with and experience powerful and potentially angry aggressive feelings. This play with power and aggression enabled Eliza to safely feel aggressive. In playing with socially unacceptable yet developmentally important feelings of aggression it is likely that Eliza was learning about managing her own and other's angry feelings. Eliza's initial joking peek-a-boo humour was an aspect of the overall playfulness that included and united both teachers and children in this early childhood centre. Though Eliza initiated this foil play it was picked up on by a small group of children towards the end of the event scene with three children chasing Charlie who had the foil. As if to complete the story-play the foil was finally cut up (not outwardly aggressively) and pasted down by Charlie with Eliza's help. The foil was controlled, destroyed and transformed.

The shiny silver plastic wrapping foil was a central mediating artefact in this event, connecting Eliza intersubjectively in relationships with several adults and children (as well as the foil). The foil had similar skin-like qualities to the plastic tarpaulin in the waterspout play, in event 1 (chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing"). Enveloping materials of various fabrics were frequently observed as mediating artefacts in young children's playfulness. The tarpaulin in event 1 integrated the children as a unit when they clambered under, over and became contained inside it. That tarpaulin held them together in a chaotically noisy and playful *third* way. The much smaller size of the silver plastic foil material in this event restricted Eliza's enveloping hiding play with it to her alone, yet still connected her with others. Like the tarpaulin, which changed from forming a house to

becoming a waterspout, the foil too was transformed as it mediated play activity in different ways: by hiding Eliza, by floating and being chased, before finally being cut up and pasted.

Two teachers also mediated Eliza's peek-a-boo power play by responding positively to her throwing the foil into the air, thereby encouraging Eliza. The traditional finger rhymes that teacher Sue enacted with Pete and Frank added to the generally playful atmosphere. The usual teacher-child power positioning was reversed when teacher Ali allowed Pete to do the finger rhyme on her face and teacher Sue crouched to the same height as Eliza while playing with her. Teachers Ali and Sue generally appeared relaxed; they also enjoyed children's company. In an interview on another occasion Sue emphasised the importance of teachers being relaxed and open to children. "… relaxed and happy and after all, isn't this what we want them all to be, relaxed and happy?… I think even if you bring humour into the centre, … it gives an easy relaxed feel that we are able to laugh at things and this isn't a deadly serious place …".

Eliza had started this event by jokingly hiding behind the silver foil wrap while I, in taking a passive reactive role, simply smiled (Corsaro, 1985). Teacher Sue responded more positively and commented on loud noises which in turn provoked growling responses from Eliza and Frank. However this exchange of reactions was not linear as in the transcript. It was more chaotic and layered (Fogel, Lyra, & Jaan, 1997) with a huge amount of the communication carrying on via very flexibly, actively moving bodies. For example, while growling Eliza, almost lion-like, crawled towards Frank who simultaneously leaned his body towards her and growled. A lot of the playfulness was expressed in energetic body movement, in laughter, jumping, and happy body language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Lokken, 2000).

Peek-a-boo joking humour is fairly common among very young children, yet it contradicts dominant theories about young children's cognitive abilities (Reddy, Hay, Murray, & Trevarthen, 1997) or inabilities. Eliza clearly showed a premeditated awareness that others also have thinking-feeling body-minds; she anticipated that the teachers would find the contradictions in her behaviour amusing. Following the initial positively playful response from teacher Sue, Eliza repeated the hiding trick with teacher Ali, demonstrating that this was not a one-off instance of understanding. Eliza showed a sophisticated awareness of social referencing. She initiated the connections and the almost aggressive playful communication with others who in this case were powerful adult teachers. She showed forethought in anticipating the reactions of the second teacher Ali, based on the reactions she had received from teacher Sue, and possibly from similar past experiences (Astington, 1996).

The activity of being playful allowed Eliza to take risks and experiment in a very relational way. Being playful enabled her to express strong feelings of aggression and power in joking games, safely. This play with uncomfortable and socially unacceptable feelings may be important for children integrating, and developing a full range of feelings as relational beings and becoming open and alive to the world.

Summary: The Third Space Between in Playfulness

This chapter has addressed the *third space in-between* that is a feature in all communication. The focus here is young children's playful communication. Events presented show how the activity of being playful together can mediate children's developing understandings of themselves as both social and individual beings. As in a Venn diagram the third space in-between includes overlapping aspects of both mediating artefacts and the emotional experiences of children. It includes aspects of inner and outer experience, of both visible and invisible things, thoughts, and feelings. It extends beyond words to include all the semiotic ways in which children being playful together connect and communicate. Being playful allows children to experience a wide range of feeling states together, socially and as individuals. As well as thirdness, other concepts used to explore this space include intra and inter subjectivity, transitional phenomena and artefacts. These different concepts provide different ways of seeing and coming to greater understandings of the felt experiences and learning involved in young children coming together in themselves and with others and communicating playfully.

References

Alcock, S. (2010). Young children's playfully complex communication: Distributed imagination. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 18*(2), 215–228. doi:10.1080/13502931003784404.

Astington, J. (1996). What is theoretical about the child's theory of mind? A Vygotskian view of its development. In P. Carruthers & P. Smith (Eds.), *Theories of theories of mind* (pp. 184–199). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 1–26. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1.

Bateson, G. (1980). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: An intersubjective view of thirdness. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXXIII*(1), 5–46. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x.

Bettleheim, B. (1976). *The uses of enchantment*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. (2008). *Handbook of attachment, second edition: Theory, research, and clinical applications*. Retrieved from http://VUW.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=360938

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Corsaro, W. A. (1997). *The sociology of childhood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

El'Konin, D. B. (1999). The development of play in preschoolers: Roles and pretend situations: Their significance and the motivation of play activity. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 37*(6), 31–70. doi:10.2753/RPO1061-0405370631.

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Engestrom, Y., Reijo, M., & Punamaki, R.-L. (1999). *Perspectives on activity theory*. Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fogel, A., Lyra, M. C. D. P., & Jaan, V. (1997). *Dynamics and indeterminism in developmental and social processes*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum.

Goncu, A. (1993). Development of intersubjectivity in social pretend play. *Human Development, 36*(4), 185.
Kirschner, S. R., & Martin, J. (2010). *The sociocultural turn in psychology: The contextual emergence of mind and self*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Kirshner, D., & Whitson, J. A. (1997). *Situated cognition: Social, semiotic, and psychological perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum.
Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought/George Lakoff and Mark Johnson*. New York: Basic Books.
Lindqvist, G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools*. Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University.
Lokken, G. (2000). *Toddler peer culture: The social style of one and two year old body-subjects in everyday interaction*. Trondheim, Norway: Norges teknisk-naturvetenskapliga universitet, NTNU.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Miettinen, R. (2001). Artifact mediation in Dewey and in cultural-historical activity theory. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 8*(4), 297–308. doi:10.1207/S15327884MCA0804_03.
Music, G. (2010). *Nurturing natures: Attachment and children's emotional, sociocultural and brain development*. Hove, UK/New York: Psychology Press.
Ogden, T. (2004). The analytic third: Implications for psychoanalytic theory and technique. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXX111*, 167–195.
Ogden, T. (2009). Rediscovering psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives, 6*(1), 22. doi:10.1080/1551806X.2009.10473034.
Ogden, T. (2010). Why read Fairbairn? *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 91*(1), 101–118. doi:10.1111/j.1745-8315.2009.00219.x.
Reddy, V., Hay, D. F., Murray, L., & Trevarthen, C. (1997). Communication in infancy: Mutual regulation of affect andattention. In J. G. Bremner, A. Slater, & G. E. Butterworth (Eds.), *Infant Development: Recent Advances* (pp. 247–273). Hove: Psychology Press.
Ruthrof, H. (2000). *The body in language*. London: Cassell.
Salomon, G. (Ed.). (1993). *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Stern, D. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
Stern, D. B. (2013). Field theory in psychoanalysis, Part I: Harry Stack Sullivan and Madeleine and Willy Baranger. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 23*(5), 487–501. doi:10.1080/10481885.2013.832607.
Trevarthen, C. (2009). The intersubjective psychobiology of human meaning: Learning of culture depends on interest for co-operative practical work–and affection for the joyful art of good company. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 507–518. doi:10.1080/10481880903231894.
Trevarthen, C., & Aitken, K. (2001). Infant intersubjectivity: Research, theory, and clinical applications. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 42*(1), 3–48. doi:10.1017/S0021963001006552.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Wartofsky, M. W. (1979). *Models, representation and the scientific understanding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands/Berlin, Germany: Reidel.
Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Winnicott, D. W. (1960). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; a study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 34*(2), 89–97.
Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Words Connecting Children Playfully Together

Abstract The events in this chapter show young children communicating, while playing together, using verbal language emotionally, creatively, imaginatively and subversively, co-constructing verbally rich interpersonal fields. Words mediate their intersubjectivity and add complexity to the communication that emerges and is co-created in the spaces between, and within, children relating and playing. The ways in which words can empower children, as serious and playful communicators, is a specific focus of this chapter. Verbal language featured strongly in observations of children communicating playfully in the wider study. Word play, and the complexities of verbal language in playful communication are, like intra and intersubjectivity, implicitly recurrent themes throughout the events in this book.

Introduction

The events in this chapter show young children communicating, while playing together, using verbal language emotionally, creatively, imaginatively and subversively, co-constructing verbally rich interpersonal fields. Words mediate their intersubjectivity and add complexity to the communication that emerges and is co-created in the spaces between, and within, children relating and playing. The ways in which words can empower children, as serious and playful communicators, is a specific focus of this chapter. Verbal language featured strongly in observations of children communicating playfully in the wider study. Word play, and the complexities of verbal language in playful communication are, like intra and intersubjectivity, implicitly recurrent themes throughout the events in this book. Events presented in this chapter highlight the connecting, symbolic, sense and meaning-making power of verbal language. Words are also connected to bodies and the multiple non-verbal modes in which these bodies too connect, communicate, represent and symbolise thoughts and feelings within interpersonal and wider communicative contexts. Events presented throughout this book illuminate these connections between children's emergent verbal narratives and their communicative playfulness.

Children in these events experimented with words as tools for thinking, as well as for communicating feelings (Cole, 1996; Halliday, 1973; Vygotskii, 1986). Words can enhance subjective self-awareness making feelings and thoughts conscious and enabling children to share feelings and ideas. The verbal children in this

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_4

study played a lot with words sometimes sharing ideas in creative and imaginative ways that reflected their developing thinking-feelings, their understandings, and their fluency with word sound patterns.

An understanding of words as more than thoughts, as also including feelings, and an appreciation of children's play with words is not new. Writing over forty years ago, Cazden (1974) cited Lucy Sprague Mitchell who was addressing a group of kindergarten teacher graduates thirty years earlier:

> There is no better play material in the world than words. They surround us, go with us through our work-a-day tasks, their sound is always in our ears, their rhythms on our tongue…But when we turn to the children, to hearing and seeing children, to whom all the world is as play material, who think and feel through play, can we not then drop our adult utilitarian speech and listen and watch for the patterns of words and ideas? Can we not care for the *way* we say things to them and not merely *what* we say? Can we not speak in rhythm, in pleasing sounds, even in song for the mere sensuous delight it gives us and them, even though it adds nothing to the content of our remark? (p. 20)

These words are at least as pertinent today. Despite the enthusiasm they express for children's apparently non-functional, non-structured word play, such play is still not a priority for teachers of young children. None of the teachers interviewed and spoken with in this study referred to children's word play when discussing children's humour and playfulness. This is interesting because word play was a prominent feature in the observations of children's playful communication in all three early childhood centres. The everydayness of young children's play with words has also been noted by other researchers and writers such as Cook (2000). As well as being enjoyable fun words can mediate complexity in thinking and feeling. Word play may also mediate children developing phonemic awareness which is an important part of learning to read, a currently dominant discourse in the field of early childhood education (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013).

As the following events illustrate, words empower, enabling young children to connect with others and to begin to communicate and co-construct feelings and thoughts in complexly sophisticated, challenging and abstract ways. Children's word usage and the themes they play, also reflect the intricacies of the cultures they're growing in to. The word culture as used here refers to the values, norms and ethos of early childhood centre cultures and family cultures, as well as ethnic, religious and national cultures.

Words are powerful tools for feeling as well as thinking and making sense of things. The early use of words as private speech where children speak their actions, thoughts, and feelings to themselves mediates their internalisation of the associated thoughts and feelings (Vygotskii, 1986) Gill, in the following event 5, talks to herself in this private public way, empowering herself with both her use of words and in the symbolic meanings and powerful feelings associated with those words. These two Badjelly episodes exemplify how powerful emotional concepts may be played with metaphorically, in the acting out of stories, myths, and tales that are integral to our cultures and are re-played by children.

Event 7: Badjelly

Background

Eastbridge, Two events, two months apart include the same children's hero, "Badjelly" (from Spike Milligan's book and cassette tape) and the power of "poison".

(A)

Ema (3 years, 6 months) and Gill (2 years) play in the family play area. I sit nearby.

Gill: "I've got my poisonous." (private speech)

Gill, crouches, hiding behind a bed in family play area, she then stands up and wanders slowly off towards the outside area.

Gill: "Going outside after Badjelly." (private speech)
Ema: "Gill's going to be Badjelly and I'm going to catch her." [said to researcher] [she laughs]

[She gives Gill the big black boots]

Ema: "She died cause I gave her some poisonous." (said to me)

Ema screeches with joy as she jumps on cushions in the family area. Outside, Gill enjoys exploring the tramping style and feel of wearing very large clumpy boots that reach past her knees, oblivious to having been "poisoned". She's going after Badjelly herself, agentially

Two months later:

(B)

Inside, Ema and Isabel laugh a lot, while playing "Badjelly."

Ema (3 years, 8 months): "Who wants to come on my broomstick"?
Isabel (3 years, 9 months): "I have to come, cause my baby's just woken up."

Isabel goes over to Ema who's positioned herself, one leg either side of the broom, holding the brush end. Isabel holds a teddy bear [her baby]
Ema and Isabel both ride/walk/shuffle on the broom, giggling together.

Researcher: "Where are you going on a broomstick?"
Ema: "We're going outside, to catch Badjelly and we're going to cook him and we're going to eat him up." [squirming and laughing while talking]

Isabel continues walking towards the outside, without the broom, holding her teddy/baby, while Ema pauses to answer the researcher

Researcher: "Cook Badjelly?"
Ema: "Yeah." [laughing]

Ema runs off after Isabel, using the broom as a poking, killing weapon, poking the floor as she runs, making lots of joyful poking sounds

Ema: "Badjelly's into poisonous."
Isabel: "We put them in the oven."
Ema: "I put her in the oven." [giggles]
Ema: "Now lets go quick before Jelly comes."
Isabel: "Yeah."

Analysis and Discussion

Modern Myths: Witches, Broomsticks and Poison

The children played with feelings of power and control inserted into various story plots. Badjelly was a recurrent theme in the play of the older children in Eastbridge centre community, a mythical object-like person, a witch, to fear, conquer, chase and poison…. Ema was one of several children attracted to this image of Badjelly. She initiated and directed the Badjelly play of event 5 as if this was play, a dramatic performance. Ema shared her experience and imagination with her peers who also used their imaginations to participate in the play. Thus imagination, like cognition, became distributed (Salomon, 1993) across the loosely co-created interpersonal field (Stern, 2013). Despite the dominance of one player, Ema, in these events, the other players (Isabel and Gill) were essential, contributing to the performance and thereby the co-construction of mini-narratives which embellished the larger narrative myth of Badjelly, the wicked witch.

The name *Badjelly the wicked witch* conveys intriguing notions of badness that seem to invite emotional responses around good-bad ideas and feelings. From the perspective of object relations theory these responses are evoked by individuals' internal object-images. Briefly, internal objects consist of mental and emotional images that are created relationally, yet internally, in very early relational experiences with children's emotionally significant others (parents, siblings, family, peers). From an object relations perspective, it is likely that Em was working out her emotional experiences by projecting feelings around her conceptions of badness into the play. She was working with her feelings of badness in the form of Badjelly. And the badness was also being further processed by being cooked in the imaginary oven.

Images such as Badjelly can evoke intense feelings of love, hate, and envy around concepts such as bad and good that reflect back on children's developing subjectivities. Exploring feelings of badness through pretend play and with the added power of words, may be particularly important for children managing strong feelings such as envy, hate or anger when they must share home and parents with a new sibling, or simply because they're expected to share resources in an early childhood centre. Playing with badness allows children to process and manage bad feelings in both unconscious implicit and consciously explicit ways. The ability to feel emotions of all kinds including anger, hate, and sadness as well as happiness is generally regarded as an indicator of mental health, wellbeing and aliveness.

The ethos of this ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) community endorsed this dramatic play by providing artefacts such as dress-up clothes to support the drama. I did not observe teachers in Eastbridge initiating and actively participating in children's pretend play. However I did observe the teachers on occasion being playful together and alongside children, as in event 16, and performing playfully for the children, as in events 13 and 14. Interestingly Ema explained the

story-line to me as if I was the audience: "Gill's going to be Badjelly and I'm going to catch her."

The children in the play seemed to enjoy their performance. Isabel and Ema laughed and giggled while being wicked. Gill seemed happy to be included, and to wear big boots, oblivious to the idea that she was Badjelly and was to be poisoned. Ema spoke excitedly, muddling sounds and grammar, so that the gender identity and singularity of Badjelly shifted from *him* to *them* to *her*. Ema laughed when she tricked younger Gill, saying she was "going to catch her" and "She died cause I gave her some poisonous". Later she laughed as she poked "Badjelly into poisonous" and asserted her dominance over Isabel's "*we*" with "*I* put her in the oven", though the oven pushing was originally Isabel's idea. This giggling laughter seemed to diminish and twist the horrifying side of conquering and killing, transforming a potentially tragic situation into a comedy of sorts. While in reality poisoning and killing by pushing into an oven, or fire, are horrific incomprehensible acts, children pretend-playing can experience some feelings of agency and being in control while safely touching on feelings of anger, envy, fury, sadness and rage which they project into play characters such as Badjelly.

Pushing into the oven, or fire, like poisoning and magic potions, are also metaphors signifying powerfully triumphant actions that are common in myths and fairy tales (for example, Hansel and Gretel). The idea of the joker/trickster winning and triumphing over evil is another mythical archetype and metaphor reflected in Badjelly. In these events the relatively powerless, word-playing, trickster-like children triumphed. All these symbolic metaphorical archetypes and themes feature in some form in the media, in television programmes of the superhero type, in movies, told stories, and in books. They are part of the surrounding culture and they can mediate children feeling powerful, agentic and in control when children re-create them through dramatic narrative play. In this symbolic sense myths pervade our present world as much as the past.

The following event picks up on play with words in differently scripted ways.

Event 8: Joking

Background

Eastbridge: Indoors: Seven 3–4 year old children eat afternoon tea together, after the younger children have finished eating. They're seated at two oblong shaped tables, parallel to each other, so that four children (two per table side) are seated back to back. Much of the talk was too muffled to clearly hear everything.

Teacher Nic tells Ben (3 years, 9 months) to turn around, he was facing Vanessa (3 years, 10 months) at the other table, so seated backwards.

Ben:	"Uh I was just telling her a joke."
Teacher Nic:	"Oh really, can you remember it? Can you tell me?"
Ben:	nods head [meaning yes, doesn't say anything, just stretches out on chair]

Teacher Nic:	"Do you want to tell me later?"
Ben:	nods [yes nod]
Vanessa:	"I'll tell you it. How did a elephant walk on a person's head?" [laughs]
Teacher Nic:	"I don't know."
Lewis:	"(unintelligible) caught fire…[laughs]" (3 years, 10 months)

Ben and Vanessa squirm in their chairs

Ben:	"Yes that's it."
Teacher Nic:	"Where do you get your jokes from Ben?"
Ben:	"I make them up."
Vanessa:	"That's really good, you can do that Ben."
Brie:	"And I can make jokes up too." [(4 years) at other end of table]
Vanessa:	"Ben, Ben, Ben, how did the elephant cross the tree?"
Ben:	"I don't know."
Vanessa:	"Because a person standed on his head." [laughs]
Vanessa:	"Ben, Ben, Ben, Ben I'm telling you a joke. How did a train cross the street?" [trying to get Ben's attention]
Ben:	"I don't know….."

Analysis and Discussion

Imitating and Re-Creating Joke Scripts

This event presents four children discussing and practising a script (Nelson, 1996) for telling elephant nonsense jokes. As primary artefacts, words, their rules for usage, and the meanings children gave words mediated the actual joke telling. This cultural practice of joke telling, with its rules of turn-taking, questioning, responding, and ridiculously inverting word meanings, also mediated as a secondary artefact – as a recipe for a style of dialogue (Wartofsky, 1979).

Ben seemed to understand the "I don't know" script-like response to joke questions. He used it twice. I wondered why Ben didn't tell the teacher his joke when asked. He possibly expected ridicule. He may have forgotten the lines. The teacher, tactfully, didn't persist in asking and with few words, encouraged the exploratory joke telling also admitting that he didn't know. However, Vanessa responded in Ben's stead. Demonstrating sensitivity, Vanessa also assured Ben that his jokes were "really good". Then, possibly inspired by Ben and the sympathetic teacher Nic, she made up her own nonsense jokes for Ben to answer.

This joking humour required children to understand the script of a joke, to think about the meanings of words, to use their imaginations and juxtapose or exaggerate these meanings, and to provide nonsensical answers. It was cognitively challenging (Varga, 2000). It was also fun and contributed to feelings of group togetherness around the table. The children laughed at the nonsense in their own jokes.

Event 9: Teacher Initiated Humor: Subversive Child Response

Background

Eastbridge: It is lunch time and about ten 3–4 year old children are seated in lines facing each other at two oblong tables that are joined end on. Before eating the teachers and some children have, in unison, said a Māori *karakia* (grace), that included the word *kai*, meaning *food*. Teacher Mu stands over the seated children; he's in control, in charge of serving the seated children their lunch. The talk begins as he serves Anna (3 years, 11 months), who is seated between Bob, (4 years, 3 months) and Cat (4 years).

Anna:	"I said kai I said kai." [kai is Māori for food]
Bob:	"I said kai."
Cat:	"I said porky kai."
Teacher Mu:	"Who would like some sour cream?"[doesn't respond to the children's talk; he walks behind them serving the food onto empty plates that sit on the table, in front of the children]
Several children:	"Me… Me Me Me Me Me.".. "A bit there for you." [he spoons food onto each plate] "And a bit there for you"…..
Teacher Mu:	
Children:	"Laughter" [at the cream splashing slightly]
Teacher Mu:	"Whoops we've got no plates." "Well I can't put it on the table can I?" [joking; he gets some more plates] "And you and you and you" [said playfully while spooning cream onto the plates]
Anna:	"He's a funny man." [children respond to teacher's 'humour']
Bob:	"You're a guy."
Teacher Mu:	"Am I a guy is that why I get laughed at?"
Anna:	"Silly."
Teacher Mu:	"Smelly I thought I smelt quite nice."
Anna:	"You do, the smells coming out of your bottom."
Teacher Mu:	"I don't think we should be talking like that while we're eating our lunch now."
Bob:	"Because that's a toilet word."

Analysis and Discussion

Teacher Control: Manners

The teacher in this event deliberately used humour, possibly to amuse both himself and the children. He was very much at the centre of the playfulness, standing above the seated children and mediating playfulness in a powerful controlling way. He held the power. The children laughed at the cream being spooned onto their plates and the suggestion that it might be spooned onto the table. One child pointed out that, unlike all the other teachers, this teacher was male, and funny, or silly. Teacher Mu deliberately misheard silly as smelly, to which a child responded with socially

inappropriate joking. However, this unacceptable joking was quickly controlled and the rules explained by both teacher Mu and child Bob, with different rationales. Both gave the same overall message that some joking in relation to bodies is acceptable, whereas anal-genital joking was not allowed. Earlier bodily-linked joking references to standing on heads and to food that goes into bodies seemed to be acceptable, but jokes that referred to anal functions of bodies were generally taboo. Yet toilet humour joking among children was observed in all three centres; it fits with understandings of young children's curiosity around their own gender and bodies. So some joking humour and playfulness was acceptable within limits.

In this everyday event the boundaries for acceptability were set by the teacher in control when he firmly stated that talk about smells coming from bottoms was not appropriate when eating. His actions possibly reflected social and cultural norms expressed in concepts such as manners and silliness. Manners enforce rules, in this case around correct or polite word usage. In a sense this event shared similarities with live theatre performance. Teacher Mu performed for the seated audience of children and their audience participation contributed to the framed performance. The process did enliven a potentially mundane routine where actions were directed at children as objects, passively sitting and waiting to be served food. In this event some children did attempt to assert themselves actively, and Anna's comments about the teacher being silly were potentially subversive, if also honest. However, the performance hardly empowered the children; the teacher, standing over and directing, seemed to be firmly in control of the activity. The teacher was a central mediating artefact. So too were the dishes and the food he served and, on another level, the words that were spoken. These artefacts all served to hold the group together in this shared teacher-controlled meal time.

The following event also occurred during a routine eating together time, in another centre where teachers sat at the table with children and words flowed playfully.

Event 10: Multiple Overlapping Dialogues

Background

Northbridge: Morning tea time, seven children and one teacher Bo sit at one round table, while another seven children sit at another table positioned nearby and four under-two-year-olds' sit alongside three under-one-year-olds' who are seated in separate high chairs. It's noisy and feels crowded, with multiple overlapping interactions within each table group, rather than between tables. To an observer teatime sounds like chaos, with half heard conversations, part sentences, and the over-riding hum of voice noise. This event focuses on a few children at one round table and because intelligibility was an issue, only snippets of the fascinating and playful talk are included.

Jim (4 years, 9 months) sits beside Frank (3 years, 8 months) and Eliza (2 years, 10 months). He squirms on chair, while talking to Frank, all squirm, Teacher Bo and 4 other children sit at the round table

Frank: "Da da da da da da dar."

Frank and Jim, both put hands on heads, making "funny" movements, imitating each other, being silly.

Jim: "Is this butter? Is this butter? Is this butter?" [to Teacher Bo]
Teacher Bo: "Yes"
Eliza: "Is this butter? Is this butter?" [imitates Jim]

Georgina, (1 year) sitting in highchair overlooking the noisy activity, makes squeaky smiley faces at me; I smile in response and remain seated nearby, videoing, watching and writing.

Jim: "The day gets longer" [He's having a conversation about day light saving, with teacher Bo]
Teacher Bo: "The day gets longer, the night gets shorter"…..

[Frank and Jim are laughing together]

Jim: "Jeliza, kiza, biza, liza." [to, or at Eliza]
Frank: "I want a monkey's head." [alluding to the banana being cut up by teacher, who's also seated at the table]
Peta: "It's monkey tails." [(4 years, 4 months) referring to the banana skin]
Jim: "It can be a pirate ship."
Jack: "You didn't even cut my finger off when I got the apple." [to teacher]
Peta: "And you didn't even cut my finger off when I got the banana."
Eliza: "It's a monkey tail." [quietly speaking to herself, about the banana skin]
Jim: "The chair came off the ground, it flied, I said it wouldn't fly and it did fly….."
Teacher Bo: "How? Did you lift it to make it fly?…Who lifted it?"
Jim: "Me."
Teacher Bo: "Why don't you fly up to the ceiling?" [to Jim]
Jim: "I can't stay up there."
"I flied ….one day in the bathroom…..and I jumped…flying gumboots…flying trees…"
"Can I leave the table?"
"My chair's flying."

[Jim carries ("flies") his chair away, carrying it with him when leaving the table; stacking chairs away is the normal routine after eating time]

Analysis and Discussion

Group Processes

The outstanding feature of this almost surreal and apparently chaotic scene is the bizarre talk that connects these children and the teacher. The dialogue is not linear. It involves children improvising and anticipating meanings and words almost

simultaneously, in overlapping dialogues, very freely. As in much communication, conversations are mixed up with movements and interruptions (Fogel, 1993). Any intention of an orderly teatime was subverted as children freely associated and played imaginatively with themes and concepts such as monkey tails, bananas, flight, names, and more. These themes were not totally random, but connected to children's past and future experiences. Name playing was a regular occurrence. In this event Jim played with Eliza's name. The children improvised and played with concepts and words, not bound by rigid rules of language usage or overly constrained by having to be seated. Their bodies mirrored this flexibility around rules as they contagiously squirmed and wriggled on their chairs. Jim and Frank inspired each other in *silly* actions. Eliza experimentally and playfully explored words, feelings and other perspectives, imitating and repeating Jim's question to the teacher, "is this butter?" Georgina caught the noisy activity and smiled happily from her highchair. The image of banana skins as monkey tails had been introduced by a teacher joking on an earlier occasion. Eliza listened and repeated the words to herself, perhaps pondering their meaning, while Peta picked up on, and repeated, Jack's joking caution about using knives. Repetition was a theme in much word play. In this chaotic and free way past themes resurfaced providing patterning connections over time, amidst apparent chaos of multiple overlapping conversations.

The teacher's openness to children's talkative exuberance facilitated this freedom. For example, teacher Bo calmly responded to questions and tactfully asked a few that encouraged Jim's imaginative exploration of flight. That theme continued after tea with Jim and Frank together making wings out of cardboard. The freedom to talk and imaginatively play with concepts and ideas around flight, during eating-together time, contributed to constructive play later.

Children imitated, repeated and learned from each other, co-creating the atmoshere that came to comprise this interpersonal field (Stern, 2013). This co-constructive process resonates too with notions of distributed cognition (Salomon, 1993) and situated cognition (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997) though driven by feelings and imaginations (Vygotsky, 2004). Laughter, playfulness and words connected the individual children and the teacher as a group, with multiple interactions occurring simultaneously reflecting participants' diverse aims, yet held together loosely in the felt freedom that pervaded the field in this eating-together activity. The dialogue in this event overflowed with contradictions and tensions expressed in body movements, gestures, laughter, sounds, and words which all added to the playful intensity of and motivation in the activity. Emotion, feelings and imagination seemed, like Salomon's (1993) cognition to become distributed across these players connecting them in the eating-together activity (Alcock, 2010).

Just as words are symbolic cultural tools for feeling and thinking, and for mediating these connections and communication (Vygotsky, 1934/1986), so too are numbers. In the following event children co-constructed narrative play with numbers, anticipating their meaning and order, in playful and serious ways.

Event 11: Numbers in Narratives

Background

Northbridge. Two events (A, B), spaced one hour apart, involve the following children: Ema (3 years, 11 months), Tom (4 years, 8 months), Peta (4 years, 4 months), Shona (2 years, 10 months). Tom and Ema are two of the five children about whom the researcher had gathered more information by interviewing the parents during phase three of the research. Some relevant comments from these interviews with parents are included in the following analysis and discussion following event B. These comments provide further insight into how these parents supported and valued their children's playfulness and sense of humour.

In scenario A it is early morning (8.30 am). Children are still arriving. A mini-trampoline is set up in one room and three children gently jump on it together.

(A)

Ema: "And September's my birthday."
Tom: "And you know what, I'll be five when you're four."
Peta: "When you're…I'll be…"
Ema: "Six, I'm five."
Tom: "No when I'm six you'll be five."
Peta: "When Ema's four I'm going to still be older than you."
Tom: "No Peta, cause there's a boy in Sydney and he's seven so he's three years older than you…"

[All fall off trampoline and laugh].

Analysis and Discussion

Numbers Mediating Intersubjectivity

This discussion, initiated by one child (Tom) continued. Numbers became a joint intersubjective focus of attention for all three (later four) children. Tom cleverly integrated his interest in numbers with Ema's remark about her birthday. Then, using the words and structure of numbers, the children co-constructed this dialogic event, based on a sharing of the individual experiences of Tom and Ema and the knowledge and interests of all three players. Tom revisited this counting-subtracting play several times that morning, as well as on other occasions.

(B)

The children lie on the floor near the trampoline (9.30 am).

Tom: "when Sarah (mother) was born Dad was 1, when …."
Peta: "I caught your eye."
Ema: "I catched your teeth."
Tom: "One day we were cooking marshmallows in the fire and you know what I had 12 marshmallows."

Peta: "I had 21."
Ema: "I ate 20–60."
Shona: "I can't count."
Tom: "I can count to 100."

Tom starts counting and keeps going to 100 without stopping. For a short while Shona counts on her fingers beside him.

Analysis and Discussion

Distributing Emotion, Imagination and Cognition Playfully

Ema and Peta caught Tom's enthusiasm for numbers. While Tom played with numbers seriously, they playfully upped the ante in counting. Tom's 12 was recycled as 21, and as 26. Recycled repetition of earlier speaker's last lines, with slight twists, was frequently observed in children's play with words and numbers. From a sociocultural perspective this repetitive spontaneous play with symbols such as numbers and words (or pretend play roles), is essential to the process of coming to understand scientific (academic, abstract) concepts. The understanding of scientific concepts proceeds from repeated spontaneous play with concepts (Vygotsky, 1986). Processes of repetition and imitation (rather than straight copying), as in this number play mediate the internalising of external concepts that accompanies understandings of abstract concepts, which in this event were concepts around numbers, words and counting. Ema and Peta spontaneously played with words as well as with numbers, *catching* teeth, as well as eyes, in a literal variation of the "I caught your eye" idiom. In this randomly dialogic and co-created way interest and awareness of numbers became a shared, distributed group interest, leading to playful practice with numbers. It is likely that this emotionally-engaging shared group practice with numbers (and words) helped the children's proficiency with number and word concepts.

The children's subjective feelings were central to them becoming interested in and developing, while also intersubjectively sharing, and co-constructing, their understandings of number-word concepts. Vygotsky, used the term *perezhivanie* (translated as "emotional experience", cited by Van de Veer (2001)) to refer to this unity of emotion with cognition in experiental activity, thereby also acknowledging the primacy of subjective experience and emotions in learning. The number-word play described above emerged out of a complex combination of children feeling and thinking while physically and rhythmically jumping on and lying beside a mini trampolene. Jumping bodies seemed to musically mirror the rhythm in numbers and counting. The trampolene seemed to ground and group them together in shared feeling-thinking activity. Perezhivanie adds to understandings of the complexities in these individual-group environment dynamics, and in emphasising the emotional and mediated nature of subjective experience avoids any narrowly cognitive bias. From this perspective learning may be viewed as an emotionally collaborative

process, harking back to Rogoff's (2003) reference to cognition too as a collaborative process.

While the children in this event played together collaboratively the lack of direct teacher involvement in these number-counting events was noticeable. In contrast, the parents of Tom showed an awareness and interest in his words and number play, and encouraged it, as his mother explained:

> The words came through when we've been reading a book, he loves rhyming words…and he plays with numbers…we tend to do outdoors physical stuff at home, not painting and drawing so much…we lie on the floor at home…He's definitely a physical kid.

I now realised why Tom spent so much time sprawled out on the floor in the ECCE centre; at home it was his natural way of being.

Interestingly Ema and Peta, the two younger children, focused on size in their play with numbers. For example, 20–60 and 21 are bigger numbers than Tom's 12 marshmallows. As Tom seemed sufficiently confident and proud of his proficiency with counting (to one hundred), he possibly felt no need to exaggerate his abilities or his size with increased numbers. Ema's father described how he understood this exaggeration and upping the ante as Ema's purposeful use of humour.

> She does a lot of negotiations and I think one of the ways she negotiates is with humour, like one of the guards always gets her to clip the ticket and he was saying "Now how many clips would you like today, three?" and she says "No, four" and she's always negotiating up that way.

Play with nonsensical words was a common feature in many events where children played with rules around words. The following two events, describe silly play where the children are between three and five-years-old and thus verbal, yet expressively feeling bodies assume primacy over words in this playful communication.

Event 12: Teacher as Clown

Background

Eastbridge: Outside, early morning, teacher Kat enjoys being very physically active and playing with the children. I sit nearby, watching and videoing.

> Olivia (4 years, 9 months) sitting on the climbing frame, looks towards teacher Kat who's come outside. Teacher Kat picks up a ball and begins doing skilful "hacky sack" movements, kicking it in the air, not letting the ball touch the ground.
>
> Olivia: "I'm going to cli-imb." [chanting]
>
> Olivia hangs upside down, legs curled over a bar of the climbing frame.
>
> Teacher Kat: "Your hair's like my hair Olivia, It's all standing up."
>
> Teacher Kat holds the ball. She has short spiky, orange, clown-like hair.
>
> Saul (2 years): "Throw it up"…[to teacher Kat]
> Teacher Kat: "Up there? Up there, where the sun is shining?"

She throws the ball really high, 3 stories up. It hits a window.

Researcher: "Jeepers Kat."

Four children leave their play (jumping from large boxes) to excitedly watch teacher Kat throwing the ball really high. They turn to me grinning, sharing their delight at my comment and the teacher's spunk.

Kat (seemingly oblivious), gets ready to throw again. She uses a lot of force in her whole body:

Teacher Kat: "Another big one, ready?"
Teacher Kat: "Whahoa."
Teacher Kat: "Do you wanna go?" [to Josh (3 years)]

Josh takes the ball from her and throws it straight up in the air, imitating Kat's style.

Teacher Kat: "Good one…"

Mai (3 years, 11 months) picks up the ball as it lands on the ground. She has a go, throwing the ball straight up.

Teacher Kat: "Whahoa, Whahoa."

Kat catches the ball as it comes down.

Mai: "Again. Again. Again."

Kat puts ball behind her back, hidden up her T shirt. She runs around the children (five children now). They see the lump on her back.

Teacher Kat: "Okay, okay, ready? I'll do a header."

She does, a high one!

Morning tea-time interrupts.

Analysis and Discussion

Teachers Play Too?

This teacher was particularly physically playful like an enthusiastic adult-child. Like the children, a lot of her playfulness too was expressed in her body movements. She was skilled at mime and, with her short spiky orange hair and physical agility, she also looked like a clown. On another occasion she was observed skillfully juggling three and four tennis balls, performing for the children. Kat moved quickly and she did throw the ball in this event Pokemon style, with one arm outstretched, imitating the style of throw on a currently popular children's television programme. By using this style she also signified acceptance of Pokemon to the children. (Pokemon play does resurface later that day).

Teacher Kat had fun and enjoyed being playful in this way. The children seem to accept her in this playful, un-adult role. Several children tried repeating her ball-throwing skills thus imitating her actions. Teacher Kat made an explicit comparison

between her's and Olivia's hair styles, thereby positioning herself close to the children and reducing the adult-child power imbalance.

However, unlike most children, teacher Kat dominated the play. While retaining the power and authority of a teacher she behaved almost like a child. With her physical prowess she was, in some ways, closer to a super-hero role model than a child, or a teacher. She could throw the ball far higher than children (and most teachers) can. She was a central mediating artefact in the play and in her actions sustained the play-performance. The teachers' role in sustaining and not killing play is a challenge for many teachers, described by many researchers including Brostrom (1996), however that literature refers to teachers' lack of involvement in children's play and/or their overly authoritative styles, rather than to teachers taking over and dominating the actual play from the inside as Kat seemed to do.

Later, after morning-tea:

> Kat initiates play, by approaching the empty dinosaur table [very low table with an emptied box of plastic dinosaur figures beside it]. She asks the nearby children: "Right then which ones can I play with?" [dinosaurs are on the ground] She gets no verbal response, but immediately four children come and join her. They role-play, using the dinosaurs as puppets. They play at eating, saving, escaping, hiding, being found etc. with lots of sound effects and crawling on the floor led by Teacher Kat. She leads the play. Together children and teacher hunt for "baby rhino", a concept initiated by Kat. The children play with both Teacher Kat and the dinosaurs. They enjoy playing with and following Kat and laugh while playing.
>
> Emily, sitting with teacher Eli on the nearby sofa watching, imitates teacher Kat's voice and giggles.

Analysis and Discussion

Laughter and Motivation

The fun and laughter in this role-playing dinosaur story seemed to add tension, and hence motivation, to the play. Teacher Kat both initiated and led this "baby rhino" pretend play. She explained her attitude towards being playful thus: "Children can't express humour and have fun if the teachers can't…When the teachers are feeling in a fun mood it affects the children. Staff getting on really well together creates the whole atmosphere."

In some respects teacher Kat's role seemed to be that of an entertainer or performer. I did wonder about her controlling lead role in the play. Children were actively included in play, but teacher Kat's words as well as her body presence dominated the play talk. Kat was aware of the pedagogical responsibilities in her teaching role: "Some days the teachers are really crazy and the children pick up on it, but we know the boundaries, we can joke around but we still do what we're meant to. We still teach."

In these events teacher Kat used words, as well as actions, while. She was also very physically active in crouching, jumping, throwing, and generally moving

quickly. Teacher Kat initiated the the theme of the dinosaur play, using words with actions to communicate and elaborate the potentially complex story around these plastic hunters. She introduced (attachment related) concepts of being a baby, lost, hiding, and being found, to the story line, and the children used the dinosaur figures to act out these concepts. Kat also used words to introduce concepts of height, velocity, and space, up there "where the sun's shining" to the spontaneous ball throwing. Teacher Kat viewed her teacher role as including children and teachers having fun together rather than as being a more didactic teacher. Her almost child-like playful style contrasted with that of most teachers in this study and in my experience.

Summary

The events in the Chapter present language used in a range of playfully communicative ways. These include children together, with and without differing degrees of teacher involvement. Significantly words are always also connected to the wider context: of speakers' bodies, communicative intentions, the felt interpersonal field, and the physical surroundings. Strong distinctions between verbal and non-verbal communication are not useful for this reason.

The addition of words brings elements of narrative context to children's play. Thus individual's imaginations can become distributed across players, creatively co-creating shared narratives. All the events presented here seem to flow into imaginative narratives or part-narratives. The diverse styles of narratives can overlap chaotically, possibly being revisited later, as in event 8 aptly named 'multiple overlapping dialogues'. Narratives, in imaginative play and in real life, can feel unfinished, chaotic, and have gaps. In this sense narratives are not usually tidy or linear structures. Instead the narratives described here seemed to be loose frames that helped children co-create, and integrate individual's and other's experiences in ways that mediated them also communicating and connecting together. The agency and power of, and for, those children and teachers who did use words, speak, and contribute to emergent narratives, stands out in these events.

References

Alcock, S. (2010). Young children's playfully complex communication: Distributed imagination. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 18*(2), 215–228. doi:10.1080/13502931003784404.

Alcock, S., & Haggerty, M. (2013). Recent policy developments and the "schoolification" of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Early Childhood Folio, 17*, 21–26.

Brostrom, S. (1996). Frame play with six year-old children. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 4*(1), 89–102.

Cazden, C. B. (1974). Play with language and metalinguistic awareness: One dimension of language experience. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 6*(1), 12–24. doi:10.1007/BF03176836.

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Cook, G. (2000). *Language play, language learning/Guy Cook*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Fogel, A. (1993). *Developing through relationships: Origins of communication, self, and culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1973). *Learning how to mean: Explorations in the development of language*. London: Arnold.

Kirshner, D., & Whitson, J. A. (1997). *Situated cognition: Social, semiotic, and psychological perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum.

Nelson, K. (1996). *Language in cognitive development: The emergence of the mediated mind*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Salomon, G. (Ed.). (1993). *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Stern, D. B. (2013). Field theory in psychoanalysis, Part I: Harry Stack Sullivan and Madeleine and Willy Baranger. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 23*(5), 487–501. doi:10.1080/10481885.2013.832607.

Van de Veer, R. (2001). The idea of units of analysis: Vygotsky's contribution. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 93–106). Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Varga, D. (2000). Hyperbole and humor in children's language play. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 14*(2), 142–151. doi:10.1080/02568540009594759.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language/Lev Vygotsky*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1934/1986). Thought and language. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 42*(1), 7–97.

Wartofsky, M. W. (1979). *Models, representation and the scientific understanding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Reidel.

Becoming Selves Relationally

Abstract This chapter explores how communicative playfulness with others contributes to children's developing subjectivities – their sense of self and identities – in relation to others and the narratives they play. The events presented provide windows into the relational patterns that emerge and evolve as children connect socially, relating and communicating with others while becoming aware of themselves. Within this relatedness exists the potential for children to become aware, to learn and develop consideration and care for both self and others. This self-other awareness with care informs the ability to imagine how others feel and to empathise with them.

This chapter explores how communicative playfulness with others contributes to children's developing subjectivities – their sense of self and identities – in relation to others and the narratives they play. The events presented provide windows into the relational patterns that emerge and evolve as children connect socially, relating and communicating with others while becoming aware of themselves. Within this relatedness exists the potential for children to become aware, to learn and develop consideration and care for both self and others. This self-other awareness with care informs the ability to imagine how others feel and to empathise with them. Developing empathy is a focus in the discussions and analyses of events presented in this chapter. Other foci include the tensions between individuals and others that typify group playfulness adding to its movement, changes in the direction of play and the narrative stories that emerge through play. In reflectively analytic and descriptive ways children's subjective self-understandings are explored, theorised, imagined and discussed as social relational group processes. Relational theories add to the range of ways of understanding these children at play (Mitchell & Aron, 1999).

In exploring children's developing identities and subjectivities the following events exemplify ways in which children playfully re-create and manage rules and roles around being children in an early childhood care and education institution. These children play with explicit and implicit rules, consciously and unconsciously, using tools, signs and symbols represented and expressed through body language, speech, and whatever artefacts the physical environment holds. In playful risk-free ways children relate inter and intra-subjectively in their bodies with objects-artefacts, each other and with themselves. They become increasingly able to feel, control and

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_5

effect their environments, themselves, and others. This confidence grows through repeated experiences of capably relating and communicating as individuals, as separate selves, who are also securely and safely emotionally connected to significant others such as family, friends, and teachers.

Infants and young children in full time ECCE institutions are likely to develop an extended network of emotionally significant others beyond their birth families. In this way the ECCE group can function as an extended family for children and families. Developing individual subjective identities, while also being part of a wider ECCE family group involves complex relational emotional processes for all participants as the following play events demonstrate.

The following three events (11 (A, B), 12 and 13) involved the same group of children in Northbridge centre on three occasions over one month using the same large cardboard boxes in diverse ways as versatile, transformational, props to mediate and support their imaginative pretend play.

Event 13: Transformational Roles and Boxes

Background

On this first occasion Eliza and Frank had been using large cardboard boxes as important objects in their pretend play. In the past hour the boxes had undergone several transformations, all based on the children's experiences and understandings of the world, gleaned from the media, books, TV, adult talk, everywhere. I sat on a child-sized chair (so at child height) nearby quietly watching, listening and enjoying the play.

(A)

Frank: "This is going to be a fire truck and a police van." [to the researcher]

Eliza, playing alongside, is busy joining two boxes together with sellotape.

Frank: "You know what Sophie?"
Researcher: "What?"
Frank: "This is our pirate ship."

The compulsory morning tea routine interrupts the play flow and Eliza drags the pirate ship closer to the eating area and ties it up with some string.

(B)

After morning tea Eliza is preoccupied with her new baby brother in the baby room.

Milly (4 years), picks up the pirate ship box and puts it on her head, like a giant hat, and walks off. Frank, seeing this, somehow entices her back to the original play space with the box. When I look again (a few minutes later) the boxes have become beds. Frank turns out the lights saying seriously:

Frank: "It's going to be night time. I'll just close the curtains".
Milly: "ha, ha," (laughing, giggling)
Frank: "No, that's not funny. If you laugh you won't be able to be in my game".
Milly: "Okay". [She shuts her eyes super-tightly, for a few seconds]
Frank: "It's going to be morning. We're going to do everything special today". [said with pleasure] as he turns the lights on

and opens the curtains.

Analysis and Discussion

Rules in Role Play Events

This event illustrates children coming out of their individual selves by considering each other's roles in relation to the emerging and shared imaginative play story. As individuals Milly and Frank co-constructed their roles and the conditions, setting the scene by transforming the essential cardboard box prop from a pirate ship to a hat, before recreating it as a bed. Thus the box played a leading role in the *performance*, being a solid grounding object around which these children's creative imaginations and emotions appeared to run wild. As an artefact it mediated their play. Children transform reality, according to the rules that are co-created and emerge both inside and outside the pretend role-play frame. Both sides of this play frame were made visible when Milly slipped out of her pretend role by laughing inappropriately at the pretence. Frank reprimanded her with the ultimate rule about roles: "If you laugh you won't be able to be in my game." The play will end. Milly did seem to enjoy laughing and being playful in her role, but she quickly adjusted her role to match Frank's play rule, tightly shutting her eyes as if compensating and apologizing for her earlier open laughter.

This ability to step in and out of imaginative play, to direct the play while also experiencing a range of role related feelings is emotionally and cognitively complex. In this short two-person event the child actors actively took on feelings associated with being an adult, a parent and a baby, as well as being oneself.

The event also clarifies how experiences in the world assist the development of the imagination, by providing children with imaginative resource material (Lindqvist, 1995; Vygotsky, 2004). Experiences derive indirectly from stories told, heard and viewed in books and on screens as well as from direct experience, including dreams. In this case Frank brought his experiences of adventure and vehicles to the play. Thus he referred to police vans, fire trucks, and pirate ships, as well as beds and sleeping routines (lights out, curtains closed, eyes shut). Experience in the real world informed his abilities to think analytically. He understood that light day follows dark night. Frank could anticipate, think and plan ahead; "It's going to be morning. We're going to do everything special today." In pretending, Frank was able to use language to regulate and control the patterns in day and night and to express feelings of joy in control. Combined imagination with the flexibility inherent in playfulness, enabled him to pleasurably plan for the pretend day ahead, and for Milly to enjoy her supportive role in making the pretend play work out.

Frank was observed role-playing sleeping rituals on several occasions. In this repetitive re-creation of sleep-times it is likely that Frank was processing, internalising, and gently managing feelings associated with the reality of his real-life sleep times (El'Konin, 1999; El'koninova, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978, 2004) In a sense Frank used his imagination to practise going to sleep and waking up. In this sense imaginative thinking is also activity. Sleep, like death, can be scary, dark, unknowable, invisible, and outside control. Cardboard boxes, words, and other children mediated

Frank coming to personal understandings of sleep. These artefacts also mediated developing relationships, communication and togetherness, as common goals for much of the children's play. In his repetitive play around a sleeping theme Frank was experiencing while also feeling and thinking through the role-playing activity. In this event Frank's subtle playfulness, and Milly's sense of humour, contributed flexibility to the role-playing, self-regulating, intra and intersubjective play process.

Imaginative play continually shifts and changes with players, moods, and the environment. Large boxes are very versatile open-ended props. On another occasion the boxes begin as beds with Frank and Eliza resuming the sleep-time theme from their previous play.

Event 14: Babies, Beds, Planes and Power-Play

Frank (to Eliza): "I'll tell you when it's morning time…It's night time".

Eliza ignores him and wanders off
Pip (4.5) comes over and takes her place, pretending to sleep in a box beside Frank.
Eliza returns

Eliza (to Pip): "Now you've got to be the baby".
Eliza (to Frank): "And that's the baby" (pointing at Pip)
Pip (loudly): "I'm not the baby".

Pip turns the nearby toy washing machine, a solid box shape, on its side, places some small chairs behind it and the cardboard box on top.

Pip (to Frank and Eliza): "We're flying to France".

Pip climbs into the box, falls backwards off the plane, laughs, rubs his head and gets back into it, piloting and making busy plane noises. He sits higher than Frank and Eliza, who compliantly sit on the chairs.

Pip: "Hey look, we're in France" (smiles joyfully).
Eliza: "When are we back home?" (starts walking away).
Frank: "Eliza, come back onto the plane". (Eliza ignores this command).
Pip: "Let's go and get her".
Frank: "She has a bike".
Pip: "That's my bike".

Eliza returns voluntarily. She's che wing nonchalantly on a plastic straw

Eliza mumbles while chewing: "Yum yummy yum yum yum yum".

Teacher Liz approaches, sits down in the plane and starts singing a travel song.

Pip: "No singing on this plane".

The singing continues with children joining in.
Teacher Liz starts reading a book to the children on the plane. Jim (4.8) joins them and Kit follows her brother Jim.

Pip: "How old are you"? Kit doesn't answer. She's young and may not know or understand.
Jim: "She's two"
Pip: "No two year olds allowed on this plane".

Analysis and Discussion

Emotions: Imagination: Power

Emotions motivate imagination in play. Feelings of power, status, and control are prevalent in the relational role play of these children. They experience rules associated with roles such as Pip asserting the power of a plane pilot. However the role of baby doesn't accord with Pip's self-feelings, so he rejects that role. Pip also doesn't allow 2 year olds to participate in the play. Some background contextual information helps understand his motivation. At home Pip is the youngest of three children, so youngest in the pecking order. But in the centre Pip can experience the power that goes with being older and in control. He is one of the older children. Pip expresses his feelings in the centre in the roles he takes and the rules he makes. Play is all about rules and roles and relationships and these are never permanently fixed. I did wonder about the feelings of Kit and why Eliza wandered away from the play twice. Eliza and Kit were both girls. On relooking I became aware that the boys, Pip and Frank, ruled this play event. I wondered about the role of teachers teaching children about considering others. The female teacher had also been reprimanded by Pip. Interestingly both the teacher Liz and Eliza had ignored Pip and Frank's bossiness and simply carried on with singing (Teacher Liz) and wandering around nonchalantly (Eliza).

Children don't usually create totally new roles or events in their pretend play. They tend to imitate aspects of roles and events around them. Thus sleeping routines were important for Frank, as they are for many young children (and older people too). This sort of pretend play is much more complex than simply assimilating by imitating others. From a socio-cultural perspective the imitation in pretend play involves children actively and creatively developing and internalizing their understandings of aspects of the roles being imitated. In this process of internalization children are also likely to be developing and learning to regulate and understand aspects of their emotional selves in relation to others (Corsaro, 1985; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978).

The repetitive activity of pretend role play also mediates children's growing understandings of the adult world as they become proficient at symbolising, representing, conceptualising and communicating ideas and feelings with words and material objects. The cardboard boxes here came to symbolise a variety of objects which had both generalised and personal meanings for these children in their play.

Event 15: From Jack-in-the-Box to Posting Parcels

Background
The previous day Pip had hidden in a box and Eliza and Tom had put boxes on their heads and walked around bumping into each other on purpose, having fun experiencing different visual fields. All four of the children involved in this event had been on an aeroplane, three overseas. Tom had returned the previous week from Canada, full of stories, and Pip was soon to go to France. Pip's mother is French.

> Frank and Milly were humorously playing a jack-in-the-box game where they shut themselves in a box, held the flaps down, then together jumped up laughing. After the jack-in-the-box play, Milly was hiding alone in the box and teacher Jim jokingly commented:
>
> Teacher Jim: "Oh, we'd better put this empty box away as no one's using it."
>
> On being told that Milly was inside, (which he knew), he suggested posting Milly to France.
>
> Teacher Jim: "Who's got a stamp?"
> Pip: "Put a stamp on me so I can go off to France too."… [excitedly]
>
> Tom (4 years, 9 months) also joins the activity. Children begin drawing stamps on boxes, all talking together discussing and imagining traveling – by plane – to France and Canada. They take turns sellotaping up the large cardboard boxes of those that want to be posted, with the children inside.

Meanwhile teacher Jim had withdrawn nearby and was reading to another child. Three groups of children and two teachers were simultaneously involved in separate play in this small space; teacher Liz was drinking pretend tea with Kit (2) and Eliza and Viv (3.6) were acting out stories with small plastic animals.

Analysis and Discussion

Boxes: Creating Space

In playing Jack-in-the-box Frank and Milly were having fun, joking with the incongruity of obvious hiding and sudden surprising, while also jointly being in control and experiencing very physical feelings of together crouching to hide, and jumping up to surprise. Their crouching down and jumping up roles synchronistically expressed and embodied their intersubjectivity (Goncu, 1993) and their shared third space (Benjamin, 2004; Ogden, 2004). The cardboard boxes offered a contained and safe transitional space to support this hiding, finding, posting-away transitional play (Winnicott, 1960, 1974).

Themes related to sleeping, travel, and hiding, with their associated roles were recurrent in the play with boxes. Several researchers (Corsaro, 1985, 1997; El'koninova, 2001) have commented on the repetitiveness of pretend play themes, as well as the imitative structure of role play addressed earlier in event 7. Both of these aspects of play – repetition and imitation – reflect children learning new con-

cepts. Following the theories of El'konin and Vygotsky, El'koninova (2001) suggests that the internalisation of external concepts requires repetitive play. Some concepts require a lot of repetition and this can look like imitation. For example, Frank seemed to be working on his personal meanings around concepts associated with sleep, day and night; he frequently returned to these concepts in his play. Similarly, themes of hiding – feeling lost, invisible, not seen – followed by surprising – being found and feeling seen – were repeated by several children, using the large boxes as mediating artefacts, while experiencing and internalising associated personally meaningful feeling-thoughts. Earlier, in event 4 Eliza hid behind the foil wrap and in event 3 all the children hid while I counted. Hiding also slipped into not seeing and feeling invisible in other events that involved sleeping and falling face-down into cushions.

However, in this event Milly, hiding in the box, was imitating others that she had observed doing likewise. Playing and re-enacting the activity is a different experience from that of observing others. Frank and Milly together re-created the hiding game in their unique way, not copying, but appropriating, imitating, and adapting the activity of hiding and surprising. By playing with concepts in this experimental way, external concepts associated with roles played gradually acquire internalised sense and meaning for those children (Zinchenko, 2001) Feelings of being lost, alone, and apart from others may become less frightening. By using mediating artefacts including each other to playfully develop these hiding and finding roles and concepts these children were together creating zones of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978).

The ZPD has been interpreted in many ways all reflecting ideas of progress and growth in children's learning (Chaiklin, 2003). Accordingly, Vygotsky (1978) viewed pretend play as a leading activity for pre-school children and therefore a source of growth with the potential to create ZPD. He wrote: "In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development" (p. 102).

Pretend play extended these children's thinking-feeling minds within the interactive field of play that was also a ZPD. The roles and stories they played mediated these children being able to act above themselves, to think and feel in ways that were not part of their usual self states. In role play they supported each other while furthering their own understandings of abstract existentially- critical concepts in concretely playful ways.

The children in events 11, 12 and 13 used the cardboard boxes in diverse ways that mediated them playing and relating and experiencing together. Through sharing, adapting, adjusting, and complementing each other in the roles they played, the children's feelings and imaginations, thought and emotion, became distributed across the players (Salomon, 1993). This shared imagination (Alcock, 2010) with feelings contributed complexity to children's playfulness and loosely united the children in activity, creating shared zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) which also functioned as transitional third play spaces and interpersonal

fields intra- and inter-subjectively connecting the players. In these events the sum of the activity of playing together was greater than the parts. The following event too involves the co-creation of a third shared space between players, a psychic space which holds and contains the to and fro of connecting and communicating that accompany the activity of game play.

Event 16: Playfulness Within a Game with Rules

Background
Northbridge, early afternoon. Initially, six children sit and stand around a new board game, called "shopping", that is on the round table. Teacher Lin has been sitting with them, talking a lot and facilitating the start of the game play by explaining turn-taking. The game involves collecting picture cards that match individual children's pictorial shopping lists. Only the five oldest children play: Tom (4.5), Zizi (4.11), Milly (3.3), Jack (4.5), Frank (4.3). Jilly (2.6) and Mini (2.6) watch. Teacher Amy replaces Teacher Lin. The children move continuously and only teacher Amy sits still. Children lie across the edge of the table, Tom rests his hands on the table and jumps, Milly crouches feet under knees on a chair, Zizi half lies across the table. I sit nearby, writing, watching, and occasionally assisting.

Researcher: "Whose turn is it now?"
Zizi: "It's my turn [she pauses, thinking, stretches her body over the table, towards Tom]
It's Tom's turn".

[Tom is preoccupied, busy explaining how he'll share a turn with Milly]

Tom: "After I've got 6, um Milly, when I've got 5, when I've got, when I've got 6, um, when I've got 12, when I've got 10, I'll let you have a turn Milly, alright?" [he jumps in affirmative satisfaction]
Teacher Amy: "That sounds alright, Tom's had a turn, it's Jack's turn".
Zizi: "No, my turn".
Tom: "You pick that one up". [pointing to a card, speaking to Jack, while looking at Zizi]
Teacher Amy: "Which one is that Jack?"
Zizi: "It's Frank's turn, Frank's turn".
Teacher Amy: "Turn one over Frank, washing powder, do you have washing powder on yours?"
Zizi: "Tom's turn".

Analysis and Discussion

Artefacts with Feelings: Mediating and Motivating

The game is a culturally mediating artefact on several levels. Words, gestures, and the game itself, mediated communication and collaboration. The game was prominently positioned at the centre of the round table, surrounded by card-holding children. Table and game connected the players physically. The educational intention of the game was to mediate children's developing understandings of sorting and matching concepts. However social relational ideas of turn-taking, fairness, and the learning of game rules seemed most important to these children. At this early stage of the game these ideas were serious, rather than playful. The teacher mediated the turn-taking and so did the oldest child, Zizi, as she began to take a *teacher-controlling* role also ensuring fair play for all. For example, from initially saying that it was her turn Zizi was able to reflect, rethink, and realise that it really was Tom's turn just as teacher Amy had earlier pointed out.

From a more macro and socio-cultural perspective the game was also a cultural-historical artefact conveying concepts of exchange value, transaction and consumption with an emphasis on acquisitive shopping. Importantly the game mediated children using words that, in this event, developed thinking through talking and counting. For example, Tom used words, including numbers, to negotiate his shared turn-taking with Milly. I was struck by the freedom with which children seemed to create space to ponder and make decisions about turns and quantities, while the play also appeared very busy and chaotic.

Event 14 continues:

Jack:	"I've got 3".
Tom:	"I've got 2 Jack".
Frank:	"I've got 2, I've got 1, 2".
Zizi:	"I've got 1, 2, 3".
Jack:	"I've got 1, 2, 3".
Zizi:	"You two've got 2 and we two've got 3". [chanting]
Researcher:	"Mmmm".
Jack:	[laughs]
Zizi:	"So now it's Franky bankie's turn".
Teacher Amy:	"You've just had your turn Zizi, you've got lemons, who was after you?"
Zizi:	"Jack, no Frank it's not your, it went that way [pointing the direction]. Jack's turn. Okay, well it's Frank's turn".

[Frank looks confused as he had peeped at a card during this talk, so had taken a turn.]

Researcher:	"You can have another turn now".
Teacher Amy:	"Bananas, do you have bananas?"
Frank:	"No, look on my shopping list, no bananas. I've got no bananas on my shopping list".

[Teacher Amy leaves, the youngest three children follow her, Zizi takes over the teacher role]

Analysis and Discussion

Rules: Re-created in Communicative Playfulness

In playing a game together these children had to consider each other as well as themselves. Both social rules and game rules, helped sustain both children's interactions and the game itself. The children re-created and repetitively practised social rules emphasising values such as respect and fairness while the rules of the game revolved around turn-taking, direction, number-counting, and waiting, plus more specific rules of the game. In waiting for turns children practised delaying self-gratification. Specific game rules included taking turns to pick up a card, read the pictorial symbols and match them with "shopping list" cards. These game rules were not rigidly transmitted and learned, but juggled and played with. Turn-taking changed, and children played with numbers, chanting them and playing with rules around number order and quantity (two and three). Zizi played with Frank's name sound. Bodies moved as the children relaxed into their versions of the game. The tone of the play shifted from its serious beginnings to a more playful style. The children now laughed and moved a lot, jumping, sliding, pointing, talking and chanting loudly together.

Event 14 continues:

Zizi: "Right then, its Tom's turn".
Tom: "Um, I'm going to pick up this one".
Zizi: "Okay Frank, you pick the one near you, tomatoes. Frank's got tomatoes, have a look on your list Frank, do you need tomatoes?"
Tom: "1, 2, 3, 4, I've got 4".
Frank: "And I've got 3".
Tom: "And I've got 4".
Zizi: "Well now it's Tom's turn, Tommie's turn, Tommie's turny, no, no, no, no, no, no, no". [singing]
Tom: "No, it's Hewy, Dewy, Dewy". [jumping while chanting]
Zizi: "It's my turn.
Orange juice, juicy juice, orangey juicy juice.
Whose turn is it?
Well it's Tom's turn.
Have you goooot it?
Put it neeeear in froooont of meeeee".

[singing, dancing, clapping her hands over her head, rhythmically, as she chants, picks up a card and puts it down]

[While singing Zizi picks up her shoes from the floor and slips them on. Tom picks up his gumboots. He puts one on and smells the other]

Tom: "I'm going to smell my boot, Zizi, do you want to smell my boot?"
Zizi: "No".
Tom: "It smells like mud".

[Tom moves around the table, offering his boot to each person to smell, and giggling. Jack and Frank smell it and back off. Tom smells it again. Zizi watches]

Zizi: "Let's get ready, whose turn? Who's had a turn?"

Tom: "Not Jack. He hasn't had a sticky turn".
Zizi: "Would you like a turn now?"
Tom: "Smelly boot".
Zizi: "Okay, then it's Frank's turn, and then it's myyyyy turn,
Noooooooo, nooooooo, nooooo,
No no no no no no no no you haven't".
Tom: "My smelly boot's kicked off my foot". [while excitedly jumping his other boot came off]
Zizi: "It's Ba a a a nky's turn, Bank Bank's turn, turn, Banky Franky.
No, put it next to Frank.
No put it next to Jack cause Jackie's got no one.
Now it's Franky Banky.
My turn, my turn.
No no no no, Franky Banky."
Tom: "No it's Jacks turn now, you pick that one". [he pushes a card towards Jack]

Analysis and Discussion

Roles and Distractions

With teacher Amy off the scene Zizi, the oldest, assumed a teacher-like role, managing and seemingly controlling the turn-taking rules, though not too didactically. She did ask "whose turn? Who's had a turn"? Comfortable in her leadership role Zizi began to dance while singing and chanting directions and commentating on the process of the game. She joyfully transformed mundane statements into sung rhymes; "Well now it's Tom's turn, Tommie's turn, Tommie's turny". Tom responded in an equally playful and challenging way with "No, it's Hewy, Dewy, Dewy". Zizi's act of putting her shoes on prompted Tom to take his gumboots off. His focus on the smelly gumboots did not distract from Zizi's controlling leadership, despite offering his boot to everyone in turn to smell. The play continued with Zizi protesting a series of long loudly sung negatives: "Noooooooo, nooooooo, nooooo, no no no no no no no no".

The roles that Zizi and Tom presented may be interpreted as an expression of socially-gendered roles with Tom as the stereotypical disruptive boy and Zizi the pleasingly good, teacher-like girl. Tom did sabotage Zizi's teacher role by ignoring her and diverting the game focus to his smelly gumboot, which he removed from his feet paradoxically while Zizi was putting her shoes on. However, contradicting the stereotype Frank and Jack – both boys – accepted their game-playing roles. When Zizi sang that it was Frank's turn, Tom disagreed and simply said, "No it's Jack's turn now" before telling Jack which card to pick up. The game play continued despite apparent differences. These differences simply added tension, energy and a sense of unity to the children playing the game together.

Event 14 continues:

Tom: "You've got you, you've done it Jack, look".

[Tom notices that the card Jack picks up matches, Tom jumps up and down excitedly, hands pushing down on table]

Jack: "I've got 5".
Zizi: "I've got 5 too, 1 2 3 4 5…6 7 8 9 10 11 12, Tommie's turn, Tommie's turn, Tommie, Tommie".
Tom: "I haven't got sausage sizzles, whose got sausage sizzles?"
Frank: "Not me".
Zizi: "My turn and look, I've got 6".
Tom: "Jack's got 5".
Frank: "1 2 3 4 5".
Zizi: "Jack's got 5, Jack's got 5, Frank's turn, right you've got it. [She claps her hands over her head, chanting a running commentary] Can anybody help find the honey? Now it's Jack's turn. Really it's Frank's turn".

Analysis and Discussion

Individuals Belonging: Becoming Groups

This event involved a game within a game, where the group unity emerged out of the process of playing a game with rules. These children initially learned and then re-created the game rules. They also created other rules to match their roles while also fitting in and reflecting familiar peer and teacher role identities. For example, in her teacher-adult role Zizi attempted to impose rules around fairness in turn-taking. The group which evolved operated on several cultural levels reflecting: the children's peer culture with its horizontal and vertical relationships of power and friendship, the teacher's culture, the overlapping adult culture and the general ethos of the centre as a community culture. Small-group activities involving between two and six children, initiated by children or teachers, were the norm in all three centres in the study, with children seemingly naturally gravitating towards and creating these small cluster groups. Within groups of this size everyone's voice could be expressed and possibly heard. Imagination, cognition, ideas and feelings are perhaps more easily shared and distributed across smaller than larger groups.

Event 14 continues:

Tom: "Really really Frank's turn. No icky bananas. Jack's turn, then Frank's turn, then my turn".
Zizi: "Well it's really really Frank's turn".
Tom: "Really really Frank's turn".
Jack: "I've got 2 more to go".

[Jack also jumps up and down to the chanting, Frank sits]

Zizi: "Can anybody help find the honey?"
Tom: "I know which one is the honey, that one". [points to a card]
Zizi: "I'm way ahead of you".

Zizi: "Open up your heart and look inside". [singing]
Tom: "Open up your cards and look inside, look inside". [singing response]
Zizi: "Frank's turn, Frank's turn, Frank's turn, Frank's turn".

[Tom joins in the last round, chanting, singing]

Tom and Zizi: "Frank's turn, Frank's turn, Frank's turn, Frank's turn".
Zizi: "Frank, pick one up".
Frank: "I'm trying to remember,… which one, what?"
Zizi: "Which one do you need?" [to Frank]
Tom: "Sausage sizzle, sausage sizzle.
Sausage wizzle in a wee".

[Tom climbs onto the table]

Zizi: "Frank, I'm just going to have to help you".
Tom: "I've got 5".
Zizi: "My turn now"…
Tom: "2 plus 3 equals 5, I need 3 more. de de de de de de now I've got 3".

Teacher Amy returns as the play has become quite happily, playfully, raucous: Zizi chants, Jack jumps and Tom's on the table. The game concludes peacefully with all the children completing their shopping cards, with teacher Amy's help.

Analysis and Discussion

Connections, Contradictions and Motivation

Tensions and contradictions dominated these children's verbal and body-language interactions, and contributed to motivating the ongoing activity. Alongside these contradictions a caring unity seemed to play out. Zizi just had to help Frank when he seemed confused. The dialogue too involved reciprocal turn-taking, frequently addressed in rhyme with rhythm. Words were used to represent their names, numbers of cards, and the objects pictured on the shopping cards. Thus Frank became "Frankie" and then became "Banky", just as earlier Tom had become "Tommie". Actions and words were exaggerated. Turns became "really really turns" repetitively chanted by Zizi and Tom separately, before they upped the ante by together chanting "Frank's turn". Zizi clapped her hands over her head while dancing and chanting; Jack and Tom jumped up and down, and Tom eventually climbed onto the table, positioning himself powerfully above the others. When Zizi sang the words of a song "Open up your heart and look inside", Tom's sung response refocused the song words on the shared game focus, "Open up your cards and look inside, look inside". The reciprocity and contradictions in children's interactions added to the momentum, motivation and energy that sustained this group game activity for thirty minutes.

Teacher Amy's reappearance towards the end of the event reinstated teacher control and order to the disintegrating social chaos. Control and the management of order was one part of the teacher's role here. Compared to her colleagues, teacher

Amy had an open relaxed style. She allowed the children to also experience feelings of being in control (Zizi), challenging authority (Tom), and accepting the status quo (Frank, Jack). These relationally experienced feelings contributed to a relaxed and open ethos, particularly around teacher Amy. This openness seemed to allow children to feel and act more openly, freely and imaginatively. Several other teachers in contrast, seemed to have more rigid approaches to rules and roles and were not often observed communicating playfully with, or (like teacher Amy here) alongside, children. Teacher Amy exuded acceptance, and when she left this scene the younger two-year old children who had started out being involved and watching the game play, left too and followed her. Besides appreciating her company they perhaps realised that, given the age-size-speaking pecking order, they would not have much status in the game playing without a mediating adult.

This game play seemed full of primary, secondary and tertiary contradictions as these children played with rules, roles, and artefacts in the play (Engeström, 2015; Wartofsky, 1979). Tom altered the words of the song and climbed on the table, while Zizi attempted to assert adult teacher control, despite being a child. Zizi's teacher-child role illuminated tensions between the children's peer community culture and the rules of the centre culture. Contradictions emerged between activity systems, the goals of the activity and other cultural or educational aims. For example, Tom's behaviour in standing on the table contradicted teacher-controlled cultural rules around acceptable behaviour. He was also subverting both the rules of the game and societal rules when chanting "Sausage wizzle in a wee" and standing on the table. What were Tom's goals and the group goals for all the children? They seemed to be a blend of enjoyment, togetherness, communication, individual and group agency. At another level the group goals were about developing understandings. These children played with rules around words and numbers including the rules of the game, such as turn taking. They made sense of rule-based concepts by playing with them in improvisational and spontaneous ways (Sawyer, 1997).

For the researcher applying activity theory, these contradictions in activity reflected the nature of group activity as socially, culturally, and historically constructed, with groups composed of diverse individuals. Consequently, contradictions and tensions between the components of the activity system could arise at any level of activity, for individuals and groups, around societal and cultural norms and values. Tensions associated with children's playfulness were a focus in this research. These tensions frequently revolved around children making sense of situations, while learning, adapting, re-creating and challenging the associated social and centre rules.

The rambling narrative event involved children being and becoming themselves in relation to others via mediated processes. At a basic concrete level these processes included individual children together playing with rules and roles mediated by a board card game on a round table. However the subtle nuances of children's conscious and unconsciously mediated and spontaneously improvised rule and role playfulness added feeling and energy to their activity. The dynamic nature of this activity was reinforced by the physical activity of the children. The occasional hyper-activity of individuals seemed to mirror the contradictions and tensions that, in turn, motivated and unified the ongoing group activity.

Event 17: Aesthetic Word Play

Background

Northbridge: Morning tea-time. Eight children (2 years to 4 years, 8 months old) and one teacher sit at a round table. A bowl of fruit is being passed slowly around the table (cut up orange and banana segments). Semi-seated next to each other and across the table from the teacher and the fruit, are the three older children. They move a lot with each other messily in time and in tune. Chairs, mugs and feet scrape surfaces and the atmosphere is busy and noisy. The younger ones wriggle in their chairs, watching both the older children and the teacher who talks to them while offering them fruit. Tom (4 years, 3 months) stands in front of his chair rolling his empty water mug on the table. His body moves with the mug, never still. Zizi (4 years, 8 months) and Peta (3 years, 10 months) rock their chairs precariously.

Looking at the teacher, Tom spontaneously begins to sing-chant:

Tom: "Please pass the wee-wees."
He gets no response, and repeats the chant. As he still gets no response, he changes the chant:
"Please pass the trai-ain."
Zizi rejoins: "Please pass the trai-ain."

The teacher had earlier made train noises while gently pushing the plate around the table.

Zizi: "Please pass the fru-uit."
Tom: "Please pass the fru-uit."
Zizi: "Please pass the lollypop."
Tom: "Please pass the banana pop." [sound unclear]
Zizi: "Please pass the orange pop."
Peta: "Please pass the ice-block"…
Tom and Peta: "Please pass the ice-block"…[in unison]
Tom: "Please pass the pop pop."

Analysis and Discussion

Words as Mediating Artifacts; Musicality as Intersubjectivity

The children played with rules of etiquette and created rules around the rhyme and form of the chanting. Like a narrative the rhyme, tells a collaborative story on several levels. The melodic chanted tone with its repetitive rhythm conveys feelings of chaotic repetition, representative of many ritualistic eating together times in early childhood centres. The children moved continuously, also often chaotically and repetitively. The meanings of the words chanted ranges from challenging the rules of social etiquette with "wee-wees", to acknowledging the "please" in "pass". There is a subversive tension in much of children's play with social rules. In using toilet humour Tom could be demanding teacher attention, and/or the fruit.

Tom was also asserting agency and all three children demonstrated social or performance awareness in the way they listened and looked at each other while moving and chanting almost over each other. Their social-performance awareness seemed to show that these children had some understanding that others also have thinking- feeling minds (Astington, 1996; Astington & Gopnik, 1991). These children performed playfully for themselves, for each other, and for an audience, all qualities identified by Lindqvist (1995) in her analyses of children's dramatic play. Like a well-formed narrative, the event concluded happily and positively, with pleasurable party-like images of lollies and ice blocks. As Coles (1989) explains good stories are well-structured narratives with plots, and happy endings.

The lack of teacher involvement may partly explain why this particular eating time became quite subversive. Half way through the teachers had a duty swap, disrupting teacher continuity. The children, confined in chairs, became restless. They scraped their chairs on the floor and shuffled their water mugs on the table. Tom rolled his empty mug around the table-top sideways, creating extra interest for himself. He repeatedly moved in and on his chair, despite a teacher telling him several times to sit down. Most children did not, they possibly could not, sit still. Water spilt from mugs. Eliza threw food on the floor deliberately and looked up smiling. Was she seeking control or attention, playfully and cheekily? Sammy flipped her dress up over her head, catching and spilling some water from her mug, which a teacher quickly caught. The spilt water mixed with food scraps on the table. Anna and Tom threatened to pour *compost water* over the floor and then over the teachers too. The teacher's response was to ignore and distract the children, saying "It's sleep time now".

The children had playfully created a peer togetherness that excluded the teachers, whom some of the children threatened with compost water. It did not help that the teachers at the end of the meal-time were different teachers from those at the start. They still epitomised power and control. For example, teachers could choose to leave the room for their meal times. The children did not have this freedom to leave for lunch, but they could assert group agency in the face of feelings of powerlessness. They did this playfully, with words and actions.

Though physically constrained by chairs and tables, the children used their bodies, their imaginations, their voices and the only available objects (mugs, chairs and table) to communicate playfully and create this chanting rhyme. The to-and-fro playfulness in their chanting seemed to connect them with each other, mediated by sung word chants that were extensions of their feeling bodies.

The musical, rhythmic qualities in their chanting seemed to unite the participants intersubjectively as, collaboratively, they improvised playfully and in the process created a cognitively – complex rhyming narrative.

The children's word play combined real fruit objects with pop, which also rhymes with ice-block and lollypop. The imagined and exaggerated word associations were all with playful party food; lollypops and more pops.

Playfulness enabled these children to interact within a joint zone of proximal development transforming words and meanings, while creating new rhymes and rhythms. Trevarthen (2002) emphasising the primal importance of rhythm, suggests

that, “The foundations of all psychological co-operation or intersubjectivity are to be found in a sense of movement and in the detection of the generation of qualities of movement in other bodies” (p. 26).

The repetitive rhyming nature of word-play, like pretend play, may be interpreted as part of the internalisation process whereby children develop understanding through imitation and repetition. This is not simply copy-cat imitation, being partly created anew (El’Konin, 1999; El’koninova, 2001). The children in this event were practising, and hence learning about, the rhyme, rhythm, form, and functions of spoken language, creatively. They were also developing their understandings of interpersonal relationships and how the sum (children acting together) may be greater than the parts (individuals alone). Together these children played with words and created a musical rhythmic chant within a group co-constructed zone of proximal development.

In this study the rhythmic chanting of improvised rhyming narratives was an observed phenomenon in young children’s communicated playfulness. It was a particular feature of eating together times when children were physically constrained by being seated. The complex word-play, as in this example, was usually initiated by the 4 year old children. Less specific verbal sounds and rhythmic gestures characterised the playful and humorous communication all age groups.

Summary

Events presented in this chapter have illuminated individuals playing out themes that mattered for them personally while also including others in this play. For example, Frank repeatedly explored his feelings around sleep in his playful relationships with Eliza and others, while Pip explored his feelings around travel with Frank and Eliza. The attuned synchronicity of Zizi and Tom in event 15 adds another fascinating dimension to this focus on individuality. These two individuals seemed to empower each other in together upping the ante, and creatively improvising a freely associated word poem. The children chose to explore feelings around issues that mattered for them. Issues included subjects like sleep and travel. Issues also included feelings around feeling empowered and free. Though relating intra-subjectively with these issues children were also inter-subjectively sharing their passions and concerns with others. They were being and becoming themselves through playfully relating intra and intersubjectively together.

References

Alcock, S. (2010). Young children’s playfully complex communication: Distributed imagination. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 18*(2), 215–228. doi:10.1080/13502931003784404.

Astington, J. (1996). What is theoretical about the child's theory of mind? A Vygotskian view of its development. In P. Carruthers & P. Smith (Eds.), *Theories of theories of mind* (pp. 184–199). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Astington, J., & Gopnik, A. (1991). Developing understanding of desire and intention. In A. Whiten (Ed.), *Natural theories of mind: Evolution, development and simulation of everyday mindreading (pp* (pp. 39–50). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: An intersubjective view of thirdness. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXXIII*(1), 5–46. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x.

Chaiklin, S. (2003). The zone of proximal development in Vygotsky's analysis of learning and instruction. In B. G. A. Kozulin, V. S. Ageyev, & S. M. Miller (Eds.), *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context* (pp. 39–63). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Coles, R. (1989). *The call of stories: Teaching and the moral imagination*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Corsaro, W. A. (1997). *The sociology of childhood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

El'Konin, D. B. (1999). The development of play in preschoolers: Roles and pretend situations: Their significance and the motivation of play activity. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 37*(6), 31–70. doi:10.2753/RPO1061-0405370631.

El'koninova, L. I. (2001). The object orientation of children's play in the context of understanding imaginary space-time in play and in stories. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 39*(2), 30–51.

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding :An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goncu, A. (1993). Development of intersubjectivity in social pretend play. *Human Development, 36*(4), 185.

Lindqvist, G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools*. Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala Studies in Education.

Mitchell, S. A., & Aron, L. (1999). *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.

Ogden, T. (2004). The analytic third; Implications for psychoanalytic theory and technique. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXX111*, 167–195.

Salomon, G. (Ed.). (1993). *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Sawyer, K. R. (1997). *Pretend play as improvisation: Conversation in the preschool classroom*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sutton-Smith, B. (1997). *The ambiguity of play*. Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press.

Trevarthen, C. (2002). Origins of musical identity: Evidence from infancy for musical social awareness. In R. MacDonald, D. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (pp. 21–38). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 42*(1), 7–97.

Wartofsky, M. W. (1979). *Models, representation and the scientific understanding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Reidel.

Winnicott, D. W. (1960). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; A study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 34*(2), 89–97.

Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Zinchenko, V. P. (2001). External and internal: Another comment on the issue. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 135–137). Aahus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Imagining While Playing

Abstract Children's wild imaginations dominate the events in this chapter. Powerful themes of birth, death, rebirth and magic are played with as together children co-create dramatic imaginative stories and repeat aspects of real-life events in fantastic ways and with feeling. The pretend nature of this socio-dramatic play blatantly integrates thinking with feeling in playful and sometimes frightful activity. Any attempt to separate emotion from cognition loses the holistic nature of this integrated and imaginative dream-like play. Imaginative pretend play can allow children to express and think about hidden feelings and to work with significant unconscious themes, often symbolically veiled in dramatic pretence. Thus the act of playing creates a transitional third space among and between the players where complex themes can be safely explored, thought, felt, and played with (Benjamin J, Psychoanal Q LXXIII(1):5–46. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x, 2004; Ogden T, Psychoanal Q LXX111:167–195, 2004; Winnicott DW, Playing and reality. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974).

Introduction

Children's wild imaginations dominate the events in this chapter. Powerful themes of birth, death, rebirth and magic are played with as together children co-create dramatic imaginative stories and repeat aspects of real-life events in fantastic ways and with feeling. The pretend nature of this socio-dramatic play blatantly integrates thinking with feeling in playful and sometimes frightful activity. Any attempt to separate emotion from cognition loses the holistic nature of this integrated and imaginative dream-like play. Imaginative pretend play can allow children to express and think about hidden feelings and to work with significant unconscious themes, often symbolically veiled in dramatic pretence. Thus the act of playing creates a transitional third space among and between the players where complex themes can be safely explored, thought, felt, and played with (Benjamin, 2004; Ogden, 2004; Winnicott, 1974). This third space encompasses aspects of players' inner and outer psychic worlds. It includes and balances both real and imaginative dimensions (Vygotsky, 2004; Winnicott, 1974). The themes played represent real-life experiences though often they may be thickly veiled in dream-like symbolism and importantly, this imaginative play, is also about making-meaning.

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_6

Vygotsky (2004) describes several ways in which imagination and reality are linked in children's play while also emphasising that imaginative play always draws on children's real-life experiences: "the creative activity of the imagination depends directly on the richness and variety of a person's previous experience because this experience provides the material from which the products of fantasy are constructed" (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 14). As we see in the following events, children playing together also share their prior experiences by interactively co-creating their field of play. Individual children's experiences become distributed across the group complicating the group play in imaginative combinatorial ways. Individual children's experience is thus extended and enriched through social pretend play and the social group thrives. Vygotsky (2004) further emphasises the links between emotions and imagination as being essential to creativity.

> This association manifests itself in two ways. On the one hand every feeling, every emotion seeks specific images corresponding to it. Emotions thus possess a kind of capacity to select impressions, thoughts, and images that resonate with the mood that possess us at a particular moment in time…. every feeling has not only an external, physical expression, but an internal expression associated with the choice of thoughts, images, and impressions. This phenomenon has been named the dual expression of feeling. … Just as people long ago learned to express their internal states through external expressions, so do the images of imagination serve as an internal expression of our feelings. (p 18)

Images, feelings, and thinking all come together in imaginative play. Vygotsky (2004) assertively summarises his thinking about these links thus: "It is a fact that precisely when we confront a full circle completed by the imagination is when we find that both factors – the intellectual and the emotional – are equally necessary for an act of creation. Feeling as well as thought drives human creativity" (p.21).

The following events present a range of imaginatively, emotionally, and creatively enacted themes. Chasing, catching, killing by various means (including poison), and magical powers are some of the themes played in the four events presented in this Chapter. Such fantastical themes are common to young children's pretend play, yet seldom seriously interrogated by early childhood researchers or teachers.

Event 18: Playful Teacher Chasing

Background: Southbridge Centre

This event evolved after a special morning tea-time. Unusually, this tea-time included all 24 four-year- old children.

The following researcher memo describes the scene-setting atmosphere:

> Three teachers, shared history, all born in the seventies, within two months of each other, all wearing seventies clothes today, will jointly celebrate their birthdays, on Saturday night (tomorrow) in the centre; parents and friends are invited, me too. This is a "grown ups" party. However the preparations and party-like atmosphere are pervading the children's programme. The teachers have been trying out their hippy-like long seventies garb, as if they're also in dress-ups. Children's collage materials are being transformed into streamers

and other decorative accessories. And now the teachers are testing a fondue set, with the children as consumers of fruit pieces pierced onto shish kebab sticks and then dipped, by adults, into the hot chocolate fondue pot which a teacher holds over the portable gas fondue stove, on a low table. The adults joke and laugh while children watch and wait, with interest.

Teacher S had been most in control during the fondue making; moving among the 20 odd children, who crowded around a low table, she handed out chocolate buttons and fondue sticks, explaining, directing and instructing. As this morning-tea time finished and the children began moving to other activities, the teacher-child power balance also changed, playfully. The teacher-chasing scene erupted suddenly, as about 6 children burst out of the building, chasing teacher Sue.

Alan:	"We can just get a machine and it can crack the world." (Alan: 4 years, 10 months)
Ben:	"And we'll eat you up." (Ben: 4 years, 4 months)
Jo:	"And we are going to make you fall down. If you run your fastest we'll run after you." (Jo: 4 years, 10 months)
Teacher Sue:	"Go on then catch me."
	"You can't get me." [chanting]
	She stands facing her chasers and makes a teasing face at them, calmly twinkling her fingers in the air, beside her ears, in time with her chant].
	They run after teacher Sue] Yelling: "Get her… get her get her get her…"
	[The number of chasers increases to 8]
	"Oh you've got me."

Analysis and Discussion

Power – Group Agency – Transition Times

These spontaneous power-play games seemed more frequent during transitions between activities and routines. The time and freedom involved in moving from the morning-tea time indoors (quite controlled, for safety reasons) to the outdoors, provided space for playful, gleeful, chaotic teacher chasing. As also noted by Stephenson (1999) in her study of children's outside play, wild physical playfulness was more common outdoors where there were fewer physical barriers such as ceilings, walls and doors. Simply being outside with the sky as the distant roof seemed to increase feelings of freedom. Rules felt fewer. Running was only permitted outdoors and most large motor activities such as climbing, bending and balancing bodies on wooden beams and ladders, took place outdoors, where the mediating ladders, planks, wooden boxes, sand-pit, trolleys and trees lived. On other occasions I observed these children co-creating private hiding places outdoors, draping large swathes of cloth over frame structures. These tent-like spaces seemed to become metaphorically concrete places of thirdness, where children's shared cultures were protected from invasively watchful adults, such as teachers, parents and myself.

In this event these children together asserted their group agency towards the powerful teacher, who reciprocated by playfully teasing and further encouraging the chasing. It was the teachers' provocative controlling and teasing behaviour that initiated this chasing event. Children and teachers' usual roles were subversively and playfully reversed. The children appeared to experience powerful feelings of being physically and emotionally in charge of the play, freed from their usual every-day teacher (adult) controlled lives. Imagination supported the feelings of freedom in the co-creation of worlds of play.

Event 16 continues:

> They pull her down to the ground, their movements matching screams of joy as they connect with her physically touching, their exuberance expressed in sounds and actions. Her body flops voluntarily and she lies on the ground. Three children climb and lie over her, kicking and waving their legs in the air, laughing and screaming with glee, yet carefully avoiding any hurting. Others watch excitedly jumping. Gilda (4 years, 5 months, no English) initially watches then, seeing no danger, becomes the fourth to lie gently on the teacher, playfully kick her legs in the air and laugh.
>
> Jackie (4 years, 9 months): "Cut her, cut her". [he waves two plastic knives].
>
> One child puts on the teacher's very large black velvet pointed sun hat that has fallen off her. The cone shaped hat covers his entire head. He jumps lots of excited little hard bounces under a giant witch-like hat and giggles loudly.

Analysis and Discussion

Pretence in Power Play

Despite all the physical excitement and words expressing violence, this rough and tumble play was non-violent. As Bjorklund and Pellegrini (2002) have pointed out, children playing rough and tumble do not physically hurt each other. Other young mammals such as puppies and kittens play in similar vigorous yet not violent ways. This rough and tumble play seems to be important for young players learning physically about the space between, in relating with others. These children understood the pretence in the drama, and the gentleness in rough and tumble.

When the children were asked, on another occasion, how the teachers felt about being caught Rolf (4 years, 6 months) commented truthfully, "They like it, they laugh when they're caught". Themes of chasing, conquering and poisoning were observed in children's play in all three centres. However, this teacher allowed children to physically experience power and control in ways that were not observed in the other centres. This type of teacher chasing activity, where the teachers seemed to encourage children to express agency and power by reversing typical adult-child roles, was unique to this centre where it was a recurrent phenomenon. As products of the liberal seventies these teachers consciously and deliberately allowed the children to experiment and play with rules around power and position. As one teacher

explained: "We don't have too many rules, or unnecessary rules". They allowed the children to use them, as mediating artefacts, in the children's playful power plays around mythical themes.

Event 18 continues:

Teacher Sue:	"Lift me up". [she offers up her hands]
Alan:	"We can't lift you."
	"Into the pond." [sandpit]
	Screams from children…three of them pull her gently. She walks where they lead her, towards and into the sandpit, they begin putting sand on her.
	Teacher Sue runs out of the sandpit:
	"I don't like it all over me."
Ben:	"We'll put it on your feet so you'll die." [holding a shovel full of sand]
Teacher Sue:	"Okay, if you just put it on my feet."
Teacher Sue	"I'll just roll these up" [she rolls up her pants, They bury her feet in wet sand]
Teacher Sue:	"Oh it's cold, oh oh it's freezing."
Jo:	"You're dead now."
Teacher Sue:	"Am I dead?"
Jo:	"Yeah."
Teacher Sue:	"What do I do now then? I suppose lie down"
Alan:	"It's not funny." [to another child who's laughing]
	Teacher Sue lies down in the sandpit, they bury her feet again
Jo:	"Now you're going to grow into a tree."
Teacher Sue:	"Am I growing into a tree?
Jo:	"Yeap."
Ben:	"Put her in the fire. Put her in the fire. Put her in the fire." [wood to fire?]
Teacher Sue:	"Help, Jackie save me."

[Jackie does so, while Teacher Sue tells the children that Jackie is saving her.]

Analysis and Discussion

Power and Myth

This complex scenario involved mythical concepts around death, birth, growth and rebirth, with associated feelings of power, control, chaos, cruelty, resistance and subversion. Incongruities abound and it is incongruities that define humour. The event reads like a tragicomedy in literary theatre language, containing elements of humour-comedy and tragedy-death. In summary, the powerless people (children) pulled the giant (teacher, adult) to the ground, jumped on and physically conquered and disabled her, before killing her, with knives (of plastic) and (as the next segment of this event indicates) poison. The giant was then buried in the pond (sandpit), from where she was reborn as a tree. She grew up but was then chopped down for firewood and burnt, so conquered and killed again. Similar mythical chasing, catching, rescuing, and killing themes (as also noted by Corsaro (1985) were observed in the

play of children in all three centres, but the usual pattern involved child-child chasing, rather than child-teacher chasing. Of interest was how children playfully transformed these potentially tragic mythic themes into playful dramas. Of interest also was Alan's anxious reaction to the potential reality in the drama. As one of the oldest children (4.10 year.) he seemed to understand the implications behind the play and that death was serious.

Different theoretical perspectives provide various interpretations of this sort of play. According to Egan (1988), myth users (including children) compose and tell narratives to provide intellectual security. Bettelheim (1976) explains how, from a psycho-social perspective, this type of play may assist children in expressing and dealing with powerful emotional feelings. Mythic concepts can evoke strong feelings around security, fear, and power. Corsaro (1985) has described this spontaneous play in terms of "approach-avoidance routines" (p. 219). He identified recurrent themes of death-rebirth, lost-found and danger-rescue. These themes also resonate with the dominant categories associated with attachment theory as ambivalent, avoidant, insecure and secure patterns of attachment. Attachment issues revolve around approach and avoidance, with associated feelings of security and fear. The teacher-chasing event addressed all of these themes.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the mythical and symbolic concepts that children dramatise may mediate their developing understandings and feelings of being in the world. These children played with roles, trying out different ways of being including exploring feelings of agency in the altered power relationships. Whatever the theoretical perspective, children in all three centres were observed dramatically, imaginatively with feeling and playfully re-creating stories with mythical themes. In this context Jerome S Bruner (1962) has described drama as the expressive art form of myth.

Just as the narratives of myth are story-shaped, with beginnings, ends, and plots in between, so children playing out mythic themes are learning about and symbolically representing their experiences of the world as story-shaped. This line of thought leads to theories about narrative ways of knowing which, as Jerome S. Bruner (1986) explains, view knowledge as embedded in the stories we create and re-create. In this way stories give meaning to life's patterns. The events presented in this book illustrate stories as co-constructed processes involving the distribution of imagination, feelings, thoughts and knowledge. As (Ochs & Capps, 2001) point out, these narratives are not necessarily linear, logical, or final. The multivoiced nature of playful narrative events can create disjointed, overlapping, sad and joyful events that reflect the feelings and patterns of real life.

This echoing of mythic themes in children's play intrigued me. In playing teacher-chasing, three boys (Alan, Ben, Jo) as the leaders and talkers, spontaneously improvised and co-constructed the creation-myth event from an amalgam of stories seen, heard and played previously. They introduced powerfully symbolic concepts around birth, death and rebirth. Other children rapidly joined the play picking up on these concepts in their own individual ways, while also becoming drawn along by

the group play. In this way individuals' feelings and thoughts expressed in imaginative and playful carnival-like fun, became distributed and shared among the group of players (Salomon, 1993). The interpersonal field too expanded.

Event 18 continues:

Teacher Sue:	"What about making some fondue on the fire, some chocolate fondue?"
Jo:	"Okay, and then we're going to put poisonous chocolate fondue all over your face."
Teacher Sue:	"Now what sort of fondue are we going to make?"
Jo:	"Chocolate and then we'll put it all over your face."
Teacher Sue:	"No no no no."
Ollie (4 years, 8 months):	"No we're going to eat it."
Teacher Sue:	"We'll need some spoons….Let's find some things to dip in it. What can we find?"

[All play with the spoons in the pots, all standing and moving, no sitting].

Ollie:	"I need a knife to cut you up."
Teacher Sue:	"Oh no you can't cut me up now, I'm dead…"

Analysis and Discussion

Teacher as Mediating Artefact

In this final scene the teacher, at the centre of the drama, used words to skilfully and gently remind the children that the playfulness was complete: "Oh no you can't cut me up now, I'm dead." She redirected the children away from the potentially chaotic playful teacher-chasing and killing drama, towards quieter, more controlled and collaborative sand play that focused on the children re-creating (through pretence) the fondue-making morning tea time of 15 min earlier.

The teacher played a central mediating role throughout this drama, epitomising power in her position and size. In the beginning she provoked and thereby initiated the chasing game. As the game progressed her calm, yet involved and questioning manner in the midst of the children's excitement, ensured that chaos did not take over. For example, in lieu of her whole body being physically buried, she suggested that the children cover only her toes in sand. This they did, understanding that buried toes symbolised a buried person. On several occasions she also checked out her role-playing with the children: "What do I do now then? I suppose I lie down… Am I growing into a tree?" In these ways *s*he allowed the children to play with her, as a living artefact, paradoxically assuming a calm and serious role in the children's playful and wild dramatic narrative.

As a community Southbridge differed from the other two centres in this study in several respects. One striking difference, which is epitomized in this event, was the active role the teachers took in children's dramatic play. All three teachers in Southbridge centre participated in and even initiated dramatic play with children, and these events frequently altered the power balance between children and teachers.

In this way these teachers supported children into experiencing feelings of group and individual agency, making choices, being and feeling in control in their play. As mentioned earlier Southbridge also had fewer teachers than the other centres and these teachers were friends with similar interests, likes and dislikes. They all enjoyed playing. These factors contributed to the relaxed community ethos expressed in the playful centre ethos. The next event also features *poisonous* as a mythical substance that imbues owners with magical powers over others.

Event 19: Making Poisonous

Background: Southbridge centre, outside.

Music plays loudly in the background and a teacher sings to it in a jazzy style, "ba baa ba ba be ba…" For the past 10 min about six children have been using hula hoops to chase and catch each other. The teachers have ruled that the children must ask others if they want to be caught with hula hoops, before catching them. Despite this rule the children seem to enjoy the chasing and catching game, possibly because the catching is still physically expressed in the act of looping a hoop over the captured.

However, the play theme changes from chasing and catching to a more united group focus on "making poisonous". The chasers have gathered under a tent-like fabric construction in a far corner of the playground where they are invisible but audible to outsiders, like me.

Rolf begins:

Rolf: "Now we need to make poisonous, okay."
Jim: "Yeah with water."
Rolf: "Now we need to make poisonous, okay, and they'll get dead."
"Yeah, yeah". [a lot of laughter, Rolf, Jim, Zed]
Rolf: "Off we go. Jim, lead in, right."
Jim: "Off we go."

Together three boys (Rolf, Jim, Zed) run out from the tent and towards the sandpit, collect buckets, funnels and spades, and arrange them on the edge of the deck that surrounds the sandpit. Rolf begins digging in the sandpit.

Rolf: "We're going to trap all the girls, and the teachers."
Researcher: "Why"?

Analysis and Discussion

Power, Poison, and Gender

The 4-year old boys at Southbridge seemed to be a united force at times, initiating and managing chasing games as illustrated in these two events (18 and 19). The plan for making poisonous developed out of the hula-hoop chasing, with its teacher imposed rule on asking before catching. Poisoning was a qualitatively different, abstract, and imaginative variation on catching and killing that didn't require asking

permission before poisoning. This sort of play with poisonous was observed in all three centres. Both boys and girls played with poisonous using the adjective as a noun. Davies (1989) notes the similar linguistic and teacher-chasing phenomena when she became the target for young children's chasing, attacking and killing with *poisonous* play.

The myths and fairy tale stories that children re-created in play narratives form frequently re-created gendered stereotypes around power. This *male – female binary* (Davies,1989) relationship is integral to many traditional myths, legends and fairy tales. In studies of preschool children and gender Davies (1989) has described how "…the idea of powerful, dominant (hegemonic) masculinity informed the interpretation that children made of characters and of narratives, and of what they were capable of imagining in positioning themselves as male or female" (p. 92).

In researching children's narrative play, Nicolopoulou and Richner (2004) have described how compared to the smooth relationships in girls' narratives, the themes that boys played with tended to be wrought with conflict: "the plots focused on fighting, destruction, and disorder…as defining themes of the story" (p. 361). Certainly this was the case at Southbridge. Girls did become participants in the play, in event 18 for example, though here the giant-teacher was the only really active female participant and as the enemy she epitomised power, to be overthrown violently, mainly by boys. Events 18 and 19 were directed and led by a small group of articulate active boys.

The lack of gentle male role models may partly explain the aggressive expression of male power by little boys (Davies, 2003). Men are a rarity in most early childhood centres, including the centres in this study. Some boys possibly resent the lack of male role models and rebel against their perceived domination by women teachers. In this event (19) Rolf did include the female teachers in the category of girls to be chased and eaten.

Event 19 continues:

> The 3 boys walk and run speedily between water trough and sandpit carrying back to sandpit buckets filled with water, pouring it through funnels into buckets that they're simultaneously filling with sand, making the poisonous lava. They work together, as a unit, enthusiastically, joyfully, a hive of activity and noise. Rolf jumps excitedly at the mixing/making process. They comment as they run:
>
> Rolf: "We need jam and sugar."
> Jim: "Let's get sugar now."
> Rolf: "Let's get more water. We're making nice gurgly googly poisonous. This is lava."
>
> [All 3 laugh and screech with delight as the bucket overflows when more water is added to their sand concoction].
>
> Rolf: "Now it's all done."
> Jim: "Now water, lets make more larvoo eh."
> Teacher Lu: "What are you making Rolf"?
> Rolf: "Lava to cook all the teachers and girls."
> Jim: "Lets make more larvoo…. More water, more water. A little bit more sugar. Hey are you digging here Rolf, are you making a, are you making a drain"? [Rolf has resumed digging in the sandpit]

Rolf: "I'm digging a deep hole, so that I can bury the teachers and the girls, okay."
Jim: "No we're not going to do that."
Rolf: "We can just bury one girl in here, just one, just one, okay. We're making a volcano for girls okay. Lava, sticky lava."
Jim: "More water….Let's make a waterfall."
Rolf: "We're building a new hole, okay."
Jim: "Let's put more water."
Rolf: "I'll go and get some more water, okay, to put into the hole, okay"?

Analysis and Discussion

Distributed Imagination: Lava-Poisonous Making Activity

The overwhelming image in this game was the excited, playful, very busy collaborative activity of these three bodies acting in unison. Rolf and Jim directed the play with words. Contradictions surfaced, adding momentum and speed to the process. For example, Jim disagreed with Rolf's desire to bury all the girls and teachers. He then avoided or didn't hear Rolf's suggestion to bury "just one girl, okay". Perhaps as a compromise, Rolf used his knowledge and words to transform the poisonous from jam into lava, which Jim learned as *larvoo*. The hole they dug together, which Rolf had initially suggested was for burying the teachers and the girls, became a volcano. Later on it became a mud puddle. Rolf's knowledge became imaginatively, emotionally, shared among the three boys engaged in the one changing activity. Physical materials, Rolf's *okay* negotiations, and shared imaginations mediated their playful activity in complexly inter-connecting ways (Alcock, 2010).

Event 19 continues:

Jim puts one bare foot in the hole that is filled with water. He laughs, then takes it out, Zed stamps both feet in the hole chanting.

Zed: "Wash it down, squash it down."

He and Jim take turns stamping water into the sand pit, laughing and chanting. Others join them, attracted by the activity. Jim wanders off.

The play changes to wet sandy play with five children around a growing water-filled sand hole, making mud cakes, using a small plastic water wheel, trying to put sand and water through it. They all take turns standing in the puddle and squelching their feet. They dig sand, stamp, and pat it down, using hands and feet, adding water, laughing a lot while being very physically active. They bury their own feet under wet sand, and laugh hysterically at their vanished feet.

Rolf: "Put it in there okay, put it down there."

The newcomers understand and comply.

Olaf joins in: "Now we're making a water slide, OK. That's the water slide there."
Rolf: "No no. We're not making any more mud, OK. No, no more water OK."

[Squeals of delight as Zed jumps in the water- filled hole]

Zed: "We need more water, more water, we need more water."

The activity level rises again as they busily fetch water from trough 10 metres away [6 children]

Rolf: "We're breaking that we're going to build a new hole, OK, we better dig the drains." [2 holes now]

Musse and Jacoub throw water into the water-filled hole that Zed stands in, splashing him.

Zed yells: "Bad boy, you bad boy." [he makes playfully pretending raging monster noises]

[Zed starts to run after Musse and Jacoub and they run off laughing. Zed has a bucket of water to throw at them, they run inside where he can't follow with the water; Rolf watches, also laughing].

The chasing play has resumed and within minutes it's hula hoop catching again. This event continued until 11.10, so lasted 34 min.

Analysis and Discussion

Playful Transformations

The busy activity continued with various transformations. In this scene the actual participants also changed. Jim left and Jacoub, Emil, Olaf, and Musse became part of the activity. There was not much talk, partly because three of the five spoke little, or no English, being recent immigrants from Somalia. However, the busy movements in the digging and water fetching activity, combined with playful laughter, seemed to unite them as a peer community, motivating them together. Rolf continued to direct the play. The spontaneously gleeful hilarity at the end combined fun with silliness and laughter.

The materials children used influenced how they experienced playfulness. For example, Zed used water as a weapon in the concluding humorous laughter-filled chase. Water added to sand enabled splashing and the creation of squelching muddy sand, which opened up space for the volcano mud play. This sort of messy playfulness was permitted in Southbridge centre, a community with fewer rules than many early childhood centres. Both Eastbridge and Northbridge centres had smaller sandpits and less water-sand play. Hiding and catching was a recurrent theme in events 18, 19 and 20, expressed in chasing, burying feet, poisoning, and physically catching.

As mentioned earlier, these themes appear to contain elements of the approach-avoidance play referred to by Corsaro (1985, 1997). Approach avoidance hiding and finding themes may also be re-playings of attachment behaviour patterns. As discussed earlier, attachment patterns can be represented as emotionally meaningful personal themes in children's imaginative play.

The following event also builds on mythical media-inspired notions of tricks, magic and wands, with their associated powers.

Event 20: Tricks and Magic

Background
Southbridge, outside, sunny, morning: Researcher sits on steps near the sand pit. Sandy (4 years, 2 months) and Flo (4 years, 3 months) come over, sit down beside her, and initiate a conversation.

Sandy: "We're doing tricky tricks."
Researcher: "What sort of tricks?"
Sandy: "Lots, I've got a roly poly slide at my house."
Flo: "And I've got a xx (unclear) slide at my house…"
Sandy: "We were doing tricks at the tricky house, it's invisible. We go in there and shut the door and then it's invisible, It's a fold up one."
Researcher: "A fold up house?"
Flo: "No, a tent that's got wings."
Sandy: "If someone comes to my house I'll trick them by getting them to go into my tree-house and then they'll jump so high that they'll fall down and hurt their self. And then I'll tell them to jump in the house and they will and they'll jump down from the tree and hurt their self. Because I want to trick them."
Flo: "I got a magic wand at home; I got a slide at home."
Sandy: "And then when they fall they'll fall into a dungeon.

There was a piece of string on top of the roof and then the string, the string will undo and they'll fall down."

Flo: "And I've got a fairy at home but she's not real, she did break once but we had to fix her."
Sandy: "The dungeon's going to be down at the bottom of the tree. I trick people by taking things away and putting them where people can't see, in a different place."

Analysis and Discussion

Incongruity in Tricks and Magic

This serious dual conversation about tricks, traps, wands, and magic had elements of the incongruity, and double thinking that characterise joking humour and imaginative play. The conversation was dual, in the sense that both Flo and Sandy constructed similarly themed stories and explanations that sometimes overlapped, but were also independent. Ochs and Capps (2001) describe how conversational narratives can help narrators develop "frameworks for understanding events" (p. 2). Words expressed the children's imaginative thinking processes. Sitting alongside the children, I mediated this talk by being passively present, yet listening and responsively asking a few questions to clarify the thinking framework, without impinging on these creative and intriguing thinking-feeling stories.

Young children's conversational narratives exhibit a variety of styles; simple, complex, short, long, finished and unfinished. All have in common the concept of

meaning embedded in the situation, in the social, cultural, historical context of the individuals involved. We bring our unique and shared experiences to our interpretations of words as utterances, which express meaning and feeling. Ochs and Capps (2001) write:

> All narrative exhibits tension between the desire to construct an over-arching storyline that ties events together in a seamless explanatory framework and the desire to capture the complexities of the events experienced, including haphazard details, uncertainties and conflicting sensibilities among protagonists (p. 4).

Event 20 continues:

Wands briefly become a joint focus for this dual dialogue:

Researcher:	"What does your wand look like?"
Flo:	"It's very beautiful."
Sandy:	"I have 2 wands at home and I share a room with my brother."
Flo:	"My wand is pinkish purple. I got it from Spotlight [a shop]. I made it, I brought all of the stuff that I had to make it from Spotlight."
Sandy:	"We'll go and do some other tricks now."

Nearby teacher Jo sings along to music playing on the radio.

Flo [to teacher Jo]:	"I know one about fairies."
Teacher Jo:	"Can you sing it?"
Flo:	"No, it's a magic song and it only works on magic days."

Analysis and Discussion

Imagining and Talking While Thinking and Anticipating

In this scenario the story explanations served to hold together relationships between both concepts played and the participants. Sandy and Flo used words, with imagination, as tools to assist thinking. Thus, Sandy's explanation of the invisible tree house as a concept became increasingly complicated in the telling. Imagination communicated in the words she used, mediated her thinking. Flo embellished her powerful magic wand concept with descriptive words. Asserting her autonomy and imbuing words with magic power she cleverly and imaginatively explained why she would not, or could not, sing the magic song because, "it only works on magic days". Overlapping themes of magic and tricks coordinated their monologues as dialogue, and towards the end of the conversation wands briefly became a real shared interest. Reality blended with fantasy on several occasions such as in Flo's description of her fairy which did not possess some magical qualities, but was still a fairy: "she's not real, she did break once but we had to fix her." Even fairies can break.

These children's experiences in the wider community, beyond the early childhood centre, such as shopping at Spotlight, had stimulated their conversational monologues. Outside experiences also included the cultural capital of being read to and hearing fairy tales. In this way individual prior experiences and current shared monologues facilitated the children's shared and distributed imaginative feeling –

thinking. As a mediating listener I found myself simply fitting in with an adult listener role that the teachers in this community seemed to value. I had observed them doing likewise.

The ability to anticipate adds meaning and sense to conversations. In all these narrative events the general scripts were largely anticipatory because the story themes were culturally familiar ones of chasing, catching, witches, killing, poisonous, wands, and magic power. Children improvised on the specific details in the making of material artefacts such as poisonous, wands and traps. The dialogue and story line too were often anticipatory as children learned to guess the general intention of what was spoken before it was said. For example, Flo described her wand as beautiful; that's how wands are. In event 18 the dead teacher grew into a tree after being buried; that's the life cycle. She was also chopped down and burned, as happens with firewood. In anticipating each other children and teachers read cues in, for example, gestures, voice tone and gaze, as well as in words already spoken (Shotter, 1993, 2010). Playful (as opposed to more serious) communication seemed to be associated with emotion and vitality, flexibility, spontaneity and improvisation. Thus what was anticipated was not predetermined. Improvisation (Sawyer, 1997), anticipation and vitality affect (Stern, 2010) are also themes in the following event involving a young child playing and performing, possibly for both herself and for an audience of others.

Event 21: Teletubbies

Background

Eastbridge, mid morning, outside on the roof-top play space; a few other children and adults are also outside occupied in the sand pit and talking.

> Mollie (2 years) run-walks (toddles stiffly, yet quickly) around outside accidentally (on purpose) bumping into the slide, the big boxes, the trollies, the wall. Every time she bumps she stops, stands still and in a loud chanting tone exclaims "UH! OH!" She then looks around, at me and other adults and anyone in the area. She does not hurt herself. She's having fun. Sometimes she laughs or giggles a little at her own actions.

Analysis and Discussion

Media Influences: Solitary Social Playfulness

The motivation and meaning of Mollie's oddly playful behaviour was puzzling; I was unfamiliar with current television programmes for toddlers. However, a colleague immediately saw the imitative connection between Mollie's seemingly absurd solitary playfulness and the television programme *Teletubbies*, in which a character did exactly what Mollie was doing. That teletubby toddled, clumsily and rhythmically bumping into everyday objects, then exclaiming "oh! oh!". It is likely

that Mollie was repetitively imitating and imaginatively re-creating this particular teletubby character with her whole bodily self. The teletubby struck an emotional chord motivating her very embodied re-enactments. From a socio-cultural perspective she was internalising aspects of that character's behaviour by imitating it repetitively, thereby coming to some experiential understandings of how that character might feel and think. She was showing her developing understanding of the character by externalising the character's behaviour in her own imitative behaviour (El'koninova, 1999/2001). The dialectical and dynamic nature of Mollie's activity blended her internalising and externalising behaviour. Thus, any potential philosophical dualism in Mollie's internalising and externalising process of coming to understandings of the character were dissolved in the activity process itself (Miettinen, 2001).

Mollie used her body purposively (Lokken, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1962), and with vitality (Stern, 2004) mediating her experience and understanding of the teletubby character, and television as media. On another level television and the Teletubbies programme mediated Mollie's developing understandings of the world. Mollie's playfulness was not as solitary as it initially appeared; she was imitating, re-creating and thereby developing some understanding of a character from the social world of television. Her playfulness was connected to and directly reflected the wider society and her developing understandings of the world (of television). As a performance her rhythmic playfulness was social. The elements suggested by Stern as comprising vitality affect – movement, time, force, space and intentionality – were all integral to Mollie's body-based performance (Stern, 2004, 2010). She seemed to be presenting a social performance for an audience that included herself (Lindqvist, 1995) and nearby adults. With each bump, she laughed or giggled, seemingly at her own behaviour, while also looking around for teachers watching her. Was she imitating the performance-audience aspect of television, or possibly joking in a playful way with the teachers and/or herself? On this occasion the teachers made no explicit responses, however Mollie's performance did have the potential to initiate and develop relationships with teachers. I was fascinated.

Summary

Shared imagination features strongly in all these events, though the level of shared understandings and their co-construction varies considerably among children involved. Common symbolic themes around death, hiding and finding are played with in diverse and metaphorical ways with children taking different roles. The roles and rules that become part of imaginative play can mediate children re-experiencing emotionally salient experiences as well as enabling them to experience feeling and being another. Thus children imaginatively learn about themselves in relation to and with and others. These relationally experienced and learned self-other feelings are components of both empathy and self-regulation. These events illuminate too how "the association between the functioning of imagination and reality is an emotional

one" (Vygotsky, 2004, p 17). Bodies, sounds and words mediate, connect and communicate imaginative dream-like story plays, emotionally. Inspired and motivated by being together (and as in event 21 having an appreciative audience) these children drew on and shared fields of imagination and associated feelings to improvise creatively complex dramas together and alongside each other. Words combined with imagination and emotion to communicate and carry most of the events presented in this chapter. The exception to this verbal emphasis was event 21, Tellitubbies, which Mollie presented with her whole moving body adding "UH! OH!" sounds rather than words. That event leads nicely into Chapter "Feelings Felt in Bodies" which emphasises embodied feeling-thoughts in play.

References

Alcock, S. (2010). Young children's playfully complex communication: Distributed imagination. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 18*(2), 215–228. doi:10.1080/13502931003784404.

Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: An intersubjective view of thirdness. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXXIII*(1), 5–46. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x

Bettelheim, B. (1976). *The uses of enchantment: The meaning and importance of fairy tales*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Bjorklund, D. F, & Pellegrini, A. D. (2002). *Homo ludens: The importance of play* (pp. 297–331): Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bruner, J. S. (1962). *On knowing: Essays for the left hand*. Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds/Jerome Bruner*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Corsaro, W. A. (1997). *The sociology of childhood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Davies, B. (1989). *Frogs and snails and feminist tales: Preschool children and gender*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Davies, B. (2003). *Frogs and snails and feminist tales: Preschool children and gender* (Revth ed.). Cresskill: Hampton Press.

Egan, K. (1988). *Primary understanding: Education in early childhood*. New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall.

El' koninova, L. I. (1999/2001). The object orientation of children's play in the context of understanding imaginary space-time in play and in stories. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 39*(2), 30–51.

Lindqvist, G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools. Uppsala Studies in Education 62*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Lokken, G. (2000). *Toddler peer culture: The social style of one and two year old body-subjects in everyday interaction*. Trondheim/Norway: Norges teknisk-naturvetenskapliga universitet, NTNU.

Miettinen, R. (2001). Artifact mediation in Dewey and in cultural-historical activity theory. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 8*(4), 297–308.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge/Kegan Paul.

Nicolopoulou, A. G., & Richner, E. S. (2004). 'When your powers combine, I am Captain Planet': The developmental significance of individual- and group-authored stories by preschoolers. *Discourse Studies, 6*(3), 347–371. doi:10.1177/1461445604044293.

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Ogden, T. (2004). The analytic third; implications for psychoanalytic theory and technique. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXX111*, 167–195.
Salomon, G. (Ed.) (1993). *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations*. Cambridg: Cambridge University Press.
Sawyer, R. K. (1997). *Pretend play as improvisation: Conversation in the preschool classroom*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Shotter, J. (1993). *Cultural politics of everyday life: Social constructionism, rhetoric and knowing of the third kind*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
Shotter, J. (2010). Inside our lives together: A neo Wittgensteinian constructionism. In S. R. Kirschner & J. Martin (Eds.), *The sociocultural turn in psychology: The contextual emergence of mind and self* (pp. 45–67). New York: Columbia University Press.
Stephenson, A. M. (1999). *Opening up the outdoors: A case study of young children's outdoor experiences in one childcare centre* (Vol. 4). Wellington, New Zealand: Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.
Stern, D. (2004). *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life*. New York: W.W. Norton.
Stern, D. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.
Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 42*(1), 7–97.
Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Feelings Felt in Bodies

Abstract This chapter emphasises the bodily felt and expressed rhythm, communicative musicality, feelings of belonging, self-other awareness and self-regulation, that featured strongly in observations of young children playfully communicating. The events in this chapter illustrate children being playful together, relating inter- and intra subjectively, while becoming attuned to each other in very bodily-based ways. Emotions and feelings flow in the rhythm of overlapping sounds, movements, gestures, and gaze. Words, chanted, spoken and heard, add complexity to children's bodily-based playfulness.

Introduction

This chapter emphasises the bodily felt and expressed rhythm, communicative musicality, feelings of belonging, self-other awareness and self-regulation, that featured strongly in observations of young children playfully communicating. The events in this chapter illustrate children being playful together, relating inter- and intra subjectively, while becoming attuned to each other in very bodily-based ways. Emotions and feelings flow in the rhythm of overlapping sounds, movements, gestures, and gaze. Words, chanted, spoken and heard, add complexity to children's bodily-based playfulness.

The overarching focus in this chapter on embodiment involves trying to interpret and understand children's *intercorporeity*, their communicative body movements together (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Intercorporeity may be understood as the bodily-based variant of intersubjectivity. Children being playful seem to always be moving. They do not stay still. Watching these children I too felt, or caught, children's joy and enthusiasm. While observing I was also continually asking myself: 'what are these bodies thinking, feeling, saying and communicating? This led to further questions around agency and intention as expressed in bodies. Close reflective observation of children's bodies in motion offers further ways of interpreting young children's playful communication that include this awareness of agency, confidence, and intention, alongside themes of spontaneity and synchronicity and underpinned by feelings and emotions.

The concept of *communicative musicality* (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) addressed earlier in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing"

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_7

provides a musical interpretation of children's rhythmic intersubjectivity and intercorporeity. This musical emphasis fits well with observations of children playing together, particularly pre-verbal children who communicate in very complex ways with languages other than words. Communicative musicality also resonates with the significance of rhythmic patterns for very young children learning to anticipate sequences and predict patterns. The understandings that accompany these developing abilities to anticipate, plan and predict allow young children to experience and develop greater control of themselves, others and the wider environment. The ways in which children's developing feelings of self-control, confidence and competence are managed has implications for children's emotional, social and cognitive development and learning as children's self-concepts will influence their actual competence. In this sense cognition and emotion are intertwined; they are two sides of the same coin (Vygotsky, 1986).

The children in these events communicate in a range of rhythmic and feeling-thinking bodily-based ways that extend beyond any exclusively narrow focus on words. Yet words are important in their play. Words can name feelings felt in bodies, so can invite the exploration of feelings and emotions. Words are tools for thinking and feeling (Vygotsky, 1986). But, as we see very graphically in event 20 words are not identical with experiencing feelings. Ideas and feelings are expressed and communicated in languages of tone, pulse and rhythm, which are bodily-based and sometimes supplemented with verbal language.

Mixed-age eating-together times were regular ritualistic routines at mid-morning, midday and mid-afternoon times in Northbridge centre. These routines consisted of children sitting around tables, eating and drinking together. The round-shaped tables seemed to connect the children physically in these teacher-controlled arrangements. The following two events, observed about 3 weeks apart, illuminate how talking, chanting, singing, gaze, posture and other invisible systems of communication strengthened the connections among the children, with and without adult involvement.

Event 22: Chanting Rhyme Together

Background

This event includes teachers and children chanting in unison. The song script is teacher-initiated and largely predetermined. However the children add variation and complicate the script as, together, they attempt to create sense and meaning (Vygotsky, 1986) from the chanted words.

> Fifteen three to four-year-old children sit, moving, jiggling while waiting, at two round tables, two teachers at one and one at the other. I sit on a child-sized chair nearby, camcorder in hand, directed mainly at the one table with two teachers. Four of these seven children are older, articulate, near-four year olds.

Teacher Ali is in charge:

Teacher Ali:	"Okay." [she begins the familiar, teacher led, group chant that involves the children joining in the chanting and doing the body actions]
Teacher Ali:	"I can hear my hands go x x x." [3 times, clapping sounds]
	"I can hear my tongue go x x x." [3 times tongue clicking sounds]
	"But I can't hear my shoulders go x x x." [silent shoulder shrugging]
Olaf:	"I can." (4 years, 9 months)
Tom:	"I can hear my shoulders go." (4 years, 1 month)
	[Teacher Ali ignores these comments and continues with more lines]:
	"I can hear my lips go x x x." [lip smacking sound]
	"I can hear my teeth go x x x." [teeth biting sound]
	"But I can't hear my hair go x x x." [head nodding movement]
Olaf:	"I can hear my head going."
Tom:	"I can, I can hear my brains going."
	The two teachers laugh, and teacher Ali continues the chant:
	"I can hear my feet go x x x." [stamping sounds, they stamp feet]
	"I can hear my nose go x x x." [Snorting breathing in sounds]
	"But I can't hear my eyes go x x x." [blinking eyelids]
	Three children (Tom, Olaf, Cheryl (3 years, 7 months)) in unison:
	"I can", "I can", "I can."

Anna, the oldest (4 years, 11 months), disagrees: "I can't", almost siding with the teacher. Young Sally (2 years, 3 months), seated between Tom and Olaf smiles, seeming to agree that she too can hear her silent self. For a few minutes Tom continues shaking his head, shrugging his shoulders and listening to his own silent movements.

Analysis and Discussion

Feeling and Listening to Body-Selves

The musically rhythmic chanted and sung rhyme connected children and teachers as a group (Freeman, 2001; Trevarthen, 2002). Communication was mediated by rhythm in word tone and expressed in body language. Children *spun off* each other, contributing feelings and thoughts that influenced their togetherness and the emergence of shared consciousness and understandings. While initially only Olaf and Tom heard their shoulders, in the next round Cheryl also heard and felt her eyes blinking. These children were listening to feelings intra-subjectively in their own bodies while also inter-subjectively influencing each others' listening. This growing awareness of subjectively-felt physical feelings comes close to recognising, naming and being able to talk about more complex equally invisible feelings and emotions that are also felt in and with bodies.

The implications of conversations around feelings, emotions, and naming feelings with words are enormous, potentially opening up the complex field of emotions for conversations and explorations that may mediate the development of self-understandings and emotional regulation. Emotional learning is partly addressed through simply naming felt emotions. Emotional awareness also requires that

children learn to listen to their subjective feelings in their bodies and further develop awareness of feelings as processes. Feelings do involve processes that shift and change within contexts. They are not the static states of being that word labels can convey. The children in this event were beginning to investigate their feeling states in relation to words with no teacher support other than the freedom to voice ideas.

Almost in a reversal of roles and power, these teachers laughed at the children's interpretations of the meanings and rules of the words. The youngest children watched and imitated the older children listening intently to the feelings and sounds of their bodies moving internally. Tight facial expressions made children's concentrated thinking visible. They thought about the meanings of the chanted words and listened for incongruities between the words and their body feelings. Despite children's interests further exploration of body feelings was not picked up on and pursued by the teachers. In contrast to the children's interest in bodily- felt feelings, socially acceptable feelings around turn-taking, not hurting and saying sorry were observed in all three centres. I did not observe any teacher- child discussions that might explore and support children's awareness of their own feelings by listening to their internal body feelings. Basic emotions that teachers might discuss with children include states such as anger, joy, sadness, fear, happiness, etc.

The developmental process whereby children learn about word meanings from initially sensing the feelings of words is described by Vygotsky (1986): "The relation between thought and word is a living process; thought is born through words. A word devoid of thought is a dead thing…the connection between thought and word…emerges in the course of development, and itself evolves" (p. 255). Olaf, Tom and Cheryl asserted considerable peer group agency in thinking about the meaning and feeling of the words (Corsaro, 1985, 1997). They seemed to mix hearing and thinking with feeling. Together these children disagreed with the intended meaning of the words of the rhyme thereby challenging the accepted rules of the teacher-determined status quo, a brave initiative for relatively powerless children. Yet they did this without antagonism or divisiveness so that the group togetherness was not threatened. The teachers laughed openly showing appreciation and enjoyment of the children's thinking and feeling-based questioning. Like most adults in my observations and experience they did not follow up with any discussion or encouragement for children to explore bodily- felt emotions.

In this event layers of meanings and relationships all contributed to creating a web-like mosaic of group cohesiveness. Contradictions, expressed, for example, in the children challenging the word meanings by comparing their feelings, illuminated both the power balance and developmental differences in word usage between teachers and children, and between children and children. Most of the younger children felt the sense in the words while the oldest child Anna, like the teachers, thought about word meaning. These contradictions in children's understandings of meaning and feeling in words and bodies motivated the continued enthusiastic and playful involvement of both children and teachers in the chanting activity. From an activity theory perspective contradictions create the edge that motivates and propels play forward. But the communication in this event involved more than contradictions between word sense and meaning. Communication included the proto-linguistic

rhythmic movements – the communicative musicality and mousike – that seemed to connect the group physically. Less visible, but no less important, layers of historical and cultural conditions around the eating-together activity also contributed to the group communication and cohesiveness. These conditions included the rituals around the etiquette of eating together such as sitting around a table, waiting to be served, turn-taking, table manners and chanting of sung rhymes.

Minutes later, several children playfully re-created aspects of the rhyme's body-feeling awareness focus, as the following researcher memo illustrates.

> Tom, after putting a sandwich into his mouth, puts his hands under the table and exclaims, chanting playfully to all: "I have no ha-ands." He then pulls them out, waves arms in the air, smiling saying "twooo". John (4 years), seated beside Tom has been watching and smiling and he immediately does likewise, imitating Tom perfectly and looking at teacher A as he chants: "I have no ha-ands". He gets no response, so John repeats: "I have no ha-ands", using the same chanting tone as Tom. This time the teacher responds by asking him how he eats with no hands. John coyly pulls out one hand to show her, smiling as if this is a joke. Does the hand play have links with the body chanting 3–5 minutes earlier? No hands, no sounds, no hearing? Meanwhile, Olaf quietly covers and uncovers his eyes, seeing and not seeing. He repeats this three times. No one notices or comments. Has the rhyme's focus on body parts and senses enhanced and created a sort of zone of proximal development in relation to children's body awareness? (Memo).

Analysis and Discussion

Repeating and Imitating Body Feelings

These children replayed layers of imitation in imitating each other and repetitively recreating the words, actions, rhythm and chanting tone used earlier in the group song-chant while feeling the experience. As in the song-chant this play also centred on children naming and rethinking feelings in their own bodies. Again the teachers did not pursue these children's interests in the feelings in their bodies. This idea of young children sitting with feelings, thinking and beginning to reflect on how their bodies feel may be a huge gap in practice, not only in early childhood education but more generally. Despite emotions and feelings being integral to cognition and learning the field of emotions has been overlooked in much research and writing about young children's learning. Within the field of education cognition has been prioritised and cut off from emotion (Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013). Yet as Vygotsky states "…affect is the alpha and omega, the first and last link, the prologue and epilogue of all mental development" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 227, cited by Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013, p. 201). Humans are fundamentally emotional and social beings.

The learning and teaching of emotional awareness seems to be a huge and neglected field and therefore an important area for further research. The feeling of emotions also extends much deeper than simply naming feelings with words. Exploring the feeling of emotions suggests children learning to notice, attend, sit with, think about, and feel experiences deeply, with and without words, both inside

themselves and in relation to others and the wider context. Emotional awareness in this sense is more than simply the social regulation of emotions. The ability to be open to recognising and feeling a range of emotions, without falling apart, mediates feelings of aliveness (Eigen, 1981).

The following event also occurred during a waiting for food time when the children were waiting to be served food one lunch-time. It is an example of child- initiated spontaneous rhyming chanting that did not involve teachers directly. Name play was a fairly frequent 4-year old teasing, joking phenomenon. It was particularly interesting because names, as personal special words, are likely to acquire subjectively felt meanings, contributing to children's developing identities and personalities. Children played with sounds as well as the meanings of names. They sometimes teased and sometimes improvised experimentally with sounds, rhyme and rhythm.

Event 23: Name Play

Background

Northbridge centre: This name-play event was introduced by 4 year olds and mediated them creating their own peer-group *togetherness*, while Anna starts playing with name sounds and the others pick it up.

Olaf:	"Tom, you've moved".
Anna:	"You know what Tom's really called? He's called Lom, Olaf's really called Lollaf".
Olaf:	"Sammy's really called Spammy".
Sammy:	"No Wammy".
Peta:	"Eeta, no Weeta and Dolly's called Polly, no Wally. Byman [Simon] Pope. My name is called Geeta".
Sammy:	"My name is Wammy". [repeats 3x, to everyone]
Olaf:	"I'm Lollaf".
Anna:	"I'm Panna".
Tom:	"Tom's name is called crrrrrrrr…"[moving chair a lot, while making sounds, rather than words]
Sammy:	"My name is called Andewope, I'm Andewope".
Tom:	"I'm Gwandelope".
Sammy:	"I'm Ropeerope".
Tom:	"I'm Hairyhair".
Sammy:	"I'm Photograph".
Tom:	"I'm Motograph".
Anna:	"And my name is Wupwupglee".

Analysis and Discussion

Names, Rhymes and Word Play

The name play began with rhyming words, before moving onto sounds, when Tom became "crrrrrrrr". This led on to complicated word creations, both with and without meaning, rhyme and rhythm, before becoming quite playfully absurd. This play was not as linear as it reads. The children spoke quickly, intersubjectively, dialogically, and chaotically in tune with each other, using their imaginations to create sounds and meanings in a range of nonsense names. The names they created and gave each other conjured up absurd images, perhaps freeing these children from the constraints associated with being their sensible real names. The children played agentically with the rules for words and names and the rules for play, clearly asserting their personhood. For example, Sammy refused to be called Spammy, substituting Wammy, while Olaf accepted his given name was Lolaf, and proceeded to announce this to all. Interestingly, Anna was both first and last speaker, almost symmetrically and poetically rounding out the event.

This play with their names mediated children's individual and group awareness, agency, and consciousness. The use of naming words mediated individual self-awareness becoming a social process, in this case in the co-creation of a rhythmically rhyming and aesthetically appealing group poem. Importantly for social emotional learning self-other awareness is fundamental to the learning of empathy.

Play with renaming selves was a common playful occurrence in all three early childhood centres in this study. This name play exuded pulse, tone, and narrative in rhythm and rhyme. The communicative musicality was integral to these children's playful interactions. The communicative play varied from subversive and humorous to aesthetically appealing tone and sound combinations that combined meaning with feeling as in the previous chanting rhyme event.

Words including names offer great possibilities for creative play for children constrained physically by chairs and tables. More formal planned and teacher- initiated music sessions also featured in the observations of children being playful, as in the following event.

Event 24: Playful Music Session

Background

Eastbridge. Two to three- year- old toddlers dominated the mixed age (1–5 years) composition of children at Eastbridge centre. Consequently, the pre-verbal playful communication of toddlers was a feature in the Eastbridge data. The following event illustrates how these teachers also communicated bodily, rhythmically, musically and playfully.

Inside, on the carpeted mat-time area; this was a regular teacher-led morning musical mat-time session with a mixed-aged group of about fifteen 1–5 year olds, (all the children present, except those sleeping), plus four teachers. I sit nearby video camera in hand.

Teacher Kat, seated on a low stool, strums her guitar to call children to music mat time. The other teachers sit on the floor in a circle with the children.

Cleo (4 years): "Now can we do um um Puff Puff the Magic Dragon with no words and just the actions?" [to teacher Kat who's still strumming her guitar]
Teacher Kat: "Puff the Magic Dragon [she bends down and faces Cleo] doesn't have any actions."

Soft laughter from teachers

Cleo: "No but, can we do Puff the Magic Dragon?"
Teacher Kat: "Yeah, we'll do Kentucky first."

Analysis and Discussion

Actions and Words

The teachers laughed at Cleo's request for the actions only in a song that, unlike other songs, had no contrived actions. In all three centres teachers were observed laughing both with and at children in similar ways. I wondered whether the teachers had misunderstood Cleo's reference to actions. She may have been asking to be allowed to stand up, to dance a little and move physically with the singing rather than sitting on the floor as was common practice. Her body did move intercorporeally with others, and the music, when the teachers sang Puff later while sitting on the floor. I considered the possibility that Cleo may have been asking to be allowed to feel free to move her body with the music perhaps standing and thereby creating her own musical actions. She may also have been asking for gentle music rather than the physically exuberant Kentucky dance style with which the session began. Importantly Cleo felt free to ask and assert her desires despite the possibility that they were misinterpreted.

Event 24 continues:

All stand in a rough circle and the song starts, teacher Kat playing the tune, other teachers singing the words

Teachers: "We're going to Kentucky, we're going to a fair to see a senorita with flowers in her hair."

Children and teachers bump each other, shaking and wriggling hips and bumping bottoms purposely, doing the actions for the words.

"Well shake it baby shake it, shake it all you can"…

Cleo and Bob (3 years, 9 months) next to each other bump each others' bodies; a lot of physical contact, soft rough and tumble with laughter, a "bodies joking" language. They

latch onto teacher Ann's legs and won't let go, hugging her knees. Teacher Ann has difficulty "controlling" their physical clinging.
"Shake it like a milkshake, until we all go Bang!!!"

All suddenly sit down on the floor.

Analysis and Discussion

Teachers Having Fun, Rhythmically

Cleo, dancing, laughing and hugging teacher Ann's legs, had earlier expressed this desire to listen, move, act and not sing. She wanted to experience and feel the music subjectively and bodily. In holding onto teacher Ann's legs she and Bob possibly felt safely connected to each other, as well as to the tall tree-like adult who grounded them, amidst the wild body-shaking and jumping that was all around and in them too. They did laugh and bump each other becoming part of the exuberant performance.

The teachers showed their enjoyment of this teacher-initiated and directed music session. They too laughed, sang loudest and moved most (though if allowance is made for size, the children proportionately moved more). The dancing, bumping, actions described in the song words added to and exaggerated the physically expressed body communication of the dancing teachers and children. In this way words added complexity to danced narratives.

Playfulness dominated the expressive bodily communication of this music session. Teachers' and children's bodies communicated playfully, fairly freely, and wildly, intercorporeally connected, as together they enacted the sung words and danced, exemplifying the *corporeal turn* (Ruthrof, 2000). This corporeal turn may be understood as a reaction to the linguistic turns' over-valuing of words. Children's playful communication involves much more than words. It includes bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1968) Thus, "…meaning is not restricted to linguistic expressions but is a part of every perceptual performance by which we constitute our world" (Ruthrof, 2000, p.11).

Event 24 continues:

The children all sit on the floor in a large loose circle. Cleo and Bob let go of teacher Ann, and sway gently when the song changes to "Puff the Magic Dragon…"

Teacher Mary sits on floor with 3 children half lying over her lap. Bree (4 years) has a teddy bear, which she dances with, holding it as a "partner" for the Wibbly Wobbly song. The teachers lead and go around the circle addressing and including every child's name in the repetitive wibbly wobbly song:
"Wibbly wobbly woo an elephant sat on you.
And wibbly wobbly below, an elephant sat on Cleo.
Wibbly wobbly wob, an elephant sat on Bob.
And wibbly wobbly wee, an elephant sat on Bree…"

The children move in wobbly ways.

One child starts shaking her head from side to side, hair swinging, others follow, catching the idea and imitating her.
The session ends with morning tea-time, hand washing rituals.

Analysis and Discussion

Name Play Again: Words and Actions

The inclusion of every child's name in the Wibbly Wobbly song re-emphasises the power of words, especially names. Each child's name was matched with a nonsense rhyming word, sung mainly by the teachers, but valued by the whole group. The singing felt like a welcoming acceptance ritual that brought each child into the group and the song. Individual children smiled and laughed as their names and matching rhymes were sung. This inclusion of all individual's names in a group song seemed to add substance to the group as a sharing community to which all the named individual's belonged. Unconstrained by sitting on the floor, children and teachers moved their upper bodies, swaying with the sung music, lying on and over each other, connected very physically and relaxingly, safely held together as a group by music and movement.

While I observed teachers having fun, dancing and moving with children, in all three centres, not all teachers were as physically relaxed, or wildly playful as this younger group of Eastbridge teachers, most of whom were in their twenties.

Analysis and Discussion

Bodily Intersubjectivity: Intercorporeity

Communicative musicality and vitality became increasingly dominant themes as I reflexively observed, questioned and came to some understandings of children's experience of playful communication, through my own subjective mirroring processes. An initial theoretical separation of verbal from non-verbal categories of communication was unhelpful. Movement expressed with vitality affect, in gesture, tone, pulse, rhythm, and feeling always accompanied words (Ruthrof, 2000; Stern, 2004, 2010). Much communication was expressed intercorporeally in moving bodies, sometimes with sounds that were not words, such as laughter, giggles and a wide range of vocal exclamations, including babbling. While words can enable the expression of complex thinking and feeling these children and teachers also communicated in complex ways with movement and rhythm and sometimes sounds and words. They gestured and used their whole bodies, including facial expressions, particularly gaze to make contact with others, to communicate. Dancing together connected the children and the teachers in the movement of music. This language of movement exists prior to words; it is the language of emotion and rhythm. Movement

accompanies, and adds feelings to words with emotion, in motion, in action (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). Movement as action proceeds words (Vygotsky (1986).

The music session exemplifies how boundaries and separations and between individuals, between external and internal, subject and object, are not clear and distinct. The rhythm, gestures, sung words and touch blurred boundaries between the dancers. Children and teachers moved chaotically as a group of individuals expressing externally their internal feelings and thoughts, yet connected by mediating sounds, feelings, and rhythm. In this event the ever changing and always emergent movement that was visible in the dance, yet invisibly felt and heard in the music mediated and connected individuals together in group activity (Zinchenko, 2001).

The following three events also occurred outdoors with the sky providing a roof for the ground and including the figures of children coming together in a range of playful ways.

Event 26: Friendship in a Tyre

Background

Swings are historically associated with childhood, fun, and recreation. This event graphically and metaphorically illustrates a complexly- connected activity system. At the start of the event the players appear physically connected with each other by the tyre on which three of them sit in a centrifugal-like tyre-swing system, while the fourth, Bo, stands outside the circle touching as she sporadically pushes the tyre swing.

Three four-year-old girls sit facing inwards towards each other on a horizontally-hung truck tyre swing, legs threaded through the middle, knees touching. Three ropes that attach the tyre to a beam above act as hand-holds between each child, while also suspending the tyre in space apparently connected to both earth and sky. The tyre swing moves continuously like an atom, assisted by Bo (4 years) who pushes it. I am seated nearby.

Erratic dialogue adds to the erratic swinging. While conversing the children swing in many different directions, circular, up and down, side to side.

Sally: "I've got shorts on."
Jo: "No I have."
Flo: "Just cause I've got the dress on that I had yesterday."

[Laughter from all three]
All chant together: "Higher, higher." (child Bo pushes energetically)

Sally: "The pants are on fire."
Researcher: "You have strong arms Bo" (I respond to Bo, the 'worker' who's quietly met my gaze while pushing the swing higher)

Flo: "me too, I can throw two apples up and some other things all at the same time…"
Researcher: "Superwoman."
Flo: "Yeah." [All talk about their strong arms]
Flo: "I'm your friend and you are mine and…"
Sally: "I'm your friend too, and…what about Bo?" [no answer]

Analysis and Discussion

Group Dynamics

The moving swing, laughter, and words add meaning and richness to the activity. Seeds are sown that link with past and future connections. For example, themes addressed in this very short excerpt, and picked up on earlier and later, include: clothes (shorts, hats), competition around friendship and power – strength, rhyming chanting words (fire and higher), and connecting laughter. Bo seems to be ignored; no-one acknowledges her as a friend. As the swing pusher she stands physically apart from the others, outside the inner swing circle.

Event 26 continues:

Flo: "Hey Sally, your hat is from home and my hat is from home and yours (Jo) isn't" [harking back to Sally and Jo wearing shorts while
All chant together: "Higher higher higher!"

Bo takes off her hat while pushing and gives it to Sally to hold,

Flo: "Bo potae, potae Bo" [authoritatively] ('potae' is Māori for 'hat').
Flo: "Bo potae!, potae Bo!" [loudly]

Bo then takes her hat back from Sally who holds it towards her, laughing and smiling, she puts it on her head. [following Flo's command]
Flo giggles as Bo pushes them higher.

Sally: "That's not funny, I need my shoes on."
Flo [to Bo]: "Sally needs her shoes on so let Sally get off."

Bo stops pushing. She picks up Sally's shoes and passes one to Sally, Flo intercepts and takes the second shoe.

Flo [to Bo]: "No, I'll give it to Sally." [taking over from Bo]

Sally puts her shoes on and Bo wanders off

Flo: "Now let's go like this, we push ourselves okay" [they try to all push with their toes while sitting in the tyre swing; it hardly moves]
Jo: "I want to get out

Flo: "Yeah me too, we're all squashed, a bit of a squashy squash"

Flo gets out, then gets back in

Jo: "It'll be too squashed."
Flo: "Right now let's go round and round."
Sally: "Oh no my shoes comed off."

Flo reaches towards the ground for Sally's shoes.

Sally: "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, leave them off. They'll come off again."

Flo gets off the swing and stands beside it.
Flo takes hold of the swing and imitating Bo's style, runs around in circles winding up the ropes. It's hard work; Sally gets off the tyre and helps Flo.
Jo is left sitting alone on the swing.
They all laugh as they wind the swing up, then let go. The swing spins.
Flo dizzily sits on the ground; Sally joins beside her; Jo sits alone in the swing. Bo has gone elsewhere.

Analysis and Discussion

Power-Play

This group frequently play together in this chatty and competitive way on this tyre swing. They laugh and use words and bodies to connect and communicate as a unit. The movement of the tyre swing further mediates this communication, adding to their words, laughter and physical movement. All wear the regulatory sunhats, which they call by the Māori name: *potae.*

Rules and relations are challenged around the wearing of sunhats as Flo asserts a controlling power-over role, particularly towards Bo the worker-pusher. Flo seems to delight in extending her power and becoming like teacher C who's earlier told them all to "put your potae on!". This power-play adds tension to the play. It changes direction as children combine and swap power roles turning the conversation towards comparing other personal clothing items: shorts, dresses and shoes. Bo is further excluded in being ignored in the talk about friends, despite her pivotal role as swing pusher without which the swinging activity would cease. Bo does eventually walk away from the group/system. The swinging activity gradually disintegrates leaving only Jo on the swing as Sally joins Flo who sits dizzily on the ground.

For the duration of this event the swing kept on moving calmly, continuously, in circles as well as to and fro seemingly creating invisible felt ripples over a changed and charged group system. When the pushing ceased the swing gradually wound down and stopped too. The positioning as pusher-worker and exclusion of Bo in this

event raises questions around the role of teachers in facilitating all children's inclusion in free play. These teachers did not seem to notice the sometimes subtle ways in which children like Bo were excluded.

The following two events also illuminate systems of connection between people, in this case including the teacher-mother-caregiver with preverbal children. The interconnected, emergent, process-nature of children's playfulness and the intersubjectively embodied qualities in the communication of two very young friends stand out. Em and Kate are 14 and 15 months old respectively.

Event 27: Toddling and Falling

Background

Eastbridge. A series of playful events involving Em (14 months) and Kate (15 months), occurred in an afternoon over a 1 h period. The full-day mixed-age childcare centre is located on the first floor of an apartment building. The outside rooftop space is partitioned from the inside by a wall of bi-folding glass doors which are open, allowing the children freedom to wander between inside and outside. The weather is fine, though slightly chilly on an early spring day. Teacher Mo, standing and watching in the space between in and outside, is also Em's mother.

Kate comes toddling towards the inside from outside; she hesitates at the door boundary between in and outside before toddling, waddling, straight towards Em who lies sprawled out on carpeted floor surrounded by four pillows having intentionally let her body fall, and landed beside them. Kate laughs, a joyful staccato cackle that matches her enthusiasm. Teacher Mo stands at one side of the inside-outside boundary between the two children, openly holding them in her gaze. She welcomes and further encourages Kate inside by bending low and smiling at her. Several older children play in the vicinity.

Teacher Mo, to Em who's playing with feelings of falling: "Ohhh!, oh up up again, up again, here she comes again."

Em makes squealing sounds of fun while falling gently forward onto the soft carpet. She falls away from Kate, as though Kate has pushed her [Kate hasn't].

Teacher Mo: "Go get Kate Em."

Kate begins falling forward too, imitating Em, alongside Em.

Teacher Mo: "Oh, she's gone crash, Kate's gone crash, crash."

Kate lies face and chest on the floor bottom up in the air. Em continues falling, laughing, squealing excitedly.

Max (3 years), comes over, says something to Kate, gently puts his head on the ground near Kate's head and takes a stick from Kate's hand. He then gets up and wanders off.

Em, watching Kate, lies down imitating Kate, placing her head near Kate's.

Teacher Mo: "Go, go, go, Kate, go." (Kate watches Em)

Kate rolls over like an oval ball onto her back; she lies there happily relaxing.

Em watches Kate and also tries to roll over; but ends up lying on her side, on the softly carpeted floor.

Teacher Mo: "Oh are you going to have a lie down?"

Teacher Mo comes over and kneels beside them.

Teacher Mo: "Okay night night."
"You want a pillow?"

Teacher Mo places a pillow beside Em who puts her head on it, side on, for a few seconds. Em sits up and Kate puts her head and half her body on the same pillow.

Teacher Mo: "Kate's got your pillow."

Em puts her head on another pillow. Kate, watching, moves her head and body to another pillow.

Teacher Mo: "Oh, Kate's got a red pillow".

Both children lie, cheeks on pillows, a metre apart from each other, bottoms in the air, half on sides, watching and attuned to each other, having fun, pretend sleeping together, while Teacher Mo watches over.

Em watches as Kate moves to yet another pillow.

Teacher Mo: "Now Kate's got the blue pillow."
Teacher Mo claps her hands together as she chants to Kate: "Go, go, go, go."

Kate half stands and lets her body fall forward purposefully, onto the carpet.

She laughs, then rolls her small flexibly soft body onto her back, (repeating the actions from the start of this event).

Analysis and Discussion

Relating Intra-and Intersubjectively in Transitional Space

Teacher Mo is initially physically positioned at the edge of the entrance between inside and outside spaces, watching and holding the children psychically. With calling words and encouraging gestures she supports Kate to gently toddle inside to cross the outside: inside boundary past Mo's physical body to be with Em in another space. Bodies mediated and connected these toddlers inter- and intra-subjectivally as together they used their whole bodies and senses to communicate and relate. They had fun together; free-falling, letting their bodies flop and drop, lying down, rolling over, connected to the mat, the pillows, the felt space around them, teacher: mother Mo, and each other. Teacher Mo used few words, sounds, and body signs to further mediate their subjectivity in relation to each other and to her. With words and actions she reminded them of each other, of their separateness, and their togetherness. The toddlers laughed after each fall, seemingly at the playful, gravitational sensation of letting themselves go and falling, safely. Laughter seemed to connect Em and Kate further as sounds added to actions.

Their bodies seemed to sing joyfully as they watched and copied each other and felt themselves and each other fall gently and rhythmically while also testing gravity. These very young friends showed considerable social awareness in taking turns to repetitively let their bodies relax and just fall, sharing the anticipation while simultaneously seeming to use their bodies experimentally as objects. Em had initiated the event by free-falling onto the pillow-surrounded carpet and as if in a choreographed natural conclusion to this first sequence, Kate completed the free-falling phase of what had become a larger play.

Teacher Mo also behaved repetitively and imitatively, though instead of letting her physical body fall she used words that elaborated, enveloped and anticipated the toddlers' actions as verbal echoes like "go, go, go…Kate's got your pillow". In this sense words (and thought) followed actions and feelings, yet words with tone and rhythm also seemed to embody actions. This linking of thought, words, feelings and action is described by Vygotsky (1986, p.255):

> The connection between thought and word, however, is neither preformed nor constant. It emerges in the course of development and itself evolves. To the biblical '"In the beginning was the word," Goethe makes Faust reply, "In the beginning was the deed." The intent here is to detract from the value of the word, but we can accept this version if we emphasise it differently: In the *beginning* was the deed. The word was not the beginning – action was there first; it is the end of development, crowning the deed.

While Mo modelled the use of words as actions, deeds and thoughts the toddlers played with the actions, possibly learning about words, feelings and thoughts by hearing and making associations. Together with teacher Mo they co-created a shared third space and played.

Event 27 continues:

> Em, watching Kate, who's lying on her back on the carpet, gets up, toddles over to the nearby music area, picks up a string of small bells, toddles back and gives them to Kate. Kate, now sitting, takes the bells and proceeds to first shake, then finger, exploring them. Em toddles off towards the outside doors where she meets teacher Mo.
>
> Teacher Mo: "What's happened to Kate Em, where's Kate?"
>
> Em turns and looks towards Kate who's sitting on the floor absorbed in the bells.
>
> Teacher Mo: "There she is, she's got the bells."
>
> Kate hearing this looks up, towards them.
>
> Em turns and toddles back towards Kate.
>
> Kate gets half up, crawls a few metres, then standing she begins toddling arms outstretched towards Em who now stands waiting, watching Kate approaching. Kate puts her outstretched arms around Em hugging her. Both squeal happily, playfully.
>
> Teacher Mo: "Ooh that's nice, are you going to have a kiss and a cuddle?" [commenting rather than questioning]
>
> Em reciprocates by hugging Kate and both unsteady toddlers fall down softly, Em first.
>
> Em makes a gently protesting cry.
>
> Kate pats Em's head soothingly.
>
> Em gets up and toddles away while Kate lies relaxedly on her back, on the floor (She seems to enjoy this position).

Analysis and Discussion

Environment: The Good-Enough Teacher

The enabling qualities of physical environment with space and soft carpet and the complexity of connections between the teacher and children stand out in this event. Teacher Mo is a *good-enough* teacher (who happens to also be Em's mother). The metaphorical concept of a *good-enough mother* referred to by Winnicott (1974) encompasses the felt and physical environment that the caregiver (mother) provides for the infant. Similarly ECCE teachers as caregivers are *good-enough* when they ensure that infants and young children in their care can feel safe enough to securely explore the environment. Boundaries between people include emotions and feelings so extend beyond visible skin and include the physical environment. Mo helped create the environmental conditions that enabled Em and Kate to connect and communicate with each other, with herself, and with the physical environment. This then enabled the emergence of a shared *holding environment* for both Em and Kate (Winnicott, 1960). The space became a play space where the toddlers felt sufficiently secure to be able to playfully let go and feel their bodies fall without fear. Mo further created these environmental and emotionally supportive conditions by gently encouraging the children to use objects such as the pillows, the carpet, and entire space. Her playful words and actions supported and further mediated their intra and intersubjectively mediated actions.

Both Em and Kate used gestures, gaze and whole body movements to communicate very actively their playful thoughts and feelings. The toddlers' purposeful playfulness included: their alternating imitation of each other, repetition, turn-taking, squealing joy and the sharing of objects like cushions that also signified lying down and sleep. They expressed ideas about sleeping (heads on pillows), gift giving, receiving (bells), showing affection (hugging, kissing and head patting), and the thrill of falling (forwards onto carpet). Their active bodily communication stood in stark contrast to the teacher's use of words as well as actions, to calmly mediate and interpret the toddlers' pre-verbal gestures and body signals. Teacher Mo's presence as well as her actions contributed to creating the secure environment that further mediated the toddlers' playfully intersubjective communication.

The toddlers watched and imitated each other repetitively. These patterns of repetitive imitation resonate with the ways in the mirror neuron system (MNS) functions (Gallese, 2009). Very simply mirror neurons fire both when the child performs an act (falling, laughing) and when that child sees the act performed by another person. The MNS mirrors actions. It has been suggested that the MNS is fundamental for the development of other awareness including empathy. Teacher Mo continually reinforced these toddlers' social self-other awareness by reminding them of each other's separateness and connectedness. It is likely that she also mediated these children learning empathy through modelling empathy in her practice. Teacher Mo verbally and physically supported the toddlers' cuddling, kissing and patting actions. These pre-verbal children expressed kindness and potentially empathetic caring in their actions. The teacher's words as actions reinforced these behaviours and united them as a unit, together with her and the physical environment.

Event 28: Sliding and Hiding

The same day, 20 min later.

The slide is teacher Mo's play focus for Em and Kate. It is next to a flexible canvas tunnel-tube. The tunnel, the slide and the large boxes, which form steps up the slide, mediate children's playful communication. These objects also signify adult conceptions of children's play.

Jo (4 years, 10 months) is hiding in one end of the canvas tunnel. He is dressed in a leopard suit. The tunnel moves with his movements and this attracts the attention of Em. Teacher Mo stands beside the slide, one arm outstretched, supporting Kate, who readies herself at the top of the slide. Em, standing a metre from the tunnel, points to it, looks at the teacher (her mother), and looks again at the tunnel, thereby initiating the teacher's talk.

Teacher Mo: "Who's in there Em? Is that Jo, is that Jo? Go and have a look, go and have a look Em."

Kate slides down the slide, she toddles towards the tunnel end. Em stands beside Kate, watching Kate.

Teacher Mo: "Em, I mean Kate, go and see who's in the tunnel. Who's in the tunnel? Who is it?"
Kate bends over, holding the tunnel edge, she kneels and positions herself half inside one end of the tunnel.
"Oh Kate who is it? Who is it?

Say boo to whoever's in the tunnel, say boo."

Jo: "Brrrr…" [growling]
Teacher Mo: "That was a funny sound that came out"
Jo at other end of tunnel from Kate, makes more high pitched noises: "Urrh urrh…"

Em watches Kate and the tunnel, Em toddles over and sees Jo at the other end of the tunnel. She makes no reaction but toddles over towards teacher Mo for a turn on the slide.
Jo runs out his end and away.
Kate looks out from the tunnel too late, too slow to see him disappear.

Teacher Mo: "Oh, who was it Kate? Who was it?
Kate: "Daar."
Teacher Mo: "Jo, was it" [then she rehears Kate, daar/dark]

"Is it dark in there? is it? It is dark?; are you going to go in?"

Analysis and Discussion

Transitional Space: Holding Environment (Winnicott, 1960, 1974)

Again teacher Mo used words and presence to actively mediate the continuity over time and space of an enabling *holding environment, a transitional and third space* where imagination and reality can co-exist. She used words, gaze and actions to

intersubjectively mediate the toddlers' active awareness of each other in her presence. Both Em and Kate used gestures and gaze to communicate very actively their motivating intentions and feelings.

These very young children and Jo used their bodies as the primary means of communication (Jo as a leopard did growl, as well as run). Teacher Mo used words that the toddlers understood. When she suggested that they look to see who was hiding they did so, peeping into the tunnel. Kate made a half intelligible comment, possibly explaining why she could not see who was in the tunnel. She said "daar, which the teacher interpreted as "dark". Teacher Mo also interpreted in Em's moving body her desire for a turn on the slide. The children's body movements were directed, like words, towards purposeful action (Merleau Ponty, 1962). Mo continued to use words providing a running commentary about their actions. She was as repetitive with her words as the toddlers were in their actions.

The playful hiding and finding activity united these children and teacher creating a *transitional play space* in which Jo at the centre of the play, hiding inside the tunnel, imaginatively became a powerfully growling leopard.

Different aims motivated the three groups: teacher Mo, the toddlers and Jo. Thus Jo and teacher Mo from positions of power developed and extended the playful hiding theme in their play and included the toddlers (Em and Kate) as a participating audience. Jo and the teacher understood the incongruity that made pretending not to know who was in the tunnel humorous for them. Jo, being almost 5 years old, could understand and play the joking 'hide and seek' role. However the toddlers seemed to be more focused on the separate physical elements in the play. They were preoccupied with immediate aims that required mastering physical skills such as sliding, climbing, walking, and bending (without falling over) to look in the dark tunnel. They seemed more present in their play and not aware of their potential role as audience or participants in the 'hide and seek' play that teacher Mo and Jo planned and played.

Event 28 continues:

Kate comes out of the tunnel edge and starts pushing a nearby toy pram to and fro.
Em is still toddling towards teacher Mo, both arms outstretched effectively communicating the message to be helped onto the first box-step up the slide.

Teacher Mo: "You'd like to have your turn on the slide now would you Em?"

Em starts climbing up the graduated boxes towards the top of the slide. Kate, meanwhile, starts climbing up the slide itself.

Teacher Mo: "Oh hullo, are you coming up the slide Kate?
You're coming up the slide."
She laughs at the incongruity of Kate going up, rather than down, the slide.

Kate gets to the top of the slide before Em. Teacher Mo helps her turn around and slide down. As Em starts to slide down, Kate starts to climb up again. They meet at the bottom, gently.

Analysis and Discussion

Transitional Physical Space: Inviting Play

Teacher Mo generously allowed Kate to safely play with the rules of sliding by climbing up the slide. She simultaneously informed Kate with pointed adult rhetorical humour of the usual way of using slides. Teachers wield considerable power in controlling children's freedom to playfully explore physical environments safely. In this case climbing up the slide was not only quicker than sliding down, climbing a smooth slope also required balancing skills. Climbing the *wrong* way provided another angle for Kate's exploratory learning about her body in relation to the physical environment and another context for asserting her self-ness while becoming confident and competent.

From a socio-cultural perspective the objects in the environment mediated these intersubjective connections inviting the children to slide, hide and play in concretely visible ways. The slide, the box steps, and the tunnel all mediated and contributed towards creating a *transitional space* where feelings of hiding, sliding, climbing, being lost, and feeling found could be safely played with. At times the physical environment seemed to merge with the children's bodies as they moved and physical objects in turn were moved. In this materially interactive way the physical environment and teacher Mo together embodied the good-enough mother concept as described by Winnicott (1974, p. 11). Human relational qualities such as gaze, body language, sounds and other communicative signs mediated and connected the children intersubjectivally and intimately with each other as well as intrasubjectivally with themselves. This felt connection was expressed in their agentic activity as they played securely with feelings of being in control while developing confidence and competence. Together the material objects and motivating actions of the players created a complexly dynamic activity system (Alcock, 2013).

It is the contradictions in people's actions within activity systems that motivates continued activity towards group goals (Engeström, 2015). The over-arching group goal seemed to be togetherness. Thus the play in this event evolved around activity with the tunnel and slide as connecting props for words, actions, feelings and imagination. Teacher Mo also connected the group activity with words and actions as she persisted in responsively interpreting the toddlers' understandings of abstract hiding and finding concepts while also assisting them with physical skills and including Jo in his shared pretend leopard play. Together the children and teacher-mother created a transitional play space of being, a secure holding space for all.

Summary

A feature that stood out in these playful events was the synchronous mirroring quality of children's intertwining movements. Their bodies spoke, moved and sang together with and without words. Movement, rhythm, gaze, facial expression, voice

tone, and other bodily-based ways of relating mediated children communicating and connecting intra-inter- and multi-subjectively, with each other and with the physical environment. Spoken, chanted and heard words added complexity to the thinking-feeling communicating bodies. Things in and of the physical environment further mediated children's playful communication. At times children appeared attached to each other, to the physical place and the things in it, and to the teacher/mother (in events 27–28). These feelings of attachment seemed to become distributed across children supporting expressions of belonging, connection and togetherness that emerged in their playful communication, in these events.

References

Alcock, S. (2013). Toddlers' complex communication: Playfulness from a secure base. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 14*(2), 179–190. doi:doi.org/10.2304/ciec.

Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Corsaro, W. A. (1997). *The sociology of childhood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Eigen, M. (1981). The area of faith in Winnicott, Lacan and Bion. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 62*(4), 413–433.

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Freeman, W. (2001). A neurobiological role of music in social bonding. In N. Wallin, B. Merker, & S. Brown (Eds.), *The origins of music* (pp. 411–424). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Gallese, V. (2009). Mirror neurons, embodied simulation, and the neural basis of social identification. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 519–536. doi:10.1080/10481880903231910.

Malloch, S., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Ruthrof, H. (2000). *The body in language.* London: Cassell.

Stern, D. (2004). *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Stern, D. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.

Trevarthen, C. (2002). Origins of musical identity: Evidence from infancy for musical social awareness. In D. H. D. M. R. MacDonald (Ed.), *Musical identities* (pp. 21–38). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Vadeboncoeur, J. A., & Collie, R. J. (2013). Locating social and emotional learning in schooled environments: A Vygotskian perspective on learning as unified. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 20*(3), 201–225. doi:10.1080/10749039.2012.755205.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1998). The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky. In R. W. Riebe (Ed.), *Child psychology* (Vol. 5). New York: Plenum.

Winnicott, D. W. (1960). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 41*, 585–595.

Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Zinchenko, V. P. (2001). External and internal: Another comment on the issue. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 135–137). Aahus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Part III
Infants and Toddlers Relating and Playing: Layers of Holding

A Holding Environment

Abstract This chapter and the following chapter 9 "Relational Fields and Context" are based on a research project exploring very young children's relational experiences in one ECCE setting which did not use primary or key care-giving systems. Puriri early childhood centre followed a philosophy of ecological sustainability which included principles of sustainability being applied to relationships in and with the whole environment, including people, material artefacts and ecological place. The individualism of formal primary caregiving systems did not fit with their sustainability philosophy. The research focus in this chapter involves deepening understandings and interpretations of very young children's emotional relational experiences in this ECCE centre.

Introduction

Babies and toddlers are the fastest growing age range enrolled in early childhood care and education (ECCE) services in Aotearoa-New Zealand (Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011). Consequently research on how they fare relationally, in group care, is both of interest and important for society. A wide range of research endorses the importance of relational security, frequently referred to as attachment security, for such very young children (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008). Patterns of relational security – attachment – developed in these early years have long-term implications for mental health and emotional wellbeing (Fonagy & Target, 2005, 2007). Primary, or key-caregiving seems to have become the early childhood sector's answer to concerns about very young children's (attachment security) experiences in ECCE services in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and elsewhere.

Puriri Centre

Primary, or key-caregiving systems, as the teachers in Puriri ECCE centre understood them, emphasised exclusively individualistic one-on-one relationships between children and teachers that would go against Puriri centre's sustainability philosophy. They did not want to prioritise such individualised relationships. Instead

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_8

they prioritised caring relationships across very small groups of very young children with teachers, in the physical area designated for children under 2-years-old.

This sort of shared care was also prioritisised across the larger group of children over 2-years-old. The smaller less populated under-twos' area became a secure containing space for the infants and toddlers who came to belong there, before later transitioning into the larger adjoining area, when they were about 2-years-old. In New Zealand-Aotearoa government funding subsidies and early childhood regulations are also tied to children being either under or over 2-years-old. The teachers in the under-twos' area were curious about how their babies and toddlers fared with no formal primary-caregiving systems of care. Hence this research project, initially suggested by them, was developed.

Sustainability related issues pervaded Puriri ECCE centre. Over the years and under the guidance of Mary, the owner-manager of Puriri centre, sustainability had become a foundational principle in both the centre documentation and in every-day practices. A few years earlier, Puriri centre had been involved in a research project exploring ecological practices in early childhood settings, from both Māori and western perspectives. This involvement affirmed their prioritising of sustainability and added impetus to the bicultural dimensions in their continually evolving sustainability philosophy, policies, and practices (Ritchie, 2013). The teachers at Puriri have more recently developed an education for sustainability plan which, being curriculum-based, is intended to directly inform pedagogical practices around curriculum planning, assessment of learning, and evaluation of the over-all programme. As a team, the teachers in this small centre worked collaboratively with each other and with their families. They also worked at developing meaningful connections with the local geographical community, including: individual neighbours, the local shopping centre and library, the Māori mental health unit with its wonderful trees which the children climbed; and a nearby area of regenerating bush, where the children had planted trees and picked up rubbish.

How ECCE teachers relate and communicate as a team is hugely influential for how ECCE centres function and feel as places. Three of the teachers at Puriri (teachers Jan, Van and Mary, the owner-manager), had worked together for over a decade. Furthermore these same three teachers had originally trained and later worked together as Montessori teachers. Two of these teachers now worked mainly with the group of children who were under-two-years-old. Despite assurances that they no longer followed Montessori pedagogy, I wondered how Montessori philosophy might have implicitly influenced these teachers' ways of working and relating as teachers.

Wondering

Part III consists of two chapters. As in Part II, events are presented in order to mediate, illuminate, illustrate and enliven theoretical explanations around what young children might be experiencing emotionally and relationally. The sections headed

analysis and discussion in Part II, that followed and were sometimes inserted during events, include the word *wondering* in Part III. This explicit emphasis on wondering is intended to provoke curiosity, questioning, and wonder in the reader, thereby enriching and opening towards further understandings of events, without striving after finite answers and explanations.

While we can never know another's experience, we can wonder about and come to some understandings, based on our observations and responses. The interpretive wonderings presented in this chapter do involve systematic analytic processes. They are grounded in observations and theories, in turn also influenced by wide reading and reflecting on exisiting research, as outlined in the research methods in chapter "Research Methods: Observing Experience in Two Projects (Parts II and III)". Though we cannot know another's experience, it seems important to open up spaces for wondering, particularly when the subjects of our wonder are very young children, who may not have the words to communicate their experiences, but can express themselves in body-based languages. This chapter addresses observed attachment-related concepts around very young children feeling securely held and therefore able to express themselves, to communicate and to share aspects of their experiences.

Feeling Held

The word *holding* is used in this book in the sense that (Winnicott, 1960a, 1974) used it to refer to the *holding environment* as more than maternal, physical holding. Holding enables the child to feel alive and awake to the world and to simply carry on *being*. A holding environment mediates the conditions that create children's experience of being and feeling securely and safely held. As feelings are felt in bodies a holding environment enables feelings of being held together internally, as well as externally, physically as well as psychically, and within the wider supportive world contexts. Well-held children can feel at ease, in and with time, able to simply carry on being and to explore their surroundings. They feel safely and securely held together. This concept of feeling held is a grounding, connected and open-to-the-world state-of-being that resonates with secure feelings of attachment and belonging (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Cassidy & Shaver, 2008; Music, 2010; Stern, 1985; Trevarthen, 2009; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001).

Experience as Thinking Feelings in Play

The following event represents one young child feeling held and free to energetically and repetitively swaddle and wrap a baby-doll in cloth. Feeling securely held enables her to communicate and reciprocally re-enact concepts around holding in her play. She seems to think her conscious and unconscious feeling-thoughts into

being with her body in her play actions. Multiple layers of conscious and unconscious, thinking-feeling are both visible and invisible. The holding environment, which includes caring teachers, mediates and enables the containing thinking-feeling processes that motivate this child's continued and almost obsessional, play. Like physical play, abstract thinking too involves fluid moving processes. Bion's (1962) theoretical concepts of *container-contained* add cognitive dimensions to understandings of the potentialities offered in this feeling-full play. When children feel well held, they can think their feelings in the activity of play.

Container-Contained

Container and contained as concepts refer to unconscious thinking (fitting together) processes (Bion, 1962; Ogden, 2004b). This event illustrates a young child's play world, both enabling and mediating symbolic thinking-feeling processes, in ways similar to adult dream worlds. The container enables the capacity for the unconscious psychological work of dreaming, and of playing. For young children play is a way of making meaning and sense of the world, of fitting parts together, and of communicating thoughts, both consciously and unconsciously. In a sense the container as a concept refers to the child's capacity for the work of thinking her feelings. As Ogden (2004a) explains: "The container is not a thing, but a process. It is the capacity for the unconscious psychological work of dreaming, [playing] … The contained, like the container, is not a static thing, but a living process that in health is continuously expanding and changing. The term refers to thoughts (in the broadest sense of the word) that are in the process of being derived from one's lived emotional experience" (p. 1356.). For dreaming I have substituted *playing*.

Thoughts emerge in containing and holding spaces. In the following event Nina's contained thinking seems to blend unconscious and conscious thoughts so that her unformulated thoughts are veiled in symbolism and played into being. She is working out theories concretely and symbolically as she physically tries bringing and fitting parts together, the contained with the container, the baby-doll with the wrapping quilt. The freedom in the environment holds and enables her to play with containing her unconscious and conscious, thinking-feeling, containing processes.

Event 1: Doll Wrapping

Background

Nina (18 months old) has been very engaged in the activity of doll wrapping over the past 2 weeks. Both I and the teachers have commented on Nina's obsession with doll wrapping; her involvement, persistence and concentration in the activity of wrapping a doll in various types of cloth wraps intrigues me. I wonder what

motivates this obsession. On this occasion Nina spends 15–20 very focussed minutes persisting with wrapping the baby-doll.

The semi-enclosed outside boundary space, where she plays, is a covered outside deck – floor. This space feels as if it's both in and outside, or neither; a roof and plastic see-through zipper walls offer protection from sun and rain. Sliding glass doors mark the physical boundary between in and outside. For children such as Nina who feel well held, this is a containing environment, slightly apart, yet also part of the wider building, and with flexible boundaries that people cross. A group of three one-year-old children and a teacher play in the covered sandpit nearby.

Today Nina carefully lays out two large scarves that are knotted together. Nina places a baby-doll on one scarf; she tries wrapping the scarves around the doll but the knot tying the scarves doesn't allow for neat wrapping. Two square scarves connected by a knot in one corner don't allow for tidy wrapping in the way that a symmetrical square scarf or blanket can.

Nina tugs the scarves out from under the baby-dolls legs. The doll looks heavy; it's a realistic rubber doll, about a third of her height. Nina looks busy and focussed. She's energetically absorbed in this very physical activity. Her whole body is actively engaged: wrapping, bending-over, across, crouching, and standing up.

After several frustrating failed attempts to wrap the baby symetrically, tightly and tidily, Nina abandons the scarves to one side and leaves the doll lying face down on the other side. She toddles inside, but returns quickly carrying a large square flannel cloth nappy, with which she resumes her doll wrapping activity. Nina now understands that two knotted together scarves won't work as well as one square cloth nappy.

She uses both hands to vigorously shake the nappy trying to lie it square and flat on the floor in front of her, but it is too big. She lets the nappy fall over her own head and body, perhaps trying it out for size, before re-shaking it. Realising that her hands can't stretch to hold two corners in a straight tight line, she loosely folds it to half a doubled-up side. The nappy then falls half awkwardly to the floor. Nina accepts this, places the baby-doll on it, and with furious energy wraps the doll as if it's a parcel, an impersonal object to be tightly swaddled and smothered, rather than a baby-doll needing nurturing. This furiously impatient style is not the caring way in which real babies are wrapped. Nina bends her whole body over the baby-doll on the nappy, at times squashing the baby-doll by lying on it. She simultaneously noisily self-talks her way with groans and semi-audible baby-talk words through the actions:

"my babeee, meeee, babeee meee, myyy, oooooh …."

Nina seems to be more focussed on struggling with the wrapping process than in playing with the doll as a baby-person-subject to be carefully held. I watch fascinated; she is aware that I'm watching and filming and looks towards me periodically, while also continuing her preoccupation with baby-doll wrapping. The surrounding area becomes busier with people.

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

Is Nina wrapping herself? She has recently begun dressing herself and fights physically with that difficult process, yet persists strongly. Finding places in clothes for arms, legs, fitting them all together and pulling socks and tricky shoes on, is challenging physically, (externally) and psychologically, (internally). Fitting this doll into the wrapping fabric metaphorical container is similarly challenging.

Perhaps Nina wants to be autonomously in charge of herself, and that includes dressing her own body. Without a body we are nobody. We have no self.

Perhaps Nina's also angry and jealous of the new baby that teacher Jan holds, instead of holding her?

Or is Nina simply experiencing struggles and frustrations around her daily experiences? Life's a struggle, communicating with words is challenging and frustrating for young children who are learning to speak, and understand far more than they can say. Hence Nina thinks and speaks her feelings symbolically, and with her body actions, in this very physically challenging busy play.

Event 1 continues

Teacher Jan arrives carrying new baby Sam (7 months). Teacher Jan sits down on the step near Nina, with baby Sam sitting to one side in her lap, watching Nina. Rod (18 months old, like Nina) follows teacher Jan and sits down beside her snuggling into her other side showing how he too wants to be close to teacher Jan. As if imitating Nina's baby wrapping he carefully tries to dress baby Sam's head with knitted leggings that look like an oddly shaped striped hat. He places the leggings gently on Sam's head while making "duh duh, ba ba ba" sounds; Rod sits back a little and points towards Sam, before again trying to dress her head with the leggings as a hat. Baby Sam shakes the leggings-hat off.

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

Rod treats real baby Sam like a doll, though dressing her real live head gently, in contrast to Nina's rough baby-doll handing. He and Nina usually stick close to teacher Jan. She's their favourite, the one with whom they feel attached and held, though they are also at ease with teachers Van, Jill and owner-manager Mary, when Jan's not around, on Fridays and during other routine breaks. Now Jan carries a new competing younger baby. Baby Sam is the youngest and newest child here. From the perspectives of Rod and Nina baby Sam is taking over Jan. But she's a baby. Sam can't even crawl. Jan holds and carries her, instead of them.

Teacher Jan mediates these toddlers' play by simply being present. Even with baby Sam in her lap Jan is still a secure base, a safe holding presence that spills over into creating a containing space where these children's felt thoughts can be processed in their baby wrapping play. Thus Rod creates a hat out of leggings and

gently places it on the real baby while Nina works out how to wrap, smother, or hide a pretend baby-doll. Importantly the layers of sense and meaning that underpin these observed actions are integral to the children's play experiences. It is these unprocessed felt-thoughts that motivate the play as perezhivanie, as emotional experience. Concepts are contained in being played with, in a secure holding space-environment.

Event 1 continues

Meanwhile Ema (3 years old) has appeared on the scene coming out from inside; she wants Nina's nappy to wrap her doll in. Teacher Jan suggests to Ema that she find another blanket for Nina to offer as a swap, in exchange for the desired nappy. Ema goes back inside and returns with a doll-size quilt which she holds out to Nina. who generously reciprocates by giving Ema the nappy and taking the offered quilt. It is a padded quilt, slightly smaller than the nappy, so possibly more manageable for Nina. Teacher Jan talks their actions. "Ema has another blanket for you Nina… can you give her the nappy." The exchange is friendly.

Baby Sam watches all the goings on from the security of teacher Jan's lap, teacher Jan pats and strokes her. Nina watches baby Sam, then returns to her baby doll, pushing her baby-doll strongly into the quilted wrap. She's managing her baby-doll while teacher Jan manages baby Sam.

At one point Nina gives me the baby-doll to hold for a minute so she can use both hands unencumbered to spread out the quilt. She then takes the doll, lays it on the quilt, and returns to the wrapping process. In casually supporting Nina's play, like a prop, I feel like an outside insider.

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

Nina brings layers of complexity to this layered wrapping activity. Why and what is most meaningful to her? Is it the wrapping, the holding, the quilt cloth, or feelings around hiding, burying or smothering, caring and protecting? She does seem to also be trying to contain, or control, the doll in the swaddling wrapping process. Most probably she's playing with a wide range of overlapping meanings.

What might the doll represent for Nina? Perhaps it functions as a material container for Nina's own projections of herself being dressed, clothed, protected, controlled? "ooh babeee meeee myyyyy babeee." Whatever the theoretical explanations are, Nina does put a great deal of emotional energy and real time into this wrapping baby-doll play. Perhaps Nina's imitating teacher Jan? But Nina's actions with the baby-doll are not caring or kind. She's rather more task-focussed on controlling by haphazardly wrapping and tightly swaddling the baby-doll bundle. She manages her baby-doll by struggling, while favourite teacher Jan manages baby Sam with nurturing care. Perhaps the baby-doll represents new baby Sam for Nina? In her smothering and nurturing play Nina may be unconsciously working with her feeling- thoughts around this baby who takes teacher Jan's away from being with Nina (and Rob).

Event 1 continues

Nina repeats the wrapping and fitting together process many times, in many ways, with slight variations in doll-self positioning and wrapping, though always vigorously shaking the quilt blanket and trying to make it fall squarely and neatly on the floor. Sometimes she lies on the doll trying to tie it into the blanket. She continues making sounds and words, vigorously expressing her feeling-thoughts as she wraps: "Ahhhh, babeee, Ooh ohh meee me babeee me me babee ohhhh miii babeee …"

Overall Nina seems more concerned with fitting the baby-doll and the quilt blanket together than with the baby-doll as a baby-person. She repeatedly allows the doll to fall on the floor casually picking up the baby each time. Very occasionally she does also cradle the doll-baby softly in her arms holding it across and against her upper body.

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

Baby care and nurturing are integral to the way the under-twos' area of Puriri centre functions. Babies come into the early childhood centre, are nurtured by teachers, turn 2-years-old, and move into the over-twos' area. Nurturing babies is what teachers here do and the children see this behaviour and imitate it in their play. Children play at what they see and feel; 3 year-old Ema, visiting the under-twos area, was also wrapping babies in the background of this event. I wondered how much Sam may have seen and retained at 7 months, to be replayed later.

From a relational psychology perspective the activity of wrapping baby dolls facilitated Nina's developing capacities for emotional self-regulation in relation to others. She safely expressed a range of powerful emotions in socially acceptable ways in this aggressively smothering and nurturing baby-doll play. Rob too was learning how to share teacher Jan with baby Sam who sat on teacher Jan's other knee. He couldn't poke Sam's eyes but he could gently place the leggings on her head like a hat, so covering and hiding her a little. Baby Sam in turn later shook the leggings-hat off, demonstrating her agentic self and that she was no doll-object to be dressed up.

The ambivalences in feelings of attachment and belonging were also represented in the simultaneously contradictory actions of hiding and disappearing the doll in cloth while also attempting to wrap up the baby doll securely and safely. In this play Nina seemed to be experiencing and acting out a wide range of contradictory feelings that in varying degrees may have played into her developing subjective sense of self and identity as a person.

Her intense preoccupation with baby-doll wrapping was observed over a period of several weeks, which is a lot of time in the life of an 18-month-old person.

From a socio-cultural perspective baby-dolls and cloths as primary artefacts mediated the fascinatingly contradictory and complex play of both Nina and Rob enabling them to express feelings freely, symbolically, metaphorically and uncon-

sciously, without breaking social rules and roles (Wartofsky, 1979). Cloths were used to cover, layer, wrap, and hide Sam gently and to smother, hide and contain the baby-doll.

I also wondered why Nina began each episode of doll wrapping by covering her own face and head, as if hiding and practising on herself before covering the baby-doll? These actions remind me of young children thinking that if they can't see us we can't see them. Or perhaps the cloth connected her to the baby-doll, and to herself, like another layer of skin? Feeling safely held allowed Nina to explore and experience wrapping and holding in these complexly representational ways. Space, time, materials, and an open ethos all mediated her feeling held and therefore being free to nourish her baby-doll wrapping obsession.

This very mundane baby wrapping play seemed simple at first glance, belying the layers of complexity, contradictions and feelings that were observed and emerged in greater detail with multiple reviewings of video footage and field notes. The metaphor of baby-doll wrapping transfers also to the process of data interpretation, where layers unfolded as if unwrapping a baby.

The layers of possible motivating meanings in these wrapping experiences continue to interest and obsess me. Actions around covering and wrapping, like hide and seek, or feeling lost and being found, seemed to be repeated and common themes in the observed children's play. These hiding-finding, themes echo the underlying concepts of attachment theory around feeling secure and insecure.

Baby wrapping was a common activity. During this event two other children, Ema and Rob, also became involved in wrapping in different ways. Interestingly about 8 months later, when baby Sam was about 15–16 months old she too became obsessively involved in baby-doll wrapping for a similar period of several weeks, as noted in a memo made at that time:

> On my latest visit Sam was wrapping dolls in the same way as Nina had been, 8 months ago, laying cover on floor, placing doll on it, wrapping, folding, picking up… The process of wrapping-laying was the important play, not the outcome of being wrapped, but the caring, folding, dropping, picking up process of wrapping. Is this a playing out of being and feeling held and cared for? She is less aggressive than Nina was, at least now; she's also younger.

Children did imitate, repeat, and in diverse ways replay and share aspects of their individual experiences. In such ways individual children can learn from each other's sharing of experiences. Baby-doll wrapping may also have been a recurring cyclical theme, prompted by the arrival of new babies in the ECCE centre.

Event 2: Holding-Carrying

Nell (17 months old) is having a morning where she's easily upset. She seems to periodically lose her self-direction and self-control. Chaotically collapsing, Nell toddles speedily towards teacher Jan, reaching her arms up and moaning, her body asking to be held. Jan picks her up, simultaneously, intuitively and responsively commenting on Nell's state. "You just need to reconnect don't you Nell". After a

few minutes of being physically held on Jan's hip, Nell calms down. She comes together, slides down teacher Jan's long legs and toddles off happily to play again. This pattern of play and recovery repeats several times that morning.

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

I wondered about teacher Jan's very responsive, available role in being a secure base for Nell (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Winnicott, 1960a, 1960b, 1974). Jan's words "you just need to reconnect", were so pertinent to Nell's disconnected state. Teacher Jan further explained how Nell just needed to be held back together again, and that this was just usual practice. This verbalised thinking about feelings, very profoundly expresses and assumes inner-outer, body-mind, emotional-cognitive interconnectedness. As Nell's body collapses into teacher Jan so does her thinking-feeling, body-mind, self. Conversely as Nell's body is physically held and soothed her body-mind comes back together again. Both teacher Jan and Nell seemed to intuitively understand and accept the importance of dependency in this caring bodily-expressed (intercorporeal, (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) intra and intersubjective) relationship. Nell depended on having Jan as her caring secure base, enabling her to fall apart and come together again, before toddling off to play more independently, for a while.

Event 3: Holding, Standing, and Sitting

Zac (8 months old) sits propped against pillows on a thin soft mattress on the floor. He's reaching his heavy upper body foreward, following his gaze which is fixed on looking at a small toy object, half-hidden, under a very low shelf. He tilts off balance and gently falls foreward and sideways. Zac goes to pieces, crying distressfully with the fright as much as any physical hurt. He had not anticipated his body falling over, and the loss of control with this external (and internal) collapse. He very quickly comes together when teacher Jan returns, picks up, holds and strokes him soothingly. She speaks softly and reassuringly to him: "did you get a fright? You fell over, you're alright Zac…". The words don't seem as significant as their soothing gentle almost sung tone. Jan sits down with Zac for a few minutes, holding him back together. She then carefully positions him back on the floor mattress surrounded by pillows and with just enough small stacking toy-objects. Zac becomes very very focused on handling the toys, stacking, putting a spoon inside a ring, and generally exploring the possibilities of bringing different objects togther.

When Zac cries and gets picked up by teacher Jan, Nell begins to cry too. The room becomes very noisy, I try inadequately to help comfort the three distressed babies, but they all only want their familiar teacher caregivers. The centre manager, Mary, is also familiar to all children, both over and under 2-years-old. Hearing the crying from her office, she calmly arrives in the room and picks up Nell who, feeling

held, immediately comes together and stops crying. Together they wander off to another area. Teacher Jan simultaneously also sends the four visiting 3-year-old children back through the half door to their larger noisier over-twos' area. They go willingly, understanding the rule that they're visitors to the under-twos' space. The loud crying sound level drops, as Zak ceases his tears. Quiet and peace return.

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

Feelings spread instantaneously and simultaneously across the children in this group. The crying was contagious. The calm that followed the noise also spread quickly across the diminished group. Mattresses, cushions, small stacking toys, and most importantly caring adults who picked-up and held these babies together, physically and psychically, mediated the return to calm.

I wondered about associations between Zac's externalised play with fitting toy-objects together and the internalising processes of fitting himself together. I also wondered about Zac's very contained, self-sufficient and apparently independent ways of managing his distress. On this and other occasions I observed him alone and totally focussed on feeling and fitting toy objects together. He may have been learning to avoid expressing feelings and possibly shame around crying.

Event 4: Holding While Lying with

Teacher Jan carries Zac and places him on the floor mattress with a few toys. Another child crawls over, sits a few seconds glances at the toys, and crawls away. Zac is absorbed with shaking a simple wooden rattle. His whole body moves, rocking and rolling, to and fro, in time with his rattle shaking. The rocking requires precarious balancing on his nappy padded fulcrum-like bottom. Zac cleverly swaps the rattle to his left hand while his body keeps on rocking rhythmically in time. Teacher Van approaches and lies down on her side, alongside Zac, who half pulls himself up and flops against her chest. She envelops her arms around him steadying him. Drawn by teacher Van's presence and the action Nina toddles over and plonks herself on teacher Van's outstretched legs. By now Zac is holding Van's long hair, his face squashed into her chest, she lowers his body, pulling herself up to sitting, legs outstretched in front, with Nina sitting on them.

Other children, 2 toddlers and 3 older 3-year-olds visiting from their over-twos' area, join in. The 3 youngest children lie and sit all over and across teacher Van's sprawling body. Their bodies seem to move together, reminding me of Merleau-Ponty's (1964) wonderfully evocative phrase: *flesh of the world,* alluding to the primacy of nature, including body-based ways of knowing, perceiving and communicating; bodies that are in tune with and part of the wider world. Zac seems to be trying to taste and possibly even eat teacher Van. He holds on to her, pulling himself

as close as possible to her face and upper chest, mouth open, sensually trying to taste or consume teacher Van's chest. She gently holds him away, protecting herself, as she draws herself to a more upright position, while continuing to hold and support him from falling over. The soft floor mattress on which all this activity takes place frames, mediates, and seems to support teacher Van and the children together as one interactive unit of bodies – flesh – moving in activity. The three youngest children are the only ones to lie and sit on her body. The 3-year-olds are more restrained. They alternate between sitting and standing on the mattress. The mattress holds them all softly and firmly, while teacher Van's bigger and stronger body also supports the three infant-toddler bodies.

For a while the activity is supplemented with small toy-objects that the children touch, feel, stack, shake, and drop. Teacher Van leads the group in singing an action-song and the older children join in, performing the actions while the toddlers mainly move and listen. But Nina, watching the older children imitates their hand actions. "The wheels of the bus go round and round, round and round…." Later, teacher Van reads books to all six children together. A memo written on the day noted: "The environment is a holding environment (Winnicott) where teachers lie on mattresses on the floor with babies, inviting crawling, sitting, lying and toddling children."

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

Teacher and children are supported by the soft floor mattress which seems to hold their bodies together. This embodied activity, exuded vitality affect in rhythm, tempo, and energy (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Stern, 1985, 2010; Trevarthen, 2002). The larger adult, teacher Van, lying and sometimes sitting in the middle of the mattress, supported and mediated the activity through her presence as well as her responsive body-based interactions. She invited and allowed the youngest children to lie and sit on her, while using books and songs with actions to mediate the inclusion of the 3-year-old visitors. All this movement felt very alive and full of vitality, with teacher Van too expressing enjoyment on her face and in her body by smiling, moving, talking, singing, reading and soothing. I wondered to what extent these children internalised and mirrored her feelings? Conversely, to what extent were teacher Van's relaxed feelings her response to the similarly relaxed and engaged children? These bodies with feelings did seem to be reciprocally, responsively interconnected in the activity of lounging around together on a mattress, on the floor. This physical environment became a literal holding environment, where the teacher lay on mattresses on the floor holding babies, and with her whole body invited and included babies and 3 year olds in this small group.

Event 5: Eating-Feeling Sticky Rice

Dan (8 months) is sitting at the low table in a chair that connects to the table. Three older toddlers sit on little wooden stools at the table. Teacher Van gives them sticky rice in little bowls with little spoons for eating. Dan slowly looks at the spoon and the rice alternately. He then tips the rice bowl upside down onto the table so the rice lies on the table, in front of him. He proceeds to quietly and slowly examine individual rice grains with touch and taste as he succeeds in transferring small amounts into his mouth, with his toddler hands. Occasionally Dan looks intently and alternately at the spoon, the rice, and the bowl.

Analysis, Discussion and Wondering

I felt as if Dan couldn't quite work out the connections involved in picking up the spoon, loading it with rice, transferring the spoon towards his face, opening his mouth, putting the spoon in, unloading the rice with the help of gums and tongue, and then chewing and swallowing. The entire process seemed too linearly complex. Instead Dan used his fingers and hands to slowly explore both the rice and the concept of consuming it and feeding himself. Eating is a profound act, somewhat like breathing, but more complex in involving motivation, memory, intentionality, awareness, observation, and cultural as well as the sensory dimensions such as texture, taste, and smell. While breathing just happens, eating requires concerted actions, and the ability to anticipate what will happen before it happens, and remember what has happened. It is also a culturally conditioned learned experience. Feeling the sticky rice between his fingers, getting some grains into his mouth, tasting, chewing and swallowing all seem to preoccupy Dan's sensory body-mind.

I was impressed and interested that no teachers interrupted Dan's processing by clearing the rice off the table. No-one tried to feed him. Instead the teachers commented on how he'd had a similar approach to food and eating on the one previous occasion, a few days earlier, when he'd also been seated at the table and left to feed himself. Sitting at the table and self-feeding with utensils were new experiences for Dan. He was given space and time to calmly work out eating and self-feeding connections, in a group context, alongside slightly older children who were also feeding themselves sticky rice, though with spoons.

Event 6: Basket Play

Background

This event revolves around a large cane picnic basket which had been gifted by a family who no longer wanted or needed it in their home. Most of the toys in Puriri

centre had been recycled from family homes to Puriri centre in this way fitting with their recycling sustainability philosophy. Unused new toys did not feature in Puriri centre.

This room is where 1-year-olds and babies play, eat and generally spend most of their non-sleeping time when inside. The large curved cane picnic basket with two flap-top door-like lids lies on its side, nestled against a set of wooden climbing steps to one side of the main infant-toddler under-two's room. Like the inviting floor mattresses the teachers' intention is that this large basket will invite users, sitting as it does and held by the floor. The basket has been lying in this position beside the steps since Monday. Today is Thursday.

The wooden steps are currently a major focus of mastery play for several children who expend a lot of time and energy repetitively climbing and crawling up one side and down the other side of the step set. Sometimes they stand on the top platform feeling tall. Nina and Quentin (both about 18 months old) have been repetitively practising climbing up and down the steps.

They seem to almost simultaneously notice the basket and Nina pushes it around so it slides, glides and turns on the wooden floor in the same spot; she opens one flap and proceeds to crawl inside it. Quentin leans against the basket and swings shut the flap lid-door behind Nina's feet. Nina moulds her body inside and into the basket shape, before crawling out the other end, past that open flap. The basket's too small to turn around in; it fits, enveloping her body cocoon-like, almost like an over-sized snail shell.

Analysis, Discussion, and Wondering

This large basket sat in the same prominent position for 3 days before children began to explore it. Why? Perhaps the children were very focussed on and engaged with the adjacent step climbing, so didn't see the very large basket. Perhaps the basket was a strange intrusion and avoidance was the children's preferred mode for managing its existence. The children all ignored the basket for 3–4 days for any number and blend of fascinating reasons that could include both fear of the unknown and preoccupation with other activities such as stair-climbing.

The pace of time feels slow in this infant-toddler area, which is non-sensical because these children are always in some way moving. They're very physically busy in and with their bodies.

The basket, like the set of steps, invites exploring bodies. The teachers don't encourage children to notice it. Instead they create an environment that is intended to calmly interest and engage very young children. Perhaps, being originally trained as Montessori teachers these teachers are particularly aware of how the objects as material artefacts in the physical environment can offer children choices, mediating and further extending their curiosity.

Later more children play with the basket using their whole bodies, exploring and experiencing the basket in relation to their bodies, just as they did with the climbing

steps. The steps and the basket offer different ways for these children to move, feel and be themselves in their toddling bodies. I wonder why small spaces attract small children? Being enclosed can feel secure, like a swaddled baby. How does it feel to be so enclosed, held, contained in a body-fitting basket shell? A thick cane outer-skin? A safe hiding place? The shutting and opening flaps at both ends seem important; they both enclose and open the tunnel basket, shutting out and enclosing Nina inside, apart from others, not seen, invisible, but we know she's there in the tunnel, shell, birth-canal basket. In such ways these toddlers sometimes seem to be exploring their feeling bodies from the inside out.

Event 6 continues

Rob (20 months) shuts a flap on Nina (also 20 months), who's nestled inside the basket, so she backs out the entrance. Later that day, when he crawls inside the basket she tries shutting a flap on him.

Over the next month the children use the basket in various ways. The basket moves between the under and the over-twos areas. I notice children putting toy-objects into the basket, as well as themselves, when their bodies are small enough. Thus the basket functions as a container for the bodies of the physically small children as well as for object-toys. Kelly (3 years old) removes her jacket so she can fit inside the basket. Like an explorer on an adventure she opens a flap, squeezes her body head first into the basket, and vigorously crawls through it, pushing open the flap at the other end to crawl triumphantly out.

Analysis, Discussion and Wondering

This free exploratory play required space, time, materials and an open ethos that encouraged children to play freely with the mediating materials, such as the steps and basket. I wondered about the basket play as a form of early pretend play? What did these children think-feel as they experienced crawling inside the basket, being enclosed and shut inside by others? Were these pre-verbal children being imaginative with their bodies in symbolic and dream-like ways? They did experiment and explore in bodily-based ways.

The apparent competitiveness between Rob and Nina echos sibling rivalry. Puriri centre is almost like another family, a second home away from home, for these children and their families. The children spend more waking hours in Puriri than in their family homes. It follows that versions of family relational patterns, such as sibling rivalry, might emerge in the ECCE centre context. These children do compete for the attention of teachers, like parents, and they have favourite teachers with whom dependent attached relationships develop over time. For example Zac would always cry for teacher Jan when in distress. He chose her and when she was not available he also allowed teacher Van to comfort him. He did not accept me in that role. With my fortnightly visits I was not a sufficiently close presence in his daily life.

Event 7: Holding on While Letting Go

Anna (21 months) and her mother Sara, find the morning parting when Sara leaves Anna in Puriri challenging. Anna appears to be a quiet and *easy* child because she doesn't fuss. She does spend a lot of time standing and watching others. I sit and talk quietly with her when I can. Today she and Sara share lots of gentle hugs gradually releasing each other. Anna gives her mother a small toy object just as Sara's leaving. Sara takes and examines it, then gives it back to Anna saying,'this is for you'. The toy belongs to Puriri centre.

Recalling transitional phenomena and objects I wondered if in giving her mother the toy Anna was symbolically also giving her mother part of Puriri as a transition object that also represented part of Anna? Did Sara's returning of the toy-object also signify reassurance for Anna that her mother would return? Anna and Sara frequently exchanged such tokens at these separation times, co-creating small parting rituals.

On another occasion Sara asked Anna if she'd prefer to stay seated near the window, or come to the door to wave good bye. Anna seated on a wooden bench, patted the bench while looking meaningfully at her mother who, understanding the gestures, sat down quietly and almost contemplatively beside her daugher. She stayed silently sitting beside Anna for a few minutes, before Anna seemed to indicate that her mother could now leave. Anna also quietly indicated with a few quietly spoken words that she would stay seated near the window, from where she could see Sara leaving.

These rituals and actions of exchange, the toy-object and the sitting together, were both initiated by the child Anna. I wondered about how she was containing and seemingly holding herself together during these very difficult and painful separation times. Sara seemed very aware of Anna's processes and consciously supported Anna to feel some control over the separation process in both these and other examples.

So how did these very young children relate? (with no primary-caregiving systems)?

Caring consistent and loving teachers seemed to be of primary importance, but the things in the environment were also important in contributing to creating a holding environment where these very young children could feel free to simply be and to relate. The basket, the climbing steps, and small toys all mediated connections with self and with others. These children used their bodies to play imaginatively with things such as the basket, doll, blankets, small stacking toys, sand, water and the usual paraphernalia of an ECCE centre.

It is easy to refer to the sensori (motor) dimensions in young children's play, without emphasising the emotional and cognitive dimensions that are implicit in the sensori-embodied nature of play. Young children's bodies speak and communicate (Lokken, 2000) imaginatively, and creatively. The picnic-basket play and baby-doll wrapping events in particular, involved sustained body-based, exploratory play-processes that included children anticipating and imagining things otherwise. Some

sense of very young children anticipating and imagining is apparent in all the events in this chapter (and book) and is a feature in children's play. The ability to anticipate opens up to more complex thinking-feeling and meaning-making including understanding causality as complex (Shotter, 2010). Such understanding enables the planning, ordering, and categorising that in turn enables growth in general understandings of how things feel and function, both internally, in children's body-mind selves, and externally in the world.

The freedom that accompanies play and the attitude of playfulness connected and integrated children's spontaneous and anticipated body-based, felt-thought, actions in the events presented here. Children played with themes of being hidden, lost, and found, which were also expressed in feelings of frustration, distress, security, and belonging. These attachment related feelings were subtly apparent in such acts as the gift-giving between Anna and her mother, the shocked distress at falling-over of Zac, and the coming-togetherness for Zac and Nell on being picked up and held and Nina's tight baby swaddling. Themes of being lost, hidden, and found also underpinned aspects of the picnic-basket and baby-doll wrapping play. Shared understandings were co-created and emerged in children's play around these common lost-found, apart and together themes.

It's significant that most of the toy objects, such as the picnic-basket were recycled from children's homes. I wondered to what extent these recycled objects embodied and carried-over connections between the ECCE centre as a public family and the children's home families. How emotionally connected to these toys from home were children? This toy recycling was an explicit outcome of the centre's sustainability philosophy.

Securely dependent attached relationships did appear to develop between babies and teachers despite the theoretical avoidance of one on one attachment-based relationships associated with primary-caregiving. Most of the infants and 1-year old babies showed strong preferences for their most familiar teachers, Jan and Van, over relief teachers, for example.

At one stage in the year Mary, the centre manager, did suggest trialling a revolving staff system which involved the under and over-twos' teachers working in both the under and over twos' areas. She felt this would benefit everyone by extending teacher awareness of the wider centre physical environment and widening the range of relationships between teachers, children, and families. Theoretically the increased range of connections would also contribute towards greater relational cohesion between the over-twos' and under-twos' areas of the centre. The trial lasted perhaps a week, before reverting back to the previous system with Jan and Van as the main under- twos' teachers'. For these teachers and the younger children the changes in teacher shifts and play areas were most disruptive. Children such as Zak, Nina, Rob, Sam, and Nell were clearly most comfortable with teachers Jan, Jill and Van, who found themselves being called on, to hold and calm these babies, while simultaneously trying to interact with older children in the busy, noisy over-twos' area. The disruptive feelings spread through the centre as a whole. So the teachers reverted to their over and under-twos' roles, rules, and areas.

Thus, despite the avoidance of implementing formal primary-caregiving system, intimate and dependent, loving and caring, relationships did develop between very young children and the two or three most consistently available teachers. The consistency in caregiving that is associated with primary-caregiving systems, stood out as a feature in Puriri centre where the same two to three teachers shared responsibilities around caring for a small group of up to 10 children aged between 6 months and 2 years old.

No doubt it helped that teachers Jan and Van had worked together for over 10 years. They were attuned to each other, sharing understandings, particularly around rules, roles, care and respect. As teacher Jan explained: "I treat the babies in the same way as I interact with older children, with respect, don't rush in, watch and wait". This valuing of respect and the importance of giving time, contributed to the generally calm, yet open, ethos that pervaded the under-twos' area. I was interested to note that Jan did not refer to the emotional importance of warmth and love in the care of young children, yet her actions with babies exuded warm loving feelings and the centre philosophy very specifically referred to 'unconditional love for all children'. I wondered to what extent Montessori philosophy and values had implicitly influenced teachers' understandings of flexible consistency in the rules that contributed to the centre ethos. Consistency with care around rules, roles and respect contributed to the holding space of Puriri as a place of belonging for these young children. In being securely held they could feel free to let-go, to play and explore, to feel and think, to connect relationally.

Summary

Over time I became intrigued by how relationships within the under-twos' area were connected with relationships and structures outside the physical boundaries of that specially structured space. The under and over-twos' areas together comprised Puriri centre as a whole. Puriri centre prided itself on being a community, with strong links to children's families, as well as to the local geographical community. So I wondered how Puriri centre's overarching sustainability-as-care philosophy played out in practice for the under-two-year-old children. How did this philosophy connect the centre as a community, in practice? What significance did this ecologically-based sustainability focus have for very young children emotionally and relationally? I became particularly interested in the wider context and how it might influence the ethos of the under-two's area as a holding environment for these young children. In this way Puriri centre philosophy, the families, and the local geographical community became an increasingly significant dimension of the overarching research focus on young children's emotional relational ways of being in this ECCE centre and became the focus of chapter "Relational Fields and Context".

References

Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Bowlby, J. (1991). An ethological approach to personality development. *American Psychologist, 46*(4), 333–341. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.46.4.333.

Bion, W. R. (1962). *Learning from experience*. London: William Heinemann.

Carroll-Lind, J., & Angus, J. (2011). *Through their lens: An inquiry into nonparental education and care of infants and toddlers*. Wellington, New Zealand: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. (2008). *Handbook of attachment, second edition: Theory, research, and clinical applications* Retrieved from http://VUW.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=360938

Fonagy, P., & Target, M. (2005). Bridging the transmission gap: An end to an important mystery of attachment research? *Attachment & Human Development, 7*(3), 333–343. doi:10.1080/14616730500269278.

Fonagy, P., & Target, M. (2007). The rooting of the mind in the body: New links between attachment theory and psychoanalytic thought. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 55*(2), 411–456. doi:10.1177/00030651070550020501.

Lokken, G. (2000). *Toddler peer culture: The social style of one and two year old body-subjects in everyday interaction*. Trondheim, Norway: Norges teknisk-naturvetenskapliga universitet, NTNU.

Malloch, S., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). Signs. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Music, G. (2010). *Nurturing natures: Attachment and children's emotional, sociocultural and brain development*. Hove, UK/New York: Psychology Press.

Ogden, T. (2004a). An introduction to the reading of Bion. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 85*(2), 285–300. doi:10.1516/3TPR-AXTL-0R8M-7EQ0.

Ogden, T. (2004b). On holding and containing, being and dreaming. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 85*(6), 1349–1364. doi:10.1516/T41H-DGUX-9JY4-GQC7.

Ritchie, J. (2013). Sustainability and relationality within early childhood care and education settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 45*(3), 307–326. doi:10.1007/s13158-013-0079-0.

Shotter, J. (2010). Inside our lives together: A neo Wittgensteinian constructionism. In S. R. Kirschner & J. Martin (Eds.), *The sociocultural turn in psychology: The contextual emergence of mind and self* (pp. 45–67). New York: Columbia University Press.

Stern, D. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.

Stern, D. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Trevarthen, C. (2002). Origins of musical identity: Evidence from infancy for musical social awareness. In D. H. D. M. R. MacDonald (Ed.), *Musical identities* (pp. 21–38). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Trevarthen, C. (2009). The intersubjective psychobiology of human meaning: Learning of culture depends on interest for co-operative practical work–and affection for the joyful art of good company. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 507–518. doi:10.1080/10481880903231894.

Trevarthen, C., & Aitken, K. (2001). Infant intersubjectivity: Research, theory, and clinical applications. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 42*(1), 3–48. doi:10.1017/S0021963001006552.

Wartofsky, M. W. (1979). *Models, representation and the scientific understanding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands/Berlin, Germany: Reidel.

Winnicott, D. W. (1960a). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 41*, 585–595.

Winnicott, D. W. (1960b). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; a study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 34*(2), 89–97.

Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Relational Fields and Context

Abstract The overarching focus of this chapter is the wider systemic context in which young children's emotional relationality played out in Puriri centre. This chapter explores the complexly interconnected nature of the field in which this small group of very young, largely pre-verbal, babies and toddlers figured and played inter- and intra- actively, inter- and intra- subjectively. While still addressing the main research question: What is the nature of the relational environment for the babies and toddlers in this ECCE centre where 'eco-sustainability' is an overarching philosophical principle? This chapter further interrogates how the wider *sustainability as care* context influenced these children's relational ways of feeling and being.

Introduction

The overarching focus of this chapter is the wider systemic context in which young children's emotional relationality played out in Puriri centre. This chapter explores the complexly interconnected nature of the field in which this small group of very young, largely pre-verbal, babies and toddlers figured and played inter- and intra-actively, inter- and intra- subjectively. While still addressing the main research question: What is the nature of the relational environment for the babies and toddlers in this ECCE centre where 'eco-sustainability' is an overarching philosophical principle? this chapter further interrogates how the wider *sustainability as care* context influenced these children's relational ways of feeling and being.

Questions asked include: How are wider sustainability values played out relationally and emotionally with babies and toddlers? Related sub-questions include: How are notions of sustainability mediated for babies and toddlers in this centre? There is a continued focus also on children's body-based thinking in asking: How do these young children use sound, gesture, and feeling to communicate and to make meaningful sense of sustainability as care?

These questions integrate both micro and macro factors in observing, analysing, wondering and interpreting the relations within, between and among these very young children. Events presented in this chapter are intended to illuminate links between children's everyday relational meaning-making through play and the overarching sustainability as care philosophy of Puriri centre.

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_9

Sustainability as Care

Puriri centre's philosophy strongly emphasised sustainability, interpreted broadly to include caring for self, others and the environment. This view of sustainability is congruent with New Zealand Māori world-views that emphasise the interconnectedness of all phenomena, a point that Puriri centre made public in their official documentation. Puriri centre's written philosophy statement connected with their environment policy. The connections are highlighted in the following extracts in which the first two strongly worded sentences introduce the philosophy, while the following equally strongly worded lines beginning "At Puriri centre we…", introduce Puriri centre's environment policy:

"Children have the right to a peaceful, safe, secure, healthy, socially just, environmentally sustainable present and future.

Children have a right to respect, unconditional love and an early childhood education, which recognises them as active citizens and as active participants with rights and responsibility within the sustainable community at Puriri centre.

At Puriri centre we (teachers, children, families) work together to address the environmental issues, which face Aotearoa and the rest of the world.

The principles of this community are:

Care for the self
Care for others
Care for our immediate and global environment that sustains us
A commitment to Aotearoa's bicultural heritage, particularly our responsibility to exercise *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship of the environment)"

Indigenous Māori concepts of *kaitiakitanga* and *manaakitanga* that emphasise guarding and caring for the environment and people are explicitly addressed in Puriri centre's philosophy and related documents. This emphasis on biculturalism through an ecological sustainability lens has become more common in Aotearoa-New Zealand in recent years, not only in Puriri centre's documentation, but also throughout the documents of ecologically-minded private and public institutions. As Māori are the *tāngata whenua* (indigenous) peoples of Aotearoa-New Zealand, the inclusion of concepts that convey Māori world-views added weight and meaning to the sustainability philosophy of Puriri as a community-focussed early childhood centre situated in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Interconnected Care

While documentation such as Puriri's philosophy and flow-on policies were very focussed on ecological sustainability, they were also focussed on relational sustainability as *care for people*. Hence the reference *to care for self, others, and the environment* in the environment policy cited earlier. Such humanely-focussed and ecologically relational views of care implicitly accord with complex systems

thinking and notions of interconnectedness and interpenetration that include the entire wider environment of other animals as well as plants, earth, water, air and all this world and beyond (Bateson, 1980; Macy, 1991). It seems as if biculturalism, indigeneity and ecological sustainability speak similar languages. This language is further echoed in the Buddhist metaphor of Indra's Net (Cleary, 1993) described in chapter "Framing: Young Children Relating and Playing" and mentioned in other chapters as a repetitive theme, loosely connecting diverse parts in the webbed and net-like relational focus of this book.

Community Connections

Links to the local geographical community were seen as very important and were supported with regular child outings between Puriri and local walkable places of interest. These included, as also mentioned earlier, the nearby urban bush area which was part of a bush regeneration programme; the nearby Māori mental health unit's gardens with wonderful climbing trees, which children were invited to climb, and the local shops. While older 3–4-year-old children walked on these outings, several younger toddlers were usually included with buggies. Local connections were reciprocated in various ways. Dan, who lived in a supported community in the same street, regularly visited Puriri centre in his motorised wheel chair. Children became familiar with his different looks and wheels for walking. The teachers valued these on-going community connections very highly.

Mixed-Age Child-Care with Flexible Boundaries: **Tuakana/teina**

The Māori tuakana/teina concept refers to pedagogical relationships between older (tuakana) and younger (teina) children. It sits nicely with Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development in prioritising both the socially interactive, co-constructive nature of learning and the wellbeing and growth that can be promoted when diverse children of mixed ages and abilities interact, connect and communicate together. Tuakana/teina relationships were supported within and across the two mixed-age groups of children in Puriri centre.

Despite a specific area, consisting of calmly arranged rooms with adjoining outside space being allocated for the under-two-year-old children, the physical boundaries between the under and over-twos' areas were not rigidly reinforced. They were flexible, generally fitting with children's needs and desires, as interpreted by the teachers. For example, and in accordance with the tuakana-teina principle, several of the 3-year-old children enjoyed being in the normally calm under-twos' area, while a few of the walking 1-year-olds seemed more at ease in the crowded and busier over-twos' area.

Reaching the under-twos' area was a daily physical boundary-crossing route for the younger children anyway, en route to their area on the other side of the over-twos' main room. The following two events revolve around these structural, age-related, boundaries and notions of care for self and about others.

Event 8: Opening Doors: Crossing Boundaries

Alex (23 months) had been playing in the over-twos' area and decided to get back into the under-twos' area herself. Using her initiative and strength she pulled, pushed, and partly carried a small child-sized chair from its place beside a child-sized table across the wooden floor towards the half-door that separated the under and over-twos' areas. Positioning the chair safely beside the half-door she climbed onto it so she could reach the door handle. The top of her head was now visible above the half door and seated in the under-twos' area I could hear Alex's chair moving activity. When I stood up I could also see her, as could the teachers too.

Children near the door could hear her actions. Zak (18 months), toddling and half-pushing a little wooden cart that also seemed to help him stand upright, became very interested in the chair moving sounds on the other side of the half-door. Zak stopped pushing and stood, entranced and focussed on listening. Being a small person, Zak could not see over the half-door. His face showed huge joy, smiling broadly when Alex finally succeeded in opening the door. Climbed carefully down from the chair beside the now open half-door, Alex triumphantly entered the under-twos' area. Zak, the two teachers and a few other children were now standing near the half-door waiting for her. Teacher Jill warmly welcomed Alex into the space: "Welcome, come in Alex." Zak repeated her name several times, in one word sentences that meant so much more than just the sound: "Alex, Alex, Alex…". He smiled slowly and joyfully, one arm outstretched, finger-pointing, reaching towards Alex. Zak's repeated one-word, finger-pointing, body-based signals exuded vitality in feeling and meaning. It felt almost as if all the children had come together through the door, crossing over from one age group to another. This was very literally boundary-breaking and border-crossing by Alex. Following Alex's return, 4 year-old Luke also came into the under-twos' area, while Alex and Ken crossed back into the over-twos' area where they stayed and played for at least an hour. On these occasions the children followed the usual practice of asking a teacher, before crossing the border.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

Though initiated by one individual child, Alex, this event came to include a small group of children, with the teacher Jill, caringly and enthusiastically welcoming Alex back into the under-twos' group. Alex showed considerable persistence and

skill in planning and completing her intention to cross the physical age-group boundary and re-join the group of younger children and teachers in the under-twos' area. Zak's excited finger-pointing while speaking Alex's name, cleverly combined symbols in an exaggerating way that matched his enthusiasm, while also representing and communicating meanings and feelings. Both Alex and Zak were motivated to action by their internally-felt, externally-expressed feelings, and nourished by the open-hearted and welcoming group atmosphere. The welcoming way in which Alex was supported in crossing the group boundary was a feature in the caring style of the under-twos teachers in Puriri centre and stands in contrast to ECCE centres where boundary rules are more rigidly enforced.

Though the boundaries between the under and over-twos' areas were physically supported by the building's structure, these boundaries were also flexible, as demonstrated in Alex's welcomed crossing, despite breaking a structural boundary rule. The rules of entry to the under-two's area for older children were based on maintaining calm, quiet and secure spaces for the babies. Depending on the atmosphere on the day, and at the time, teachers usually allowed between two and five older children to visit and stay awhile in the under-two's area. Most of these child visitors were 3-year-olds. They accepted the entry rules, seemingly learning them by osmosis, but probably learned from each other and by imitation. Teachers too, frequently reminded older children that this area, which most of them had passed through as babies, now belonged to the younger children, along with the toys and other things in it. Thus, respect ruled all around.

Event 9: Boundaries: Caring for and About Babies

Three-year-old Casey frequently arrived at Puriri in her pyjamas and, bringing breakfast from home, she would join one or two younger children, also eating breakfast, calmly together, at the small table. Casey had a medical condition that required her spending periods of time, usually a few successive days, in hospital. Following these periods of hospitalisation Casey usually chose to return to the smaller, quieter under-twos' area for a while. The teachers supported Casey's growing self-awareness of her need for rest, by allowing her this freedom across the two areas and offering her rest and quiet times.

Usually the older visiting children were engaged, one-on-one, in simply being-with, and talking-with babies, perhaps exchanging small toy-objects, or sharing cardboard picture-books. Sometimes those older children who were familiar faces with specific babies helped with bottle-feeding. Occasionally they also joined in with small teacher-led groups, lying on the floor together, playing, reading, or singing (as in event 4, in chapter "A Holding Environment"). The babies loved looking at and interacting with children who were just a little bigger, more mobile, verbal and powerful, than they were. Their faces glowed with delight during these intimate one-on-one exchanges. The young caregivers in turn seemed to enjoy imitating the bigger, more powerful, caregiving teacher-adults in authentically caring role-play.

Discussion, Analysis and Wondering

Blending the different age groups in these flexible and responsive ways did bring an energetic vibrancy to the caring ethos that pervaded the under-twos area. I wondered about the significance for the older children of returning to this physical space where they had recently lived as babies. How might being in the under-twos area affect these older children's subjective sense of self? What might these children recall, consciously and unconsciously, of their histories and subjective memories, from being under, to becoming over-two-year-old children and more? I wondered too if physically being in the baby area might mediate these older children feeling safely able to regress emotionally.

This sort of shift towards greater dependency is a common pattern for young children managing the stress that can accompany the arrival of new siblings, hospitalisation, or simply living. Children becoming more open and dependent in the face of stress are asking for more love and care. These teachers understood why Rob became clingy, asking for more caregiver holding, with his looks, gaze, cries, arms and whole body, following the arrival of a new baby in his family, combined with shifting house. They understood too why 3-year-old Casey preferred the smaller under-twos area, following her time in hospital. In these flexibly subtle ways, the teachers supported children to be dependent and to become aware of their feelings. Awareness of feelings contributes to children becoming better able to recognise and regulate their emotions.

In some senses Puriri centre functioned as a matrix, a nexus-like large, nurturing, family-network, linking the children and teachers, their families and homes, the local community and the centre itself. Puriri teachers reinforced these caring connections in practical relational ways, such as by visiting babies' families in their homes, before the babies began attending the centre.

The early capacity to care is acquired within intersubjective caregiver-infant relationships, through internalisation processes that may include imitation of mirror neurones along the feelings of being nurtured and cared for (Gallese, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Stern, 1985; Winnicott, 1960a; Zinchenko, 2001). Hollway (2006) suggests that the capacity to care (to feel) more widely and differentially for others, may also be acquired in close (attached) relationships between siblings. Caring relationships for infants need not depend only on caring adults. For children who live a lot of their time in ECCE family-focussed centres such as Puriri, other children can come to assume roles and status similar to that of siblings. For example the every-day rivalries and jealousies that commonly exist between siblings desiring parental attention, were also apparent in young children vying for teacher attention in this ECCE centre. Affection between children also featured, particularly in the caring practices of a small group of 3-year-old children with the babies.

I wondered how caring for babies might support these young children in learning to care for themselves as well as others. In caring for the babies these children were adding to the caring ethos, but what about care for themselves? They did seem to feel nurtured in simply being in the baby-space and caring-for other younger babies.

The under-twos area exuded a nurturing ethos and the older children loved being there. The actual practice of caring for others is likely to mediate self-care. Furthermore, the practice of care may mediate children becoming differentially responsive in their capacities to care for and relate with a range of different others (Hollway, 2006). In imitating and practicing the teachers' nurturing caring roles, these children were also internalising and developing the disposition and their capacities to care, for and about, both themselves and others.

Event 10: Accountability, Sustainability and Documentation

Part way through my year of data gathering visits, Puriri centre's 3-yearly education review audit was scheduled and carried out by the Education Review Office (ERO). ERO is a government department, which audits, evaluates, and reports on the education and care of early childhood and school services. Early childhood services in Aotearoa-New Zealand are audited by ERO every 3–5 years and the process can be quite intense and gruelling in the documentation lead-up and for the few days of the actual official visit. Mary and teacher Jan were unsure about whether they should even allow the ERO strangers into the small, calm, under-twos' area. The presence of strangers commonly intimidates babies. Mary asked me, as a member of their community, to meet the ERO officers and I readily agreed thinking that it might be interesting as well as useful for this research, which it was.

Discussions with a review officer contributed to broadening my field of vision in relation to the interpretation of data generated in the under-twos area. I began to look more explicitly for signs of ecological sustainability as a theme, that owner-manager Mary, frequently emphasised in her conversations, and that was integral to Puriri centre's documentation and many of their everyday practices, such as recycling. I also began to explore the ecological context of Puriri centre more explicitly, including the geographical community of the centre as well as the practical relational implications of the sustainability philosophy for these children.

The written ERO report on Puriri centre positively endorsed Puriri's emphasis on sustainability stating that:

> "The focus on sustainable futures recognises children's ability to gain thoughtful and deeper feelings about the environment. … Teachers include 'environmental responsibility' in their programme plans. This involves teachers, through their interactions and activities with children growing their understanding of sustainable living within the community. This focus impacts on all aspects of the programme in positive ways."

In making reports ERO officers rely on centre documentation as well as 1–2 days intensively observing and questioning adults and sometimes older young children. I had noted the pervasiveness of written and visual documentation in Puriri centre; it was like wallpaper in the background. The walls and even inside kitchen cupboard doors in the under-twos' area, were covered with notes for teachers and photos that in different ways added to understandings of what might be important, prioritised and valued information for children, teachers, families and for educational authori-

ties such as ERO. But I had hardly interrogated possible meanings in the documentation, being more focussed on interactions between people.

Occasionally documentation featured as pedagogical when I observed toddlers looking at, touching, and sometimes playing with photographs of themselves, and/or familiar others, places, and things. But generally real people and mediating artefacts such as balls, blankets, dolls, blocks, books, sand, water, and food, engaged children's interests more deeply and frequently than photographs. As is always the case, pedagogical documentation was several steps removed from children's actual relational emotional experiences. Photos and words, including the words in this book cannot truly capture or mirror children's experience.

Documentation, in all its forms, did provide an overview of teachers' intentions. The centre philosophy with its strong emphasis on sustainability their environment policy and their more recent education-for-sustainabilty curriculum document are examples of documentation that explicitly guided these teachers. Under the guidance of Mary, the owner-manager Mary of Puriri centre, they had together developed these documents.

Mary, the owner-manager of Puriri centre was the main driver for Puriri centre's sustainability focus. The power in her position as owner and her passion for sustainability issues, enabled the prioritisation of sustainability at Puriri centre. Mary took environmental issues very seriously, also telling me that she has nightmares about global warming. In explaining her passion Mary showed considerable self-awareness in suggesting that she and her dispersed family of origin carry intergenerational diasporic trauma with feelings of fear, anxiety, and sadness that can accompany feelings of homelessness and not belonging. However while her personal history may have contributed to her nightmares, she seemed able to *contain* (Bion, 1962) and live thoughtfully, creatively and productively with her diasporic history. Teachers and children engaged positively with sustainability issues in practical ways, such as in recycling and planting trees. Mary was very aware of ethical issues around not frightening children with scientific stories of the worlds' end.

Though care of self, others and the environment was evident in many of the interactions I observed among teachers, children, and their families, it was more challenging to see infants involved in caring for the natural environment in ways that might be meaningful for them, within the confines of this urban ECCE centre. The following event, containing several episodes, stands out because it does eventually culminate in one very young child enjoying being caring in his pretend plant-watering activity. He shows that he knows plants like, want, and possibly need water.

Event 11: Sustained and Sustainable Pretend Play

Teacher Jan carries a large watering can filled with water across the room, through the open glass doors, past Ed (16 months old), towards the outside deck area where a small water-trough stands. Ed sees her. "Bah, bah, bah…" he garbles, seeming to self-talk, while simultaneously looking towards her, shaking and waving an

outstretched arm-hand at the watering can. He quickly toddles outside, following teacher Jan towards the water-trough. Ed almost falls as he toddles so excitedly and speedily. On reaching the water-trough, he leans his small body against it and leaning over the edge, gazes expectantly into it, while teacher Jan says calmly and reassuringly: "Hang on, just let me rinse it out, we'll just rinse it out first, it's a bit yucky." She pours some of the water from her watering can into the dirty trough to clean it: "Here we go." Then she lifts the small plastic water-trough, out of its frame, and turns to empty it into the garden that adjoins the deck. Ed steps back, his gaze following her actions, anticipation and alertness visible in his turning body and face. He makes more communicative "ooh…ooh!" sounds. Teacher Jan responds by mirroring similar and longer sounds: "Oohh! hooh! ohh!" while pouring the water from the trough into the garden. The sounds match the water pouring.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

Ed anticipates and is drawn towards the teacher-initiated water-play. He reads and integrates signs – teacher Jan, watering can, water-trough, water – that mediate his understandings, enabling him to responsively and spontaneously initiate becoming part of the planned water-play activity.

Play, in and with water, draws and holds a strong attraction for many children (and adults). The feeling of hands in water can both sooth and stimulate. I wondered what Ed might remember of the feeling of his hands playing in warm water.

But perhaps Ed simply wanted to be together with teacher Jan and included in the process of setting up a play activity? Her presence, talk, responsive mirroring and inclusive style, seemed to affirm him as a separate person, yet also connected to her. This child-affirming way of being seems to say: "Yes you exist, you belong here and we are connected together." These implicit messages may be important for such young children subjectively becoming their self-identities. Teacher Jan contained Ed's thinking-feeling ways of making sense and meaning, within a holding environment. She connected intersubjectively, in tune with Ed. The movement and purpose in the activity of setting up water-play also seemed to connect them together as a very small group, or unit.

Event 11 continues

Rob (18 months), seeing the activity from inside, comes toddling slowly outside, heading towards the water-trough frame. He crawls under and into the water-trough frame and stands up, placing himself in the middle of it. Teacher Jan has her back turned emptying the water-trough. She turns to replace the now empty trough inside its frame and sees Rob standing inside the frame:

"Oh what are you doing?" says teacher Jan in a surprised yet warm welcoming sounding voice to Rob; "how can I put it in now?…, excuse me, can you hop out please." Rob stands solidly inside the frame, looking at teacher Jan and listening, but appearing to not quite understand that for the water-trough to sit inside the frame he needs to move his body outside the frame. Teacher Jan: "go down, can you work it out? here, go down…" He seems to enjoy having teacher Jan's full attention.

While she is occupied with Rob, Ed crawls behind teacher Jan's long legs; he looks into the watering can next to her legs, then into the garden where the 'yucky' water from the trough has just been tipped. He seems very interested in the water and its containers, the garden and the watering can.

Meanwhile teacher Jan uses body language indicating to Rob with her hands as well as words: "here, move here, okay?" Rob responsively smiles at teacher Jan, seeming to relish the self-focussed attention. He reads her languages and begins to understand, though still shows some bewildering confusion in his eyes and on his frowning, smiling face. After several repetitions and much coaxing from teacher Jan he eventually crawls under and out of the frame.

Teacher Jan warmly: "Yeah, well done."

To Ed she says: "watch your fingers" as he holds onto the top metal frame bar where the water trough will sit; the trough fits in place and Ed's hands slip straight inside it, despite the lack of water. Ed again communicates joy and excitement: "Ohhhh…oh… hoh…" He uses lots of expressive sounds that function like words, clearly communicating feelings of joy, but without the precision of shared word meanings.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

Rob appeared to relish very literally becoming the centre of attention standing in the centre of the water-trough frame blocking the place of the water-trough. It was fascinating to observe his initial confusion become a dawning understanding that he needed to move, while possibly wanting to remain obstructive in order to continue receiving teacher Jan's effusively expressive attention. He stood right in the middle of the water-trough, seeming to soak in and absorb all of her very focussed attention towards him. Meanwhile Ed, like the proverbial little scientist, crouched down and half-hidden behind teacher Jan's legs, was making connections between the half-full watering can, the empty water-trough, and the garden into which the water had disappeared. It is likely that he was wondering where the water went, when it disappeared into the ground.

Event 11 continues

Teacher Jan picks up the half-full watering can beside her and empties it into the trough. "I'll just go and get some more water," she says to both children. Ed watches her and wanders towards the garden, looking around and returning to the water-trough when teacher Jan returns a minute later.

Ed plunges his hands into the stream of water as teacher Jan pours it from the can into the water-trough. Rob joins in feeling the pouring water too. Teacher Jan comments: "Whoo, where's the water coming from?" Ed makes excited "ooohhh…" sounds while both toddlers begin playing separately, apart, yet connected in splashing their hands under the same stream of water. They seem more interested in the water than each other, though occasionally Rob glances towards Ed and seems to copy Ed's splashing actions. Teacher Jan rolls up Rob's long sleeves, talking as she

does so: “I’ll just roll these up so they don’t get wet”. Ed has short sleeves so she leaves him playing with the water. She puts a few small container-objects into the water-trough commenting: “Here you are”.

Rob goes to pick up the large watering can that teacher Jan has been using. “Here you are Rob”, she says offering him a smaller version, in the same green colour and style. He ignores it, but Ed immediately takes it. Ed begins repetitively putting the small can into the small trough and unsuccessfully attempting to fill it with water. He then attempts to pour water from the empty watering can onto the wooden deck. Ed doesn’t seem to mind that the can is empty. He’s more focussed on the filling and pouring process, even without water in the can. A few drops of water fall from outside the wet watering can onto the deck. Perhaps that is sufficient to maintain the water-pouring pretence, despite no water coming from its spout. Ed continues making expressive talking sounds: “ohhh… ohhh” while repetitively going through the actions of filling the watering can and pouring non-existent water onto the deck, accompanied by splashing real water.

Teacher Jan: “You know what we should do boys, if you’re going to tip the water out I’ll get a container for it”. She a places a large plastic bowl on the deck beside the trough, where Rob has been pouring real water while Ed has been pouring pretend water.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

The points of difference between these two toddlers feature in this excerpt. Rob, though several months older, bigger and more physically competent, appears to take the lead from Ed, looking towards Ed and following what Ed does. Teacher Jan is aware of how wider family issues are likely to be contributing to Rob’s desire and need for more attentive care.

Ed simply continues on his agenda of imitating the water filling and pouring actions he’s seen teacher Jan and others carry out. This pretend play is meaningful to him and the repetition mediates him making sense and meaning of the process. Both toddlers are very keen on using the watering cans in their water play. I wonder to what extent they may be imitating and replaying the actions of teacher Jan in setting up the water play activity with water in watering cans. Whatever the reasons, as tools these watering cans intrigue these toddlers.

Event 12: From Water Play to Plant Watering

After awhile Ed shifts his deck watering focus to instead focus on plant watering. A large pot-plant stands in a very large wine barrel container, also on the deck and a few metres away from the water-trough. Ed toddles across the deck to water the plant with pretend water from the real watering can. He begins a new process of

repetitively toddling back and forth between the water-trough and the plant. Ed pretends to fill the watering can from the water-trough. He is still unable to get the water into the can, but this doesn't appear to be an issue for him. He toddles across to the plant, lifts and tilts the watering can towards the plant's base, and pours imaginary water onto the plant. Ed seems totally absorbed in this repetitive pretend watering of a real plant.

Teacher Jan puts a sunhat on his head. He takes it off and drops it on the deck floor. She repeats her actions telling him: "Please keep a hat on your *mahunga*" (head in Māori). He takes the hat off again, dropping it on the deck, but she has now gone inside and not noticed. Rob still occupied at the water-trough has noticed. He takes his sunhat off his head, looks towards naked-headed Ed and seems to be showing or telling Ed with actions to put his hat on. Ed doesn't seem to notice Rob's demonstration; he's pre-occupied with pretending to water the real plant. Rob awkwardly replaces his own hat back on his own head before toddling inside, one hand still holding his hat onto his head, as if to show teacher Jan that, though he has his hat on, Ed does not.

Ed, left alone at the water activity makes calling sounds towards teacher Jan, I think, though she's inside and can't hear "mee… bah… mee… bah". He continues pretend watering the plant for a short while, alone at the water-trough, before abandoning the two watering cans that he now awkwardly tries to handle, one in each hand. Ed toddles towards the inside hat-less, just as teacher Jan coming outside asks: "Are you coming next door now Ed? Yes we're going next door to visit the big boys and girls." Ed comments: "Baba… baba…" and turns to follow her. She picks up his sunhat and puts it on his head. The sun is shining where they're going.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

The contrast between how these two toddlers related in play stands out. Ed was absorbed in his activity. Disliking the interrupting feeling of a sunhat on his head, he simply removed it, dropped the hat on the floor and continued his plant watering. He did not even notice Rob, telling him by showing how to put his hat on. Ed talked a lot, making garble sounds, adding to his busy and rhythmic, toddling, working style. Rob's more silent and slightly uneasy style seemed to hold him back from letting go and simply playing and being. Though older and bigger, he watched and followed Ed's actions. Ed seemed oblivious to his influential leader-like role. Rob also frequently vied for teacher Jan's attention. He wanted and possibly needed a lot of loving attention and teacher Jan did give him time, though as she was caring for others also, this time was sometimes shared. Despite these different toddler styles the water play did engage both children soothingly. I wondered if Ed's creative shift from soothing splashing to pretend plant watering was an outcome of his very secure self state.

Plant watering, as care for plants, was a valued activity in this environmentally aware ECCE centre. I imagined that Ed had observed teachers watering the garden

and pot-plants on other occasions. I was excited by Ed's absorption and the complexity in his imaginative plant watering. His shift in thinking, from pretending the watering can contained water to using the pretend water on a real plant showed wonderful integration of reality and imagination in seriously meaningful play that reflected the cultural values of the place (El'Konin, 1999; Vygotsky, 2004). Ed seemed very at ease in simply pursuing his water play interests. Purpose and pleasure combined in his activity.

Play outdoors and with natural materials such as water, earth and sand is increasingly marginalised in many ECCE services in Aotearoa-New Zealand, in the face of pressures for more sedentary approaches to early learning (Alcock, 2013). Preparation for children's future academic success is increasingly seen as an important role for ECE services. The introduction to the school sector of National Standards intended to measure and report on children's literacy and numeracy levels, on an annual basis from school entry, at the age of the age of 5 years, seems to have added to downward school-ification within the ECCE sector (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013). The following event exemplifies how the Ministry of Education's emphasis on ECCE centres teaching early literacy can also play out positively in practice with toddlers.

Event 13 A: Pens and Mark Making; Literacy and Time to Play

Teacher Jan sits on the floor at a low kidney shaped table on which are scattered blank sheets of paper, about seven large, brightly coloured, felt pens – easy for toddlers to grip – and the empty cardboard box that contained the new pens. Three one-year-old children stand around the table. The intended drawing activity involves making marks on paper with these attractive new large felt pens.

However, the children initially show much greater interest in exploring the pens as play objects with parts that fit together, rather than as mark makers. They become interested in popping the lids off. Teacher Jill mediates: "can I show you?…not in your mouth…like this….see". Putting the lids back on the pens is even more tricky "Shall I put the lid on for you?… look, like this…not in your mouth…) She talks individual children through the actions as they very carefully reconnect pens with lids, sliding them inside the long lids, before repeating the popping apart actions. After working out the lids and possibly tiring of the pen-popping Nina begins to fit the new pens back inside their cardboard box.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

Nina likes being in charge and at about 18 months old she is one of the older, as well as louder children, so she takes charge of the pens, by taking control of their container box. The children play with pens in a multitude of ways that include physically

fitting pens together and later making marks. The pens do resemble lolly-pops and when a child attempts to lick one, teacher Jan reminds children not to eat them. I wonder if, in playing with fitting pens together, the children are, in a sense, playing with fitting themselves together? They are learning to connect with each other, and possibly learning rules and roles around sharing pens, as well as the workings and possibilities of pens. Play mediates these children working out patterns in connections as part of making meaning generally (Bateson, 1980).

Event 13 A continues

Lee approaching the group repeatedly says: "Mine, mine, mine…" looking at the pens showing that he wants one. Nina holds the box of pens, having fitted most of the pens with their lids on very carefully inside the box. Holding the box tightly she turns away from Lee. Teacher Jan asks Lee: "Would you like a pen?" Lee enthusiastically nods his head meaning: "Yes". Teacher Jan then asks, but seems to be telling Nina: "Can you give Lee one (felt pen)?"

Nina calmly passes Lee a pen, which he equally calmly takes. The children do make marks on the paper and teacher Jan draws their attention to this: "Good job, look…".

A short while later a pen lid is accidentally dropped and rolls across the floor under the table. Searching for the lid leads to a game of peeping at each other under the table, standing up and crouching down. The children repeat this play several times laughing in surprise at seeing one another as they peep above and below the table, like Jack-in-the-boxes.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

Teacher Jan supports the children in learning how pens fit together, where pens belong (in a box) and what they can do (make marks-drawing). She allows children time to explore and play with the materials, experimenting with the many ways of using these tools, the lid-fitting, the packaging, categorising, rolling pens, hiding pens, and even drawing with pens on paper. Her welcoming presence drew children towards the activity, while the new pens and paper mediated the pen exploration and drawing activity. The children engaged playfully with the pens, popping them apart. They later related playfully with each other, in the peeping game.

I wondered about the sense of belonging and care that such small-group, teacher-mediated, play seemed to engender.

In this event teacher Jan explicitly mediated Nina practising care for another when she asked Nina, who held the pens, to give a pen to Lee. He had already indicated that he wanted a pen, yet Nina resisted giving him one until told to do so by the powerful teacher. I wondered about the nature of such messages and the authenticity of the *caring for others* messages conveyed in the subtext of the teacher's asking-telling tone.

Event 13 B: Mark Making: The Feeling of Finger-Painting

On another occasion Teacher Jan sits on a child-sized chair in the same place at the same table that stands in the same corner of the under two's room. A large tray covers the table-top and in the middle sits a shallow bowl filled with a sloppy cornflour, finger-paint, mixture called gloop. Three one-year-old children stand around the table looking at this gloop and tentatively begin to individually touch, poke and feel it, while teacher Jan also feels the gloop. Her intermittent commentary accompanies and supports the children's rapidly increasing exploration of gloop feelings: "See how it feels, …isn't it sticky? … You can try to pick it up … Don't eat it… Look, you can make patterns with your fingers, your hands…" As the children experiment with ways of feeling and spreading the gloop they look up more and begin glancing at each other at each other, as well as at teacher Jan.

The gloop play begins to spread over the edge of the tray and onto the table- top. The children engage in large swirls, pats and squeezing gloop through their fingers and hands. The gloop spreads to the mirror wall on one side of the table as first one, then another child, began to paint their faces in the mirror, covering their reflections in gloop. The third child, seeing this, begins to paint the glass doors behind him. Teacher Jan calmly comments on the reflection painting: "Ohh, are you covering your faces?" Seeing the gloop spreading, she calmly picks up the floor carpet corner and folds it further away from the messy gloop. The children too play calmly. They become very engaged in this increasingly messy and sensory, mark-making, gloop-spreading, finger-painting play. With their hands and fingers as brushes, they paint the table, their reflections in the mirror and in the glass doors.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

I stood nearby watching with interest and some amazement as this teacher very calmly supported these toddlers' very messy sensory play, inside. Such play is often confined to outdoors. I have not often seen children so casually permitted to spread finger-paint beyond the table boundary onto the nearby walls and doors with such calm ease. In my experience such activities can become chaotic, especially when panicking teachers reactively impose rigid rules. However, teacher Jan knew these three children and she could responsively gauge the boundaries for their play. She stayed seated in the same place, like a grounding figure, holding the play space, not interfering, but providing guiding suggestions. Within this relational field these children were supported to feel and think differently, through the medium of the wet, sticky gloop skin that covered their fingers and hands, like another layer of skin.

I was interested in how the children, from being totally focussed on how their own hands felt in the gloop, began to subtly glance and take cues from one another. Through such intersubjective exchanges the children further developed their gloop

play co-creatively. The mirror wall had space for only two children, side by side, so the glass door behind Bill became an obvious alternative space to him. He painted the glass with gloop, carefully watching and feeling his fingers and hands squelch gloop onto glass. From being very self-focussed at the start of the play the dynamics shifted to children becoming a group acting together, looking at and following each other, as well as themselves.

Event 13 B continues

As the play became less intensive teacher Jan began to pull it in, by placing wet wash cloths on the table and announcing: "It's time to start cleaning this up now…. Here are some wet cloths…" The gloop was transformed into water play for a short while, as children wiped it up with the wet cloths and squeezed them into the bowl, with teacher Jan's help. Then teacher and children carried the gloop covered tray and bowl through the gloop covered sliding glass doors to the outside water-trough. Together they splashed and cleaned up their hands and arms as well as the utensils. This cleaning up was part of the whole play process.

Discussion, Analysis, and Wondering

This event is included here as Part B because the physical set up was so similar in these two events, A and B. Both activities, centred on a small corner table with a responsive teacher, seemed to mediate children's feelings of belonging and connectedness, as individuals connecting and relating together with just a few, others. It was only once these children had individually poked and prodded and played a little with the gloop material, (and with the pens in Part A) that they began to connect intersubjectively with each other mediated by the gloop (and pen) play. This shift from focussing on self in relation to the play material, to connecting with just a few other people seems significant. Dyads, triads and just a few children seemed to work for these very young children.

I was intrigued by the rhythmicity and vitality in children's ways of moving (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011; Stern, 2010; Trevarthen, 2002). Though in both Parts A and B the teacher sat, on the floor and on a chair, the children stood, and moved, toddling freely around the table that, like the teacher, also seemed to hold the play activities together. These children never stood still, yet the place felt calm.

Summary

Though Puriri centre's *sustainability as care* philosophy was evident in socially caring interactions, it was challenging to observe meaningful environmental sustainability practices in the experiences of infants of toddlers. This isn't surprising, as sustainability is a complex and abstract concept. But, sustainable actions are often

very simple. Thus, environmental awareness was integral to the daily living practices of these children and their teachers. The babies did wear cloth nappies and accompanied older children on tree planting expeditions. Toys were recycled from family homes to Puriri centre and many other sustainable practices were followed.

Sustainability as care for self and others was generally visible on the surface in observations of children relating together and with teachers. Teachers did actively mediate and support children being caring for others in learning to take turns, to share and to follow similar social rules. Children were also actively taught to respect and care for things in the environment, such as plants and books. But in-depth exploration of care for self, as a feeling, felt in bodies, seemed to be implicit in many interactions, rather than an explicit focus.

Boundaries feature on several levels including the physical border-boundaries between the under and over-twos areas', the physical boundaries between Puriri centre, family homes and the local community and the boundaries around those homes, shops, the bush area etc. But the internally felt boundaries that characterised individual babies and small groups of toddlers, sometimes with a teacher safely nearby, seemed to be particularly significant for young children coming into being themselves while simultaneously connecting and relating with others. Events in this chapter highlight young toddlers becoming aware relationally, as intra and intersubjectively connected with others, in dyads, triads and small groups, contained and held together in feelings of belonging, connectedness and being.

The role of the *good enough* teacher, in providing a *holding environment*, that enabled children to feel *contained* in themselves and to begin thinking their feelings meaningfully, in play of all sorts, stands out in these observations (Bion, 1962, Ogden, 2004; Winnicott, 1960a, 1960b, 1974). The centre's philosophical focus on sustainability as care of self and others and the world, was most meaningful for babies and toddlers subjectively becoming themselves, with others in the world.

References

Alcock, S. (2013). Searching for play in early childhood care and education policy. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 48*(1), 19–33.

Alcock, S., & Haggerty, M. (2013). Recent policy developments and the "schoolification" of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Early Childhood Folio, 17*(2), 21–26.

Bateson, G. (1980). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Bion, W. R. (1962). *Learning from experience*. London: William Heinemann.

Cleary, T. F. (1993). *The flower ornament scripture*. Boston: Shambhala.

El'Konin, D. B. (1999). The development of play in preschoolers: Roles and pretend situations: Their significance and the motivation of play activity. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 37*(6), 31–70. doi:10.2753/RPO1061-0405370631.

Gallese, V. (2009a). Mirror neurons, embodied simulation, and the neural basis of social identification. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 519–536. doi:10.1080/10481880903231910.

Gallese, V. (2009b). The two sides of mimesis: Girard's mimetic theory, embodied simulation and social identification. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 16*(4), 21–44.

Gallese, V. (2009c). We-ness, embodied simulation, and psychoanalysis: Reply to commentaries. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 580–584. doi:10.1080/10481880903231928.
Hollway, W. (2006). *The capacity to care: Gender and ethical subjectivity/Wendy Hollway*. London/New York: Routledge.
Macy, J. (1991). *World as lover, world as self* (Vol. 185). Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
Malloch, S., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.
Ogden, T. (2004). On holding and containing, being and dreaming. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 85*(6), 1349–1364. doi:10.1516/T41H-DGUX-9JY4-GQC7.
Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2011). *The primacy of movement* (Vol. 82). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
Stern, D. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
Stern, D. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Trevarthen, C. (2002). Origins of musical identity: Evidence from infancy for musical social awareness. In D. H. D. M. R. MacDonald (Ed.), *Musical identities* (pp. 21–38). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press.
Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 42*(1), 7–97.
Winnicott, D. W. (1960a). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 41*, 585–595.
Winnicott, D. W. (1960b). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; a study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 34*(2), 89–97.
Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
Zinchenko, V. P. (2001). External and internal: Another comment on the issue. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 135–137). Aahus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

Part IV
Implications for Teachers: Observing Subjectively, Reflectively, Relationally and with Feeling

Implications: Teachers Being Relationally Aware

Abstract From birth we are emotionally and relationally becoming human-beings together. This final chapter addresses practical implications for early childhood teachers in being relational and respectful, seeing children as human-beings, as becoming emotionally grounded selves. Relational perspectives view individual selves as intra- and inter-connected with others, emotionally cognitively and bodily alive and open to living and learning in the world. Bodies with feelings matter and are integral to understandings of the holistic and complex processes involved in children's ways of learning, being and becoming (Stern D, The interpersonal world of the infant: a view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology. Basic Books, New York, 1985; Trevarthen C, Psychoanal Dialog 19(5):507–518. doi:10.1080/10481880903231894, 2009; Eur Early Childhood Educ Res J 20(3):303–312. doi:10.1080/1350293X.2012.704757, 2012).

This final chapter addresses practical implications for early childhood teachers of viewing children relationally and respectfully, as human-beings becoming emotionally grounded selves. These implications are the outcome of further reflection and analyses of the events presented in this book.

From birth we are emotionally and relationally becoming human-beings together (Stern, 1985; Trevarthen, 2009, 2012). The overarching research focus of this book is young children's relational and emotional ways of being and belonging, within early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings. This focus fills a gap in the field of ECCE theory and research literature. The bodily-felt ways with which children make sense and meaning of their worlds have frequently been overlooked in the face of individualist and cognitivist views of young children and learning. In contrast relational perspectives view individual selves as intra- and inter-connected with others, emotionally cognitively and bodily alive and open to living and learning in the world. Bodies with feelings matter and are integral to understandings of the holistic and complex processes involved in children's ways of learning, being and becoming.

These holistically interconnected perspectives are informed by socio-cultural and relational psychology (Kirschner & Martin, 2010; Mitchell & Aron, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978). While socio-cultural perspectives have tended to prioritise the visible, conscious and material ways in which people are motivated to connect with

S.J. Alcock, *Young Children Playing*, International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development 12, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-1207-5_10

others, relational psychoanalytic perspectives have attended more to the invisible, unconscious and subjective ways in which these processes occur (Hollway, 2006; Kirschner, 2013; O'Loughlin & Johnson, 2010). Both perspectives view individual subjectivity as evolving relationally through co-created systems of interactivity. Culturally co-constructed tools, signs and symbols, such as language and play, actively mediate this relationality (Wartofsky, 1979). These two broadly inclusive relational psychological perspectives underpin the conceptual framework for this book. This chapter presents a synthesis of some of the practical implications arising from these relational perspectives, as illustrated in earlier chapters, for teachers of babies, toddlers and young children.

A case is made for teachers reflectively and subjectively observing while also engaging with young children relating and playing.

Observing Lilly: Reflecting Awareness

Watching Lilly exploring a spoonful of rice is a privilege for me. She's not yet 1 year old and eating rice in a café is probably a first for her. I see and feel the first-ness of her experience. As a participating observer I am privileged to participate in the first-ness of her experience, in what becomes my experience too. Lilly almost throws her fingers into the sticky rice, a few grains find her mouth as she tries to unstick them from her fingers, but eating doesn't appear to be her priority.

Settled in her mothers lap, Lilly looks faces towards towards me across the table, so directly opposite her. With both hands Lilly grabs the edge of the plastic rice-filled bowl in front of her, looking as if she's planning to drop the bowl onto the floor. That would be a fun experiment! Lilly expends huge amounts of energy playfully experimenting and exploring things in the world around her. That's play. I reach out my hands intending to save the bowl and the rice. Lilly glares fiercely at me, almost growling she holds tightly, tugs and pulls the bowl away from me, towards herself. Her body almost screams "it's mine, my bowl, my rice!" Mother comes to the rescue. Mother feels like Lilly's alter-ego, her body encompassing Lilly's and her face positioned like a larger version of Lilly directly above Lilly's small head. Mother gently holds the bowl as I let go and Lilly becomes distracted by a few drops of water that her father, seated beside her, drops onto the table.

Water on the table-top helps unstick the rice. Like windscreen wipers she slides her arms from side to side across the wet table-top. The water is smooth, wet and not sticky. Her father puts a teaspoonful of his chilli-sauce flavoured rice into her mouth. Lilly screws up her face, holds her ears, shifts her tongue, feeling the sharp taste. She shakes her head. I read her body and feel her confused feelings in her screwed up face. She seems to be listening to the physical feelings inside her mouth. Then she scrunches her mouth into a wonderfully wide forced smile as if to say 'hullo, look at me, I'm me, and I'm smiling at you'. Lilly does get wonderful laughing smiling responses from anyone when she smiles like that. Her smile speaks volumes.

She's very secure with her mother and father beside her, supporting her strong social urge to also connect with privileged strangers like me.

For much of the hour that we're together Lilly is physically connected to her parents. She sits on them, is held and is carried, though she is also mobile and beginning to toddle alone. She feels securely attached as she plays with smiling, eating, wiping the wet table, and generally toddling around.

Relationality with Feeling (In Bodies)

Watching and being with Lily engaged me emotionally in my feeling body. Emotions emerge and develop as feelings felt in bodies and between people. Feelings emerge and change in the to and fro-ness of relating and not relating, connecting, disconnecting and reconnecting, living together and apart with others. From this relational perspective emotions are not viewed as fixed discrete entities found inside individuals, but as fluid and responsively shifting processes that are felt and expressed in mood, and tone and that emerge and evolve in the invisible feeling spaces that exist in and between people (Benjamin, 2004; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011; Stern, 2010; Trevarthen, 2011).

The discussions, interpretations and wonderings that accompany the events presented in this book have emphasised the connectedness of children's (and teacher's) bodies with minds, thinking with feeling, selves with others, and in wider contexts. These relationally interconnected, views of children and teachers enrich understandings of the multiplicities and complexities in children's (and teachers), ways of being, while also highlighting implications for teachers' practices. I could elaborate on the complexities in Lilly's social café play; the way she separated rice grains and the cards in her mothers wallet, handing them out as gifts, sharing and connecting again with us. Themes of coming together and apart pervaded her play with things and with us. Her play was relational and emotional all the way through. Lilly even played with the power of social smiling. In simply being present I was included in her relational field of play.

Many of the events presented in earlier chapters present young children in ECCE settings, connecting and communicating, alive and open to one another in shared, sometimes playful and always relational ways of being. Though most of these events seemed to emerge spontaneously they were also the outcome of conditions. The extent to which conditions can be effected by teachers varies, but in very fundamental and sometimes subtle ways, teachers effect the conditions, to enrich the experiences of young children and themselves in ECCE settings.

The conditions for Lilly, above, included being in a café eating rice, surrounded by four adoring adults (her parents and grand-parents). Together we comprised an activity system mediated by Lilly as well as by artefacts including the bowl of rice, Lilly's mothers' wallet with its cards, the water, table, chairs etc. These objects and our movements, words, expressions, emotional energy and intentions mediated and

held us together as a dynamic activity system, full of tensions and contradictions. These emerged mainly around Lilly's mediated play; her activity also connected us.

I'm telling this story because it's exemplifies adult/teacher roles and power in relation to young children's exploratory play and access to mediating artefacts. We could have restricted Lilly's play in every way, by withholding the rice, the bowl, and the wallet. We could also have tried to ignore her, but that would have been difficult, given her determination to be seen and heard and our emotional openness towards her.

The objects Lilly chose to play within the café with were authentic and very much part of her surrounding culture. They were not toys. She knew that mother's large wallet full of cards and coins was important to mother. Like the adults Lilly wanted rice, a bowl and water. But while Lilly played creatively with these artefacts we treated them more functionally, simply eating, drinking and paying, though also entranced by Lilly's play. Like layered Russian dolls, this artefact mediated activity system was in turn also mediated as a café in a food hall in a city in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Teachers viewing children and themselves as relational, with all the implications such understandings might bring is a good place for teachers to further awareness. In the oft-quoted words of Mahatma Ghandi: "You must be the change you want to see in the world".

The implications for teachers in ECCE settings being actively relational, that emerged out of the writing and analyses in this book, are addressed in this chapter within three circularly overlapping and related topics: reflective observations, emotional awareness (of feelings felt in bodies), and narrative as meaning-making in play. Reflective relaxed observation styles, mediate openness and en-minded-body awareness, which in turn mediate awareness of the present-ness in children's communicative play. When children (and adults) feel open and alive to the world around, they are also open to flexibly making sense and meaning in playful and serious ways. These three topics are addressed in this order, though in reality they inform each other in more haphazard ways.

Reflective Relational Observation

Reflective relational observing is complex. The word *observation* does not help understandings, when understood with traditional early childhood education notions of so-called *objective* child observations. Reflective observation includes and even prioritises the insights of *subjective* observation processes. Observation as such, is not just watching. Rather reflective observation includes consciously wondering, pondering and reflecting while observing, sometimes almost contemplatively. This observation process is both personal and interpersonal. It may become intersubjective, by actively including observer and observed as subjects. Thus, in observing Lilly in the earlier story I was also observing myself, subjectively. Reflective relational observation involves observing oneself in relation to children, so simultaneously observing children and listening to the intuitive feeling-thoughts that

emerge in oneself, for example when entering children's play. I was aware, at times, of observing myself in relation to Lilly.

Listening to ones' own body feelings, while observing others, takes practice and time. Feeling open in itself requires being relaxed and present. Feeling relaxed is integral to being open to awareness of oneself and with others and when observing children. It follows that stressed-out teachers are likely to have difficulty being relaxed. Consequently feeling and being relationally present and open will also be difficult. Teachers may benefit from strategies to support them in becoming more relaxed, present, open, aware and connected in themselves and with the children and families they relate with. Developing relational awareness is a never-ending process of learning to simply be open to the present moment.

Mindfulness; Awareness

The field of mindfulness offers strategies that can mediate teachers' further developing awareness of being present to themselves, to children, and to the world. Jon Kabat-Zinn writing the Foreward to the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group Report "Mindful Nation UK" (2015, p. 10), explains mindfulness as: "… a way of being in wise and purposeful relationship with one's experience, both inwardly and outwardly. It is cultivated by systematically exercising one's capacity for paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally, and by learning to inhabit and make use of the clarity, discernment, ethical understanding, and awareness that arise from tapping into one's own deep and innate interior resources for learning, growing, healing, and transformation, available to us across the lifespan by virtue of being human. It usually involves cultivating familiarity and intimacy with aspects of everyday experience that we often are unaware of, take for granted, or discount in terms of importance. These would include our experience of the present moment, our own bodies, our thoughts and emotions, and above all, our tacit and constraining assumptions and our highly conditioned habits of mind and behavior."

Strategies to support such mindfulness emphasise listening to oneself with all senses so with the whole body. This focus on senses – feeling, taste, touch, smell, sight and consciousness – calls to mind the sensory ways of being that infants and toddler's such as Lilly exude. Mindfulness techniques often focus initially on developing breath-awareness by feeling the breath entering the body with the in-breath and leaving with the out-breath. This focussed awareness on being present to the breath mediates relaxing into being present and open to the world, which in turn supports being open and present to observing while relating with young children. In this sense observer and observed are also connected, in sharing the air that is breathed. Focussed awareness mediates experiencing the breath connecting ones' body with the world.

Mindfulness offers some very practical strategies for developing sensitivity to feelings as felt in bodies. Specific breathing-based techniques, such as consciously

breathing stress out of the body, mediate the return to a more relaxed state of openness. This sensitive self-awareness supports relational awareness. Reflective relational observation requires a shift from reflectively – mindfully – observing oneself, to simultaneously observing others.

Reflective observation of feelings involves broadening the visual bias in observing and observers explicitly including awareness of their feelings. This shift implies observers listening to feelings in their own and others bodies. Watching pre-verbal children, such as Lilly, demands this sort of body listening observing style. Bodies talk, think and feel. Feelings are felt in bodies. Without our bodies we are no-body. The bodies of pre-verbal children are particularly articulate, thoughtful and feeling-ful in their ways of being, before words. Words brings another complexly inter and intra-connecting layer to bodies relating, making it easier to overlook the complexities in bodies when observing verbal children.

Observing bodies with an open and inclusive focus on visible and invisible feeling-thoughts can be challenging. A curious observer attitude helps, along with asking oneself reflectively open-ended questions such as: What/how is this child (eg Lilly) thinking and feeling? What/how mediates and connects her with others, with herself and with me? How/why am I feeling and thinking while observing? What are these children saying with bodies? and with words?

Observing feeling-tone, rhythm and vitality

In trying to understand and become aware of the complex emotional nuances in the observed child (rens) ways of being, reflective questions that focus specifically on the feeling tone and rhythm in children's activity can also be useful. Examples of questions about emotions and feelings are:

> What sort of tone, pulse, rhythm, and or the vitality affect do I feel while observing? What might the child (ren) be feeling? How do these feelings connect? What do the feelings say?

Reflective questions associated with languages of music, movement, dance and poetry, may provoke emotional awareness in observers, by expanding ways of seeing. Words structure how we consciously think and see the world (Vygotsky, 1986). The ancient Greeks, had just one word for music. In their eyes and ears *musike* included all of the temporal arts: music, dance, drama, and the performance of poetry (Alcock, 2008; Trevarthen, 2002). This emphasis on temporality echoes the temporal qualities of feelings and emotions.

Referring to the temporal nature of vitality in feelings, Stern (2004, p. 64) points out that: "The feeling quality of vitality affects is best captured by kinetic terms such as, *surging, floating away, fleeting, explosive, tentative, effort, accelerating, decelerating, climaxing, bursting, drawn out, reaching, hesitating, leaning forward, leaning backwards*, and so on". These terms describe languages of movement and dance. Words such as *rhythm, tone, pulse, story-line, and beat* are associated with the language of music. The related concept of *communicative musicality* (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) further enriches ways of seeing and feeling when reflectively observing children playing.

Musicality is inherent to all languages and modes of communication.

The movement, vitality and rhythmicity that stands out in many of the events presented in this book, calls to be observed, noticed and responded to. Lilly, in the story at the start of this chapter, exuded energy in her non-stop movement.

Vitality affect is implicit in the feeling-tone of all languages and modes of communication (Stern, 1985, 2004, 2010). It is particularly obvious in the sensory and bodily-based communication of pre-verbal babies and in the *aliveness* with which their bodies at ease can anticipate, begin to regulate and communicate, without and before words (Shotter, 2010).

The language of words can further mediate observer awareness of children's vitality in all its forms. Words used to describe movement and music, resonate with Loris Malaguzzi's (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998) description of the *100 languages of childhood*. "… The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking. … of listening, of marvelling, of loving, a hundred joys for singing and understanding, a hundred worlds to discover … to dream … (and a hundred hundred hundred more) but they steal ninety-nine…." (p. 3). Malaguzzi's poem dramatically describes how the invisibility of most languages, narrows and reduces the range of ways that children might connect, communicate and represent thoughts and feelings.

An obvious implication for teachers observing young children's rhythmicity and vitality is to increase the visibility of languages other than those prioritised by formal schooling, which tend to be reading, writing and arithmetic, with technology as an increasingly significant shaping tool. Teachers can enhance awareness and acceptance of other languages, including music, movement, dance and drama, by actively supporting children's access to and use of mediating artefacts such as costumes, drums and other sound-beat-rhythm-making objects. Teachers can highlight children's use of languages of music, movement, drama and dance, in their observations and teachers can further mediate children's language use and awareness through engaging together with children in drama, singing, chanting and dancing. Reflective observing can thus mediate teachers noticing, feeling and responding to the many languages of the children they observe, while also connecting and relating with those children.

Observers can look for vitality in the feeling of rhythms and can include body rocking, tapping of objects like rattles, improvised chants, songs and lullabies, for example. Reciprocally felt rhythmic qualities are particularly important for observers with babies. Like mirrors made of sponge, babies actively absorb and adapt to the feeling-tone of people close to them, in the firing of their mirror neurons (Gallese, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). Infants imitate the actions of those around them. The neuroscience of relationality and attachment in infants and young children is a growing domain of important research, with implications for notions of belonging, connectedness and for the learning of empathy. Though details are beyond the scope of this book, findings from the field of neuroscience endorse the rub-off importance of emotional awareness for people such as ECCE teachers relating warmly with the young children they care for (Schore, 2010; Siegel, 1999).

Self-regulation is also grounded in awareness of body-rhythms. Infants and young children becoming aware with all senses, of the flow and rhythm in and

between their bodies, are also actively learning about their own body rhythms. The sensori-motor label accurately describes infant's implicitly sensory ways of being, though it seems to overlook the significance of rhythm and feeling tone and the part these qualities play in children's developing self-identities.

To summarise, reflective relational observation involves ECCE teachers:

Being open and present,
Observing, subjectively, so including oneself.
Observing bodies moving and listening for vitality affect and the general feeling-tone.
Observing the spaces in-between self and child(ren) (including the artefacts, languages, vitality and tone that mediate connections).
Being aware of the wider relational field, with all that mediates self and others communicating and connecting.
Being open to play.

Emotional Awareness (of Feelings Felt in Bodies)

Self-Other

Becoming emotionally aware of oneself is a life-long practise for most people and refers here to both children and teachers being and becoming emotionally self-aware, though such awareness is particularly important for teachers working closely and intimately with very young children. The intimacy in these relationships mediates children subjectively becoming Selves – how they understand themselves – their identities. Young children actively internalise (and externalise) feelings from the emotional tone in the actions and interactions of their teachers and significant others (Beebe, Rustin, Sorter, & Knoblauch, 2003; Beebe, Sorter, Rustin, & Knoblauch, 2003; Gallese, 2009c; Zinchenko, 2001). As well as subjectively becoming Selves, children are also becoming relationally aware, amidst the feeling-based actions of the people around them (Trevarthen, 2012).

Thus teachers carry huge responsibilities in how they relate, and care for young children. Several events presented earlier in this book show teachers engaging emotionally with children in a range of ways, from wild-play to intimate caring. In other events teachers are not present. But the environmental conditions that mediate those events are teacher controlled, the range and choice around play activities being indirectly and directly determined by teachers, who also exert some controlling influences over the rules, roles, routines and rituals that together contribute to the ethos of ECCE centres and the degree of empowerment children feel in the centre.

Centre Ethos

The busy worlds of ECCE centres can quickly become emotionally stressful places. ECCE centres are hives of unconsciously and consciously felt and expressed emotions, which can contagiously spread across groups of children (and teachers), as exemplified in several events in this book. Emotions are felt (and caught) relationally. In order to become emotionally self-aware, children have to be allowed to safely and securely experience feelings, with others. Children cannot become emotionally self-aware if they're not expected or allowed to feel a range of feelings such as: sadness, anger, love, envy, joy, hate. It is from feeling feelings that people can come to understanding and regulating emotions. The relationships that evolve over and with time lived in ECCE centres are profoundly emotional for children, as well as their families and their teachers. Basic feelings such as love, anger, joy, hate and envy, imbued with overtones of power, care and respect, are integral to these relationships, making ECCE centres potentially very feeling-full places.

ECCE teachers play influential roles in contributing to the feeling-tone of the ECCE centre, by engaging directly with children and also by contributing to the conditions that mediate how children engage in that particular space. Conditions include rules, roles and artefacts (Wartofsky, 1979). It is the feeling-tone of these conditions that mediates children interactively being and becoming their subjective Selves – their Self identities – in that ECCE centre space. In this sense children come to mirror aspects of their relational environment in their ways of being. Reflective child observation methods may support teachers' becoming explicitly aware of how their ways of being influence both individual children and the overall emotional tone – the relational ethos – of the ECCE centre. Awareness can enable change.

In reciprocal ways teachers, as observers, can enhance their awareness of feelings, as experienced in their bodies, during the actual process of observing. This self-other awareness makes observing a relational process. Awareness of feelings involves being relaxed, hence able to be present and open to experiencing feelings as they emerge and change (Damasio, 2000) which harks back to the field of mindfulness.

Mindfulness of Experiencing Feelings in Bodies

The mindfulness focus mentioned earlier extends beyond simply being relaxed, to more specifically emphasising awareness of experiencing feelings in bodies. This body-based awareness of feelings requires the receptivity that comes with being relaxed.

Feeling relaxed, safe and secure, resonates with the *secure base* concept of securely attached infants (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). In a circular way the security of feeling a sense of belonging mediates and enables teachers and children's

openess to experiencing feelings. This is not the same as identifying, naming, lightly touching while possibly avoiding actually experiencing feelings in the stomach, heart and whole mind-body. It is the body-based sensory experience of feeling that contributes to understandings of being awake, open, curious, and alive to the world.

Simply naming feelings with words does not necessarily lead to children identifying and experiencing feelings as felt in bodies. However, words can mediate felt experience. Teachers can use words, with feeling, to support children experiencing feelings relationally. It is the avoidance of actually experiencing feelings that contributes to less vital ways of living, including the dull cut-off feeling-tone of depression and other states of mental un-wellness.

Bodily felt awareness of feelings builds on being physically relaxed and open to experience. Mindfulness of feelings depends on awareness of the embodied nature of emotions, as feeling-thoughts felt in bodies. With relaxed openness teachers can listen to the feeling-thoughts that create the emotions felt in and between their bodies and children's bodies (Damasio, 2000). Mindful relational awareness becomes more complex with the inclusion of feeling-thoughts. However, the emphasis on coming back to feelings as felt in bodies and drawing on all senses is important for teachers' observing themselves and children relationally, reflectively and with awareness. Teachers can integrate simple strategies that encourage breathe awareness into children's play and in so doing teachers can enhance their own breath and mindful awareness.

Good-Enough Teachers: Holding in Mind and Body

The metaphorical image of teachers as *good enough teachers*, rather than super-teachers, resonates positively in a Winnicottian way (Ogden, 2001; Winnicott, 1974). Good enough teachers recognise and respond to children's emotional states. They attune and connect with infants and young children. Good-enough teachers support children feeling safely and securely held, which in turn supports children to think and learn. Holding is implicit in the holding actions of some teachers in events presented in this book; they become *secure bases* for young children.

Through observation-informed understandings, teachers can consciously anticipate and sensitively hold children in mind as well as in their physical bodies, thereby supporting children to also become emotionally in touch with themselves. Lilly's mother held Lilly physically as well as in her mind, supporting Lilly's further exploratory play in the café, in the story described earlier in this chapter.

Alongside the concept of feeling held, concepts such as *thirdness*, *transitional space* and *transitional phenomena* discussed in earlier chapters, also usefully inform relational observation by re-emphasising the *inter* space of inter-subjectivity (Benjamin, 2004; Ogden, 2004; Winnicott, 1960). This overlapping felt space that is both between and in people is a major focus for reflective relational observations. For Lilly this was the space of play, filled also with rice, bowl, wallet and water, adding substance to feelings.

Notions of co-creation, or co-construction, add further to observer awareness of the imaginative and artefact mediated ways in which knowledge and understandings are created relationally and in play. Thus Lilly could simply relax and play relationally using the adults, her body and the things around her in a shared felt and imagined third space that was also a real café-restaurant.

All of these relational concepts open up and expand ways in which ECCE teachers can observe and come to understand themselves and the children and families with whom they relate. A pragmatic way of understanding these concepts is for teachers to use them while observing children. Focussing on the *inter* of intersubjectivity and the *co* of co-construction, can enhance teachers' relational awareness. With children's wellbeing and learning as overarching goals, relationally aware teachers can engage responsively with children, in these felt in-between transitional spaces, which are also the spaces of play.

Relating and Regulating Emotions with Rhythm and Play

These four points: regulating, rhythm, play and emotions, are complexly connected in young children's ways of relating and being. Like the meaning of motion in the word *e-motion*, emotions move us. They do this with both rhythm and feeling. Emotions are embodied. They are felt rhythmically, in our bodies and relationally, in the flow within and between ourselves and other people, places and things.

While moving quickly and rhythmically Lilly, anecdotally introduced at the start of this chapter, was also implicitly – unconsciously – regulating herself emotionally by regularly glancing towards her mother and us re-connecting with the adults around her. She actively used her mother in particular as her secure base. Ben, another almost 1-year-old infant, approaches the world differently, more cautiously, though also with speed, but crawling rather than toddling like Lily. He too regularly glances towards his caregivers, implicitly and relationally regulating himself emotionally. These regular glances, interspersed with hugs and holds, reassure both Ben and Lilly emotionally, supporting them to continue moving, playing, and exploring in body-based sensory ways. Connections between sensations and rhythm are felt in their bodies and learned in 'the feeling of what happens' (Damasio, 2000) implicitly. These embodied feelings lay the foundations for later more conscious self-regulation (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1998; Stern, 1985).

Thus, initially self-regulation is learned implicitly in the rhythms felt by babies in their bodies. With their very sensory ways of being infants physically feel the tone and rhythm of their bodies. It is these feelings that become embodied as basic emotions. Before speaking, or even understandings words, implicit memories based on feelings, are relationally, co-created in and between babies and their significant caregivers. In this way physical rhythm becomes integral to the feeling-tone of being. The rhythm felt by babies', feeds into relating and communicating with others as well as coming to know the Self in a potentially regulatory way.

All the performing arts languages, including music, movement, dance, drama, poetry and are grounded in rhythm. Dissanayake (1992) has proposed that the rhythm in early infant-caregiver intersubjectivity is the basis for all arts. Verbal language at its most basic also includes these basic rhythmic felt qualities, in the tone, tune, pulse and overall felt expression with which young children come to speak.

Conscious self-regulation requires self-awareness of feelings, as experienced, recognised and felt in bodies and relationally. But for pre-verbal infants, toddlers and for young children the process of learning to self-regulate is also implicit, so unconscious. It involves more than the conscious self-control that the phrase *self-regulation* suggests. Implicit relational awareness of feelings, is a foundation for self-regulation of emotions in children and adults. Emotionally self and other-aware teachers are likely to notice opportunities to step-in and support children becoming self-aware, emotionally-aware and self-regulated. Aware adults can hold children's feelings, emotionally supporting children for whom feelings might otherwise be overwhelming.

Teachers of babies and young children can enhance children's wellbeing and openness to learning by responsively initiating singing, moving, dancing and other rhythmically engaging ways of communicating and interacting with young children (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011; Stern, 2010; Trevarthen, 2002).

Through rhythmic communication and play teachers can support children to listen to their body-feelings to be open, to go-with experiencing feelings, rather than turning away and smothering what might feel or sound socially inappropriate, sad, or painful. This sort of body-listening awareness fits with a pedagogy of listening, emphasising open-minded receptive attitudes in teachers, which in turn effect the feeling-tone ethos – of the ECCE centre.

Play as Narrative-Like Sense and Meaning-Making

Conversations and communication depend on so much more than words and verbal language. The sense and meaning that infants (and young children) feel and communicate in rhythm also functions as a framework for them constructing and creating narrative-like understandings of self, other and the world (Bruner, 1986). The rhythm becomes an emotionally felt narrative, with pulse, time, beat, pitch, timbre adding complexity to the narrative as a felt story-line (Trevarthen, 2002). This interpretation of narrative fits with the emotionally felt communicative qualities in music, dance and other temporal arts.

In play and in being playful young children implicitly draw on all these rhythmic modes as ways of being, connecting and communicating, intra and inter-actively with self and others. Ben and Lily enjoyed the fun of peep-oh games, which carry profound narrative themes around being lost and found, with echoes of safety when found and feelings of fear when lost. Rhythmicity was integral to these children's play. Play was co-created in transitional third spaces that emerged in and between

Ben, Lily, and the adults who played peep-oh with them (Benjamin, 2004; Ogden, 2004; Winnicott, 1960, 1974). The process of playing mediated Ben and Lily making meaning and coming to understand themselves in relation to, and with, others and the environment. The narrative plot in games of peep-oh, being lost and found, held together the profoundly thrilling meanings in feeling lost and found. Games like peep-oh communicate the blend of movement, present-ness and open-to-the-world attitude that characterise infants and toddlers playing. Events presented in earlier chapters show more verbal young children playing similar themes in many different and imaginative ways ranging from hide and seek with words and counting, to myth infused themes of finding, catching and killing the bad witch.

Words add specificity to narratives. Visiting a practicum student, Sarah, in an ECCE centre recently I was immediately drawn into an imaginative narrative play performance that included an audience of children and teachers with a visiting professional actor. He directed and narrated the fairy-tale story with themes of hiding and finding, good and evil while we acted our designated roles; this drama thrived on audience participation. Sarah was a talking horse, carrying the child soldiers who found and rescued me – the old-young princess – from the wicked sleeping dragon. Our roles added humour and mirth to the carnival-like, yet profoundly emotional, story-line.

Tim filmed the play-drama with an Ipad he'd created the previous day out of A4 size corrugated cardboard. He'd written a few naming letters in one corner of each Ipad before giving them to Sarah and to another child. Together they had used the pretend Ipads to skype each other across the playroom. The layers in play can repeat in such ways over time and days. Teachers can so easily support such continuity, by providing resources, observing closely and engaging with children. The drama, the Ipads, the skyping and much of what I observed on that day and on any visit to an ECCE centre, revolved around narrative and play. In this visit adults actively supported the play by directing it and acting roles (Lindqvist, 1995). Play offers scope for adults too to play (Alcock, 2013).

The events presented in this book are narratives. They are narrative-like in simply loosely structuring my narrative-informed ways of seeing, interpreting and understanding the relational fields of the children, and ECCE centres where I observed, as a researcher. Reflecting on these events as observations, I am struck by the potential that written observations always hold for seeing more. Like the proverbial world in a grain of sand, the more one looks, the more one sees (and feels).

Hence, one major implication and practical suggestion for ECCE teachers that arises out of this book and the research that informs it, is to observe: reflectively, relationally, critically, deeply, and with feeling. This understanding of observation is both simple and complex. It involves drawing on many modes of communicating, feeling, representing, and thinking. This sort of deeply reflective and subjective observation supports teaching and learning as interesting and alive ways of being and becoming for teachers and children.

Summary

This book has drawn on observations (field notes) in the form of narrative-like framed events (Bateson, 1980; Goffman, 1974) to creatively illustrate the complexities in young children's diverse ways of feeling, thinking, playing, being and becoming. Events with discussions, analyses and my wonderings illuminate the feelings and meanings in the observed experiences in holistic and contextualised gestalt-like ways.

The emphases in this book on events, as observations and observation as a tool for research, fits with the early childhood teaching and research tradition of prioritising observation. However, as I emphasise in this final chapter it is the reflective, subjective, feeling-based and relational dimensions in observations that are prioritised and signalled as most significant for ECCE teachers (and researchers). Were I to begin this research and this book again, I might notice and write differently. That is in the nature of continual reflective observation processes. The more one looks and feels, the more one finds.

References

Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Bowlby, J. (1991). An ethological approach to personality development. *American Psychologist, 46*(4), 333–341. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.46.4.333.

Alcock, S. (2008). Young children being rhythmically playful: Creating musike together. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 9*(4), 328–338. doi:10.2304/ciec.2008.9.4.328.

Alcock, S. (2013). Searching for play in early childhood care and education policy. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 48*(1), 19–33.

Bateson, G. (1980). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Beebe, B., Rustin, J., Sorter, D., & Knoblauch, S. (2003). An expanded view of intersubjectivity in infancy and its application to psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 13*(6), 805–841. doi:10.1080/10481881309348769.

Beebe, B., Sorter, D., Rustin, J., & Knoblauch, S. (2003). A comparison of Meltzoff, Trevarthen, and Stern. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 13*(6), 777–804. doi:10.1080/10481881309348768.

Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: An intersubjective view of thirdness. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXXIII*(1), 5–46. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x.

Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds/Jerome Bruner*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Damasio, A. R. (2000). *The feeling of what happens: Body, emotion and the making of consciousness/Antonio Damasio*. London: Vintage.

Dissanayake, E. (1992). *Homo aestheticus: Where art comes from and why*. New York: Free Press.

Edwards, C. P., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. E. (1998). *The hundred languages of children: The reggio emilia approach – advanced reflections*. Greenwich, CT: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Gallese, V. (2009a). Mirror neurons, embodied simulation, and the neural basis of social identification. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 519–536. doi:10.1080/10481880903231910.

Gallese, V. (2009b). The two sides of mimesis: Girard's mimetic theory, embodied simulation and social identification. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 16*(4), 21–44.

Gallese, V. (2009c). We-ness, embodied simulation, and psychoanalysis: Reply to commentaries. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 580–584. doi:10.1080/10481880903231928.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hollway, W. (2006). *The capacity to care: Gender and ethical subjectivity/Wendy Hollway*. London/New York: Routledge.

Kirschner, S. R. (2013). The many challenges of theorizing subjectivity. *Culture & Psychology, 19*(2), 225–236. doi:10.1177/1354067x13478985.

Kirschner, S. R., & Martin, J. (2010). *The sociocultural turn in psychology: The contextual emergence of mind and self*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lindqvist, G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools*. Uppsala studies in education 62. Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Lyons-Ruth, K., Bruschweiler-Stern, N., Harrison, A. M., Morgan, A. C., Nahum, J. P., Sander, L.,… Tronick, E. Z. (1998). Implicit relational knowing: Its role in development and psychoanalytic treatment. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 19*(3), 282–289. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1097-0355(199823)19:3<282::AID-IMHJ3>3.0.CO;2-O

Malloch, S., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*. Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press.

Mitchell, S. A., & Aron, L. (1999). *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.

O'Loughlin, M., & Johnson, R. T. (2010). *Imagining children otherwise: Theoretical and critical perspectives on childhood subjectivity* (Vol. 46). New York: P. Lang.

Ogden, T. (2004). The analytic third; Implications for psychoanalytic theory and technique. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXX111*, 167–195.

Ogden, T. (2001). Reading Winnicott. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXX*, 299–323.

Schore, A. (2010). Attachment and the regulation of the right brain. *Attachment & Human Development, 2*(1), 23–47. doi:10.1080/146167300361309.

Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2011). *The primacy of movement* (Vol. 82). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.

Shotter, J. (2010). Inside our lives together: A neo Wittgensteinian constructionism. In S. R. Kirschner & J. Martin (Eds.), *The sociocultural turn in psychology: The contextual emergence of mind and self* (pp. 45–67). New York: Columbia University Press.

Siegel, D. (1999). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are*. New York: Guilford Press.

Stern, D. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.

Stern, D. (2004). *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Stern, D. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Trevarthen, C. (2011). What is it like to be a person who knows nothing? Defining the active intersubjective mind of a newborn human being. *Infant and Child Development, 20*(1), 119–135. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/icd.689

Trevarthen, C. (2002). Origins of musical identity: Evidence from infancy for musical social awareness. In D. H. D. M. R. MacDonald (Ed.), *Musical identities* (pp. 21–38). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Trevarthen, C. (2009). The intersubjective psychobiology of human meaning: Learning of culture depends on interest for co-operative practical work–and affection for the joyful art of good company. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 19*(5), 507–518. doi:10.1080/10481880903231894.

Trevarthen, C. (2012). Finding a place with meaning in a busy human world: How does the story begin, and who helps? *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 20*(3), 303–312. doi:10.1080/1350293X.2012.704757.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wartofsky, M. W. (1979). *Models, representation and the scientific understanding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands/Berlin, Germany: Reidel.

Winnicott, D. W. (1960). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; a study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 34*(2), 89–97.

Winnicott, D. W. (1974). *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Zinchenko, V. P. (2001). External and internal: Another comment on the issue. In S. Chaiklin (Ed.), *The theory and practice of cultural historical psychology* (pp. 135–137). Aahus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.