

“How do educators establish sensitive relationships with infants (six weeks to twelve months of age) in an early childhood context of Aotearoa/New Zealand?”

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

**AUT University
The School of Education: Te Kura Matauranga
Primary Supervisor: Anne Grey**

2011

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), no material of a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of another degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the many people who have contributed to this thesis being completed. Firstly my dedicated and patient supervisor Anne Grey from AUT (Auckland University of Technology) and Andy Begg post graduate programme leader AUT for the many valid and intense discussions that put my thoughts into some kind of order. I wish to thank my family, my parents who have always supported my decisions to explore my interests, and especially to my husband and two children. I am grateful to the participants of the research project who willingly gave of their time and energy and without them this project would have not gone ahead.

I wish to thank the Auckland University of Technology for granting me a scholarship which made study financially less difficult.

Ethical Approval

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 August 2009
AUTEC Reference number 09/174

Abstract

This research explores how qualified early childhood educators establish responsive relationships with infants from the ages of six weeks to twelve months of age in a mainstream early childhood centre context in Auckland, New Zealand. In this research learning stories were used as a basis for discussion linking to the requirements of national Early Childhood Education curriculum document “Te Whāriki” (Ministry of Education, 1996). By analyzing discussions surrounding this documentation, I examined how educators promote and build responsive relationships with the infants with whom they interact, and how the educators view their teaching practices and pedagogy.

Chapter One Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce the research project and its purpose. I locate the study in the New Zealand context, and give an overview of my personal profile. I define the terms ‘infant’ and ‘educator’ for the reader and explain how the early childhood education curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) and the use of the learning story (Carr, 2001) forms a foundation for educators to reflect on their pedagogy.

The purpose of this project was to explore how qualified early childhood educators establish responsive relationships with infants under twelve months of age who attend an early childhood centre in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Educators articulated a process of building relationships by recording significant events that occur in the lives of the infants in each education and care context. These events were then linked to *Te Whāriki*, the Early Childhood Education New Zealand curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 1996).

1.0 Introducing the study

In this project educators reflected on their own behaviour and pedagogical perspectives and philosophies. The research aimed to investigate and analyse the reality of what is happening for educators and infants in the early childhood education context. This includes the importance of the educators’ professional knowledge about working with infants under twelve months of age. By investigating the educators “every day practices” or ‘lived experiences”, I endeavoured to make visible the skilled and often unseen art of establishing responsive and reciprocal relationships between the infant and the early childhood educator. In the New Zealand early childhood sector, this is documented in what is called a ‘learning story’ and is what formed the basis for discussion in three interviews with practitioners, who unpacked their teaching and learning knowledge about pedagogy with infants in this age group.

1.1 Locating the Study within a New Zealand context

This research was carried out in the greater Auckland area of New Zealand. I chose early childhood centres that were within easy driving distance from my home and interviewed one teacher from each centre. This ensured that the research budget and time restriction did not

become a barrier to the successful completion of the study. This study was commenced in late 2009 and completed in mid 2011.

1.2 Locating myself in the research

My perception of the importance of professional qualifications in “on the job training” of educators working in early childhood services and infants has changed, as my experiences have widened and I have become a mother, educator, and researcher. Previously I held the belief that infants were successfully cared and educated by teachers who were *interested* in this young age group rather than specifically seeking higher and more complex qualifications in order to enhance educator’s foundation of education and care concepts. However, this has changed, especially with regard to those working with infants who are six weeks to twelve months in age. This change in perception has come about as I have discovered the critical significance of the interactions of educators with infants, as these young children are influenced by their caregivers and the interactions that are established through daily lived experiences in the early childhood services.

I locate myself as a student researcher who through gaining the knowledge of the process of research projects, hopes to articulate and identify the specific role of educators who work with our very youngest citizens of New Zealand. I further wish to make these findings available to early childhood educators who are involved with infants on a day to day basis and acknowledge the authentic, skilled, and demanding work that goes into establishing these responsive relationships.

1.3 Personal profile

I have been a student of early childhood education for ten years, starting my qualification at the Auckland University of Technology in the year 2000. I had recently been made redundant from a customer service position which I thoroughly enjoyed. However, over the last year of my work, I started to pursue education at tertiary level to assist with new staffing recruitment and in-house professional development courses and on the job training. To support this new role I decided to enrol in, and obtained, a certificate in adult education, also at Auckland University of Technology. During the process of reflecting on my career paths, and with the support of my

manager, my dream of becoming a teacher of children started to emerge as a real possibility. In 2000 I was one of the first students to be part of a new Bachelor of Education at Auckland University of Technology, a three year undergraduate course designed specifically for early childhood education. During this time, I also had my first daughter, and was able to continue with my degree on a part time basis. The experience of being a mother, educator, and student gave me an insight into many different perspectives that have shaped the person that I have become today.

One of the most significant and fundamental challenges for me at this time was to find short term childcare while I completed the practicum based component of my degree. I was faced with the constant dilemma of finding educators who understood the value of relationships with myself, my husband, and my daughter. This has been a constant and demanding quest and one which has led me to research the topic of how educators establish responsive relationships with infants in an early childhood environment.

After completing my Bachelor of Education (which took five years part time), balancing being a parent a student, a wife and a mother, I graduated. I continued in post graduate studies at Auckland University of Technology completing the relevant points for my Masters of Education. This thesis is the last part of this journey of learning. I have begun to understand that this is the beginning, rather than the end of a lifetime passion of investigating how educators and children learn and grow together.

1.4 Defining ‘infants’ and their characteristics for the purpose of the research

For the purpose of this research project, the term “infant” is used for a child aged between six weeks to twelve months of age. This includes mobile and non-mobile infants who are enrolled in an Early Childhood Centre context. There is wide scope in the literature when defining the age in months of an infant. *Te Whāriki* discusses the age range between the infant and toddler, “the overlapping age categories used are: infant – birth to eighteen months, and toddler – one year to three years” (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Kovach and Da Ros-Voseles (2008) define the age of a ‘baby’ as “children from six weeks to fifteen months old” (p. 9). This wide age range acknowledges how infants mature and develop as individuals at their own pace and is supported by the New Zealand early childhood curriculum which advocates that children are seen in a holistic light rather than only a developmental light (Ministry of Education, 1996).

In this research, the term ‘infant’ relates to children between six weeks to twelve months of age. This age group was chosen specifically for educators to discuss how they established sensitive and responsive relationships with children. The purpose of focusing on this age group was intentional in order to explore educator’s pedagogical practices and philosophies through interviews and documented learning stories collated by the individual educator for discussion purposes. Elliott (2007) comments on the importance of the educators’ perspective so as “to better understand the dynamics of caring for infants and toddlers in groups” (p. 3). As part of this discussion, the characteristics of infants were often used as a starting point to investigate how the educator is ‘responsive’ to infants in the context of the day and how the characteristics of infants directly impact on how these relationships are established and developed from the educator’s perspective.

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum document, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) has noted three characteristics for infants that are relevant to this study.

- *“Infants are very vulnerable. They are totally dependent on adults to meet their needs and are seldom able to cope with discomfort or stress” (p.22).*
- *“Infants have urgent needs that demand immediate attention” (p.22).*
- *“Infants need the security of knowing that their emotional and physical needs will be met in predictable ways” (p.22).*

The notion that infants’ needs must be met by adults in a timely fashion highlights the importance of responsive, sensitive and aware adults who are tuned in and who see the value in responding appropriately. This forms the basis of a strong foundation of attachment and security from where the infant can explore their world and learn about themselves as individuals (Bowlby, 1969). Rolfe (2004) acknowledges this by emphasizing “sensitive caregiving, by definition, implies an ability to respond appropriately to infants’ needs of any kind, regardless of

what they are and how they are expressed” (p. 102). This, indeed, is a challenging endeavor for educators to actively engage in, and one that this research proposed to examine in detail. Exactly how do early childhood educators achieve this in their every day practices with infants?

1.5 Defining ‘educator’ for the purposes in the research

Defining how educators ‘see’ themselves in their role as they care for and educate infants can be an intensely subjective decision. This research endeavors to uncover the different and varied ways that educators perceive themselves, and how this can impact on their values, beliefs and philosophies of teaching. For the purposes of this research, the term ‘educator’ is used to describe a person who has achieved a degree in early childhood education, and is employed full time working actively with infants on a daily basis. There are, however, other terms used to describe an educator. Douville-Watson, Watson & Wilson, (2003) define the words ‘caregiver’ and ‘early childhood educator’ as “referring to professionals who specialize in the direct care for, development of, or research with young children” (p. 3). It is these educators with whom I engaged to gain insight into their professional practice and pedagogy.

Throughout the discussions, teaching strategies and common themes were articulated by the educators that reflect the diverse and often complex subjective thinking behind an educator’s pedagogy. Goodfellow (2003) describes this as practical wisdom - “Practical wisdom combines expert knowledge with sound judgment and thoughtful action” (p. 49). The curriculum content consists of a basis from which realistic and sensitive teaching moments can occur. For infants the curriculum is the sensitive moments and is *everything* that occurs. By combining practical wisdom and curriculum content an often *invisible* and personal method of teaching is developed, supported by much reflection and intuition. These often invisible dimensions are what this research identifies through rigorous and detailed accounts from educators. “Dimensions of practical wisdom are much more difficult to articulate than are the knowledge content areas and skills required by a particular profession” (Goodfellow 2003, p. 50). It is these underlying concepts that I wish to illuminate for the reader.

1.6 Summary

In this chapter I have defined the terms ‘educator’ and ‘infant’ for the purposes of this research. I have brought the reader’s attention to the background of the study, and included some brief information about myself as the emerging researcher. In the next chapter I will review the literature that underpins the care and education of infants that are under twelve months of age.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This literature review discusses the relevance of historical and current literature concerning infants and ‘out of home care’ in an early childhood education centre. In particular it discusses the New Zealand Early Childhood curriculum document Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education 1996) and the relevance of learning stories (Carr, 2001) as written documents about infants’ learning and development which were used as discussion starters for interviewing educators for the research project. The literature review discusses how relationships between children and educators are established and sustained in an early childhood context from national and international perspectives and as du Plessis (2009) concluded, shows that further research is being conducted identifying strategies to support emotional attachments. This review also identifies and discusses relevant theories that underpin and inform educators practice which link to the educators’ discussions about their personal practice. This is included from a platform of information from which the reader can make connections to the research topic.

2.1 The current context of infant care in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In New Zealand, a government organization, The Education Review Office (ERO) visits, reviews and publishes reports on the quality of education in Early Childhood Education centre’s throughout New Zealand. This nationally-located, government funded department is aligned to the Ministry of Education. The Education Review Office typically carries out regular reviews on every early childhood centre. Centre’s are reviewed on their quality across a range of measures, of their service to parents, whanau and children. The ERO report provides a valuable and credible beginning point for parents wishing to place their child in an early childhood center unknown to them and wanting a reliable insight into infant education and care options.

One report of particular interest to infants is *The Quality of Education and Care in Infant and Toddler Centers - Monograph Series* (Ministry of Education, 2009) funded and published by the Ministry of Education. This is a report based on seventy four center-based early childhood services throughout New Zealand and offers a rigorous discussion from the findings collated

between February 2005 and January 2008. The centers reviewed were fully licensed early childhood centers for children under two years old and were located in both rural and city locations. Four main points were considered relating to quality within these centers. These were philosophy, programmes, learning environment, and interactions.

The philosophy of the infant and toddler centers in the report reflected the emphasis on relationships, safety, interactions between children, parents and educators as part of everyday practices within the centers. Programmes were supported by the New Zealand curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) and were linked to flexible and individual routines which were child-centered, recognizing the unique nature of the infant and toddler age group. The report noted that assessments were a mixture of a systematic approach and were partly focused on children's emerging interests, while other centers were still working on how to analyse and document children's learning. The environments were found to be well resourced and designed for the particular age group, were attractive and contained a wide range of age appropriate equipment; however, children's access to this equipment and the outside environment needed to be improved. ERO observed nurturing and warm interactions in most centers with educators responding to children's ideas and current interests. In the report there was some concern about the centers that were more task and routine-orientated, rather than engaging meaningfully with children (Ministry of Education, 2009).

As part of the Ministry of Education initiatives to improve the quality of early childhood education, educators are required to have teacher registration and from 2005 at least one registered, qualified early childhood educator was required to be employed within a licensed center. By 2007 this was increased to fifty percent registered educators. Provisionally registered educators were provided with a guidance and advice mentor funded by the Ministry of Education to support their registration process. The Education Review Office report stated that thirty three of the seventy four centers in the study had educators with qualifications that met or were in a position to meet the 2007 requirements. These regulations require fifty per cent qualified and registered educators obtaining either a degree or diploma in early childhood education to be employed in the center in general. However, there are no requirements for educators working with the infants to be specifically trained in this area. Some infant educators did engage in

professional development to support their practice “in this specialized area of teaching” (Education Review Office, 2009, p. 17; Perry, 2002). This is noted as an area of interest in the following report released by the Ministry of Education in 2011.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education released a literature review focused on children under two years of age (Ministry of Education, 2011). This report discusses the significance of the growth in participation of this age group stating that “participation rates for this age group grew by 36% between July 2000 and July 2009” (cited in Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 1). In order to provide rigorous evidence to respond to this trend, this report was commissioned to review the current literature and provide future recommendations for quality (Grey, 2010) practice and policy making in New Zealand.

Alongside the report from the Ministry of Education, the Children’s Commissioner released an inquiry in the welfare of children under two years of age, who are in non-parental care (Children’s Commissioner, 2011). Based on the UNCROC (United Nations Conventions for the Rights of the Child, 1989) this report aimed to capture the diverse perspectives of participants who use early childhood education and care services for children under two years of age in New Zealand. As an advocate for children, the commissioner has a statutory responsibility to investigate matters relating to their care. The participation rate has dramatically risen for children under two years old attending centers. Therefore, this report was timely discussing the overall implications this may have on society from a child’s perspective. The report states that the interest of infants and toddler care and education needs to have greater emphasis in regard to regulations, policies, and practices. In particular, a focus on the skills and knowledge of those working with under two year old children, such as professional learning and education, must be addressed (Children’s Commissioner, 2011).

2.2 *Te Whāriki* and infants

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) encourages practitioners to explore the principles and strands of this document and a particular focus is the developmental and emotional needs of infants. *Te Whāriki* states that “in order to thrive and learn, an infant must establish an intimate, responsive, and trusting

relationship with at least one other person” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). The four principles of *Te Whāriki* recognize this. These are empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships. The notion of relational interactions is one of the foundations of this document, as it was identified as one of the most important and influential aspects of early childhood education and care (Dunkin & Hanna, 2001). All principles are defined by the quality of the relationship between the infant and the educator. The strands of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) allude to this in its focus on well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration. The age and characteristics of children are carefully discussed for each strand with goals articulated to support back to the relational principles of this document.

Of interest for this research is the principle of relationships with infants and how this is incorporated into everyday practices that educators can recognize and meaningfully document. The aim is for educators to establish these relationships so that “children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 43). The curriculum document includes examples from each goal linked to the three age groups of, infants, toddlers and young children. For infants this includes describing possible learning experiences, such as “there are one to one interactions which are intimate and sociable” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 51). For educators who are not specifically educated for working with very young infants these examples give a valuable and practical resource, incorporating the strands and goals of the curriculum document, and supporting educators to meet the learning goals. These goals and strands are woven into the curriculum document in a natural and sensitive manner, reflecting the many diverse ethnicities of New Zealand, while remaining grounded in New Zealand Maori culture from a social cultural perspective.

The notion that caring and educating infants is a specialized pedagogy (Perry, 2002; Nyland, 2004; Manning-Morton, 2006) or as Raikes (1993) discusses, being a “high-ability teacher”, is documented under the key goal requirements. An important quote to note from *Te Whāriki* is, “the care of infants is specialised and is neither, a scaled-down three-or four-year-old, programme nor a baby-sitting arrangement” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). Rockel alludes to this in her discussion of infant pedagogy (Rockel, 2003; Rockel, 2010) to challenge earlier

thinking where infant care has previously been regarded as “quite straightforward” (p. 98). However, with the increase of research in this area, Rockel discusses that this is far from the case, especially in making infant learning visible. Rockel (2010) writes that an educator’s pedagogical approaches are often complex and supported by deeply held values and beliefs which affect an educator’s responses to infants and the ability to connect with them and their families. Educators need to make the link between their own motivations of infant care and education, and the curriculum as a specialized pedagogy. “*Te Whāriki* is a values driven curriculum” (Barrett, Fowler, Hose & Sands, 2010, p. 33) which can be used to support this infant care specialization. Writers such as Winnicott (1964) acknowledged the importance of being responsive “looking to see what happens in the development of the baby while you are enjoying responding to his or her needs” (p. 29). This is where the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) offers a holistic approach (Lee, 2006) to making relational learning and teaching visible through a curriculum that supports educator’s values and beliefs.

Te Whāriki discusses the key curriculum requirements based on the special characteristics of infants such as their physical growth, changes in health, and their dependence on adults for their immediate needs (Ministry of Education, 1996). The infant’s reliance on the adult to provide a predictable (Gonzalez-Mena, 2010) and safe, secure environment is essential to weaving together the curriculum in a holistic manner. Of particular significance is the one-on-one responsive, sensitive nature of educators who are able to follow the infant’s lead by understanding their cues and signals. “Tuned in caregivers can learn to read individual babies different signals” (Gonzalez-Mena 2007, p. 47). In *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) this is described as supporting communication through use of non verbal and verbal signals and utterances such as pointing (Southgate, van Maanen, & Csibra, 2007), responding or attempting to make a word sound. This promotes caring for infants as individuals and providing responsive adults who are aware of their needs for security and predictability of routines (Butterfield, 2002) within the early childhood education context. Higher staffing ratios support educators to be available and responsive to each infant, and their unique needs. The notion of primary caregivers (Rockel, 2003, McCaleb & Mikaere-Wallis, 2005) suggest that one educator is primarily responsible for an infant, and is an example of establishing responsiveness. Opportunities for calm, relaxing

(Brownlee, 2007) and direct one-on-one time when feeding or nappy changing, offer a powerful ally in ensuring that infants feel respected during these times. The importance of educators-child ratios cannot be emphasized enough. “Present findings make the need to recognize the importance of child-caregiver ratios in the determination of the quality of professional child care abundantly clear” (de Schipper, Riksen-Walraven, & Geurts, 2006, p. 861). How infants establish relationships with educators is an important life “skill” (Gallagher & Mayer, 2008), and may, in fact, be the most important relational skill, that impacts on children for the rest of their lives.

Underpinning this is the ‘partnership’ (Ministry of Education, 1996) educators develop with parents and whanau where they work together for the benefit of the infant and the quickly changing physical and emotional needs of this age group (Ministry of Education, 1996). By establishing meaningful relationships with parents and whanau, information can be obtained through informal conversations about the infant and any changes that have occurred that may affect the educator and infant’s daily routine, such as feeding or sleeping patterns.

The focus on building responsive relationships (Elliot, 2001) impacts on how New Zealand children are represented within the early childhood education curriculum. The social context of New Zealand’s history and heritage is honoured and acknowledged and forms a foundation on which the philosophy of teaching is built (Ministry of Education, 1996). The child’s previous learning is also recognized as an important and significant part of the child’s learning and developmental history. This learning sits alongside, and is woven into the experiences the infant has within the center context, and provides the opportunity for extended learning through interactions with people, places and things (Ministry of Education, 1996). Alongside this, is the important aspect of relationships with peers and adults, in a culturally responsive and socially mediated learning environment that supports infants in their learning experiences in reciprocal and responsive relationship building (Ministry of Education, 1996) and reflects the diverse nature of early childhood education in New Zealand. This diversity includes playgroups, full or part time daycare, crèches and special character centers, such as church based or religious philosophies, Te Kohanga Reo Maori, or Pacific Island language nest, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia inspired centers. A range of services are offered in the community to meet the individual

needs of differing cultures, families and philosophies. This underpins the commitment to developing partnership between all families and the early childhood sector.

2.3 Literature on implementing the Early Childhood Education curriculum

The relevance to the research project of how the early childhood education curriculum was developed is important when understanding how this curriculum document fits into infant pedagogy. The collaboration of ideas from those working with infants ensured that the curriculum document is adaptable and flexible to all children in the early childhood context of New Zealand.

Considerations from special working groups were put together to include infants' and toddlers' perspectives in the draft document (Ministry of Education, 1993). These, however, were not published, but the general purpose of the curriculum became more focused. This view was supported by the statement "*Te Whāriki* would not be about content, but would provide a framework for action guided by philosophical principles" (Nuttall, 2003, p. 32). This was a new approach to curriculum and one very different from the primary sector. However, it was acknowledged "that the sector could gain additional strength and status by having clear links with the Curriculum Framework" (Nuttall, 2003, p. 22). The notion that these two curriculum documents, from both the Primary and early childhood sector could be different, while still accommodating the differences in age and development, in order to support the transition of children moving from early childhood education into primary education, is significant. The lack of prescriptive practices in *Te Whāriki* caused practitioners some confusion at first; "some centers were overwhelmed by the number of ideas and by the open-ended nature of the curriculum, which provided only a framework, not a recipe" (Nuttall, 2003, p. 38).

Consequently professional development was offered and funded by the Ministry of Education to support understanding and implementation of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) as a reflection of the cultural and political context within New Zealand at that time. "Its durability lies in a conceptual framework that interweaves educational theory, political ideology, and a profound acknowledgment of the importance of culture" and has "become a model for other countries faced with the challenge of developing curricula for early childhood" (Nuttall, 2003, p.

42). The progressive nature of the document, however, needed to be unpacked, and discussed within the early childhood community. Many subsequent Ministry of Education and academic documents, and papers can be understood as “unpacking” the ideology of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996).

2.4 Documents used for assessment for infant learning and development

A study of infant and toddler centers was conducted to highlight the diverse areas of early childhood education. In *The quality of education and care in Infant and Toddlers Centers – Monograph Series* (Ministry of Education, 2009) assessment for infants and toddlers is explored to find out how early childhood educators incorporate this into their pedagogy (Rockel, 2010) of teaching. Finding evidence of infant’s learning has proved to be difficult to capture, record, and assess (Blaiklock, 2010). In 2004 a new series of documents *Kei Tua o Te Pae*, (Ministry of Education, 2004) were distributed by the Ministry of Education. The main point of the infants and toddlers booklets were to assist with incorporating assessment into the curriculum for infants and toddlers while focusing on the reciprocal and responsive, sensitive relationships with people, places and things. It was suggested that infants need to establish relationships with people and places to create a safe and secure environment in which to learn and grow. Educators needed to observe and incorporate a variety of ways to interpret an infant’s cues (Degotardi & Davis, 2008). These included being empathic, (Grille, 2005) open and observant, watching closely for body language, facial expressions (Abbott & Langston, 2005) and gestures, and by listening carefully (Jalango, 1996).

Involving families and whanau in children’s assessment (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 4) both informal and formal should be a continuous process. This is recognized by educators as an important information gathering technique for widening their own understanding of infants with the support and insight of parents and family. For assessment, the ongoing communication between the center and home is a valuable information gathering area as parents and whanau know their children really well. Establishing communication around these experiences between parents and educators offers possibilities for learning opportunities for infants and support from both educators and whanau who work together (Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2011). Things that happen outside of the early childhood context can impact on children and vice versa,

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, it is helpful that information is exchanged between parties to gain further understanding of the child's perspectives and experiences in the two contexts.

2.5 Documentation and Learning Stories

By documenting how infants establish sensitive relationships with educators the teaching and learning practices become visible and accessible. Parents/whanau and caregivers have evidence of the care and education of children and have a written way to reflect and re-live these learning experiences for both infants, educators, and family/whanau. This is a significant move towards identifying how educators establish sensitive interactions with infants.

Documenting the learning and growth of infants can be difficult for educators due to an infant's rapid changes (Ministry of Education, 2004). Instead of assessing infants against developmental milestones, educators document children's learning experiences through written records called 'learning stories' (Carr, 2001). With the advent of learning stories, and perhaps learning notes, (Blaiklock, 2010) there are possibilities for educators to look towards a more individual and culturally appropriate method of following each infant's progress as they learn and grow. The Learning stories, or "story of children's learning" (Hatherly & Sands, 2002, p. 9) has evolved as a form of narrative assessment. The learning story can assist to "make visible the understandings about the emotional labor of child care" (Goodfellow 2008b, p. 21). Through responsive and sensitive interactions educators learn from the infants' individual dispositions (Carr, 2001). These, are then recorded as meaningful learning experiences through the medium of pictures and written text (Gray, 2004). This often takes the form of a 'story' or narrative from the educator (Dalli, 2001) about what transpired or happened during a specific event. As educators become more aware of infants and gain a history of experiences with them, the learning story offers a rich, descriptive account that parents, educators and the child come to value (Honig, 2002). "Written documentation provides a visible way in which to share children's interest with family and whanau" (Barrett, Fowler, Hose & Sands, 2010, p. 33). Portfolios of these experiences are filed together in logical, date order and are readily accessible to parents and whanau. These important events are often relived through re-reading or looking at the pictures by family/whanau/extended family who in turn add value to this form of documentation which

actively encourages information exchange between the home and centre context (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Carr (2001) discusses this process of documentation as weaving theory and practice together, rather than focusing on assessment alone. For this young age group learning can be difficult to pinpoint as “teachers cannot be certain of the nature of children’s learning, especially that of very young children” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 5). Through the exemplars provided in *Kei Tua o Te Pae* educators are reminded of the significance of knowing the individual child and the curriculum in detail. Insights can be gained about how the child is learning and growing from observations, and linked to learning theory for infants (Ministry of Education, 2004). Podmore (2006a) contends that observations are “important in understanding aspects of children’s worlds” (p. 7). Podmore suggests using systematic observation techniques “for assessing learning and teaching interactions” (p. 7). By documenting these in the form of a ‘story’ of what happened from the educator’s perspective, whanau and extended family are able to see, hear (Nyland, 2005, Podmore, 2006b) and gain insight to their infants’ learning and developmental experiences from the educators’ perspective. This is an extremely valuable and informative way for family/whanau to remain connected with the infant while they are in ‘out of home care’. Carr’s (2001) research identifies the significance of the educator’s reflection on, and documentation of children’s learning in the written form of a narrative. Written from the educator’s perspective about what is seen to be happening or has happened for the child in an early childhood centre, a learning story will often have a photo to support the narrative and add another dimension to the story. The learning story framework also highlights relationships and participation, and as Carr points out, this takes the same view as the national early childhood curriculum document “that emphasises curriculum as being about ‘reciprocal and responsive relationships with people, places and things’” (Carr 2001, Ministry of Education, 1996).

Hatherly and Sands (2002) describe the assessment method of learning stories as the “telling of a story” possibly over time, to provide valuable insight into a ‘sense-making component’ (p. 9). These writers stress the importance of the focus being on “the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences” (p. 9). The Ministry of Education (2004) exemplars for infants and toddlers focus on assessment within the context of relationships. The learning story

framework assessment is designed to document the daily events of the infant, which in turn, is linked to the curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). In particular the importance of the role of educators is highlighted and the Ministry of Education states that educators “make their roles and reflections visible in assessment, recognising the importance of their relationships with children in learning” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 18). However, personal pedagogy is often entrenched in values and beliefs that through self reflection (Zepke, Nugent, Leach, 2003) can be challenged or acknowledged. Through the learning stories these reflections can be connected to a framework that defines and offers clarity, meaningfully connecting professional practice with a theoretical framework which is grounded within a New Zealand context. The environment may be seen as static, or not changing. However, for infants this can be an advantage as familiarity can promote a sense of well-being and belonging as referred to in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

2.6 Theories that inform *Te Whāriki* and that influence educators pedagogy

There are many theories that outline how early childhood educators teach. However, in the final version of the early childhood curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) these are not stated explicitly. They are, however, fundamental to educators’ understanding and philosophical perspective about how children under five years old grow and learn, and are studied in depth throughout teacher education programmes.

The purpose of this section of the literature review is not to offer a complete account of each theory in the entirety, but rather offer a summary that shows a link to the thinking behind *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). These include the theories of maturation, constructivist theory, attachment, behaviorism, and ecological theory. These theories are now discussed briefly with regard to how they apply to infants under twelve months old and relate to the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). Many of these theories may not be outwardly visible in the document, but have a huge influence on teaching practices and philosophies for educators.

2.6.1 Maturation Theory

Maturation is defined as “genetically determined, naturally unfolding course of growth” (Berk 2008, p. 12). The work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau viewed infants through a developmental lens. Rousseau believed that children should be able to grow according to their own timetable or plan, that a biological process or maturation naturally occurs in order for children to develop and that they “should be allowed to unfold” (Brewer, 2007, p. 7). Further to this idea was Gesell’s notion that a child is influenced by two major forces - the environment and the genes the infant was born with (Crain, 2000). The genes that are biologically inherited from parents will determine when these developments will happen; this is, of course, assuming that the environment is at the premium or the best it can be. To some extent, how the infant matures is both environmental and genetic. For this to happen successfully, maturation must develop in a series of steps, which is an important feature of this particular theory. As we watch infants change, there is often a common pattern which can be identified, such as learning to roll, crawl and finally walk. Although these patterns can be similar, they are unlikely to be at the same time for each child. This uniqueness is an issue that Gesell felt strongly about. He often discussed ages during which a child would develop certain abilities that were seen as more significant and easily assessed. It seems that the notion of individuality may have been lost within his writings (Crain, 2000). This theory gave rise to the concept of ‘developmental milestones’. Although this concept is now critiqued as being too narrow in focus, it still influences many early childhood educators and is useful for assessing ‘typical development’.

2.6.2 Other maturational theories that underpin practice

Another approach that is based on maturational theory is the Resources for Infant Educators or RIE approach (Gerber, 1979). This is a philosophy that respects infants as individuals; “what adults do with infants and toddlers either supports or undermines their inner drive to learn and to develop their unique capacities as human beings” (Hammond 2009, p. 1). Founded by Magda Gerber in 1978 the RIE approach is based on the work of pediatrician Emmi Pikler who worked with orphaned children under three years of age in Budapest, Hungary after World War Two. Magda Gerber met, worked and became a long time friend with Emmi Pikler after seeing how she worked with such respect for children. Emmi Pikler died 1984, and Magda Gerber after moving to the United States in the 1950 continued working towards promoting respectful care

for infants (Hammond, 2009).

This approach provided principles to support the growth and development in children and resonated with many who believe in respecting infants. This respect is based on observing and listening (Podmore, 2006a) to infants and acknowledging what they are able to do at any given time. It is not based on developmental milestones, as children are seen and celebrated for their own individual achievements. An example of respect to infants is the current practice by some parents and educators to put babies on their tummies, an act that can cause distress to the infant if their body is not ready for this movement. Hammond (2009) states “another mistaken assumption is that babies benefit from being put on their tummies” (p. 83) and advocates that they will eventually do this themselves in their own time without adult intervention. The RIE philosophy has a strong focus on caregiving and encouraging children to do things for themselves from a very young age, starting with establishing a positive relationship with the educator (Moylett, 2011). An example of the respect (Perry, 2002) shown to infants from educators, is the way that a child can assist and give permission for a nappy change, by simply lifting their bottom for the educator to put the nappy underneath. This is seen in the RIE philosophy as children being actively involved in their own care and educators asking, looking and observing children for their permission and engagement (Gerber, 1998).

Gerber examines this in detail, based on her work and association with Emmi Pikler a paediatrician in Budapest, Hungary. Located in the United States, Gerber’s philosophy looks at the “establishment of an authentic, trusting relationship between the adult and infant” (Gerber 1998, p. xi). Respectful, individual, and personalized care is discussed within a group care situation that relies heavily on the educator to give this high quality attention to infants (Gerber, 1979). A core aspect of this philosophy is the word ‘educarer’ (Gerber, 1998; Nutbrown & Page, 2008) which describes the ideas that offers the possibility of a blend between caring and educating children. Gerber articulates this well by saying “we should educate while we care and care while we educate” (Gerber, 1998, p. 1). Respect implies that the needs of the infant can be met and recognized by adults who send strong messages that they are genuinely interested in observing, and waiting while the infant develops as an authentic, competent individual (Gerber, 1998). Being an authentic person is “someone who is true to himself or herself” (Gerber, 1998, p.

71). It means that as educators we need to assume less, really get to know who the baby is, and be open to finding out rather than have a preconceived ideas. This critical element supports “the teachers’ own observation and intuitive reading” (Weissbound & Musick, 1981, p. 48). Educators can then trust that the infant will develop according to their own characteristics and “ultimately realize their own unique potential” (Cartwright, 1999, p. 6).

2.6.3 Ecological systems theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) was a Russian born American psychologist and one of the first psychologists to adopt a holistic approach to child development. Bronfenbrenner’s personal writings’ in his original discussions on the notion of Ecological Theory in 1979 links into his own history of a young boy growing up and the impact that his father had on his thinking and observational sensitivities (Bronfenbrenner, 2008). “Wherever we were he would alert my unobservant eyes to the workings of nature by pointing to the functional interdependence between living organism and their surroundings” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. xii). This is the bedrock of discovering the correlation of how humans interact with their environment, and how the environment interacts with humans. Bronfenbrenner spent time researching radically different cultures outside his own that widened his perspective on human nature and caused him to think about the impact of the individual’s surrounding society structure and values. His experiences in this field, as he discusses “expanded my awareness of the resilience, versatility, and the promise of the species *Homo sapiens* that create the ecologies in which it lives and grows” (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. xiii).

In his 1979 work Bronfenbrenner explains his reasons for investigating how humans evolve within their habitat, “my awareness of the resilience, versatility, and the promise of the species *Homo sapiens* as evidenced by its capacity to adapt to, tolerate, and especially create the ecologies in which it lives and grows” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. xiii). Bronfenbrenner discusses the impact of government policy on human lives, in particular public policy, stating “public policy has the power to affect the well-being and development of human beings by determining the conditions of their lives” (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. xiii). Three factors link to Bronfenbrenner's work and to the research data that I have gathered, the individual person the

wider community, and the wider political systems. As I look for the overarching themes in the interviews of the three participants, they each fall into each one of Bronfenbrenner's categories.

From this analysis, a framework for discussing this work in a way that is meaningful to the wider early childhood education sector has become apparent. The works of Bronfenbrenner feature within the early childhood education New Zealand curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 19) with a diagram showing how the concepts mentioned previously can be linked to the child. I propose that this model be used from the perspective of the educator to represent the challenges and constraints that affect teaching pedagogy of education and care of infants under twelve months of age. By acknowledging the different influences, cultural backgrounds and philosophies educators would have a tangible, accessible framework to place their understandings of themselves and the children in their education and care and provide a holistic and deeper understanding of their professional lives.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model focuses on the "development-in-context" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.12), or how the infant grows and develops within the immediate environment. He states that "the ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded" (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 21). In other words the infant's growth and development are affected by the environment in which the child lives. This encompasses the country, and culture, history, and politics. Bronfenbrenner acknowledges that the theoretical perspective "is new in its conception of the developing person, of the environment, and especially of the evolving interaction between the two" (p. 3). The ecological environment is referred to in Bronfenbrenner's writings as micro-systems, meso-systems, exo-systems and macro-systems (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010) with each structure nesting within another and causing the experience to be different. This describes "the child as part of the community with many outside influences that will have an effect on them" (Bary, 2010, p. 18). The 'experience' is a particularly important point within this theory, and Bronfenbrenner states, "the aspects of the environment that are most powerful in shaping the course of psychological growth are

overwhelmingly those that have meaning to the person in a given situation” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

2.6.4 Constructivist Theory and Communities of Practice

A differing approach to children’s development was formed by Jean Piaget, who believed that children construct knowledge as they interact with their environment, or that development leads learning. Through many different kinds of experiences, such as touching (Carlson, 2005) tasting, smelling, and hearing, infants start to become familiar with how to react to differences and unexpected situations. “From the moment of birth, infants mutually interact with their caregivers” (Caulfield 1995, p. 3). Piaget was interested in how children think, and become comfortable with these experiences. “Piaget’s approach looks at how the child’s interaction with the environment leads to cognitive development” (Lefrancois 1997, p. 73). Through a generic process of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium the infants’ memory of experiences are embedded into the cognitive or thinking part of the brain through repetition. During the course of an infant’s day many such experiences occur, for example, a new caregiver, a piece of equipment, or a different food is introduced. The infant tries to ‘fit’ the unfamiliar into his thinking to make it comfortable, if this does not happen (assimilation), then this becomes new learning. An analogy of this is making a new folder in a computer to store new information, (accommodation). After this process, this experience becomes familiar and the infant’s feelings of confidence re-emerge, the unfamiliar has now become the familiar and equilibrium has been restored. Through this process the ‘construction’ of development is constantly emerging, being changed, modified, and updated. No wonder infants need so much sleep, as their brain is constantly re adjusting itself to all that is happening around them. “Children are not passive receivers of knowledge: rather, they actively work at organizing their experience into more and more complex mental structures” (Brewer 2007, p. 8).

Vygotsky (1896-1934) was born in the Russian Empire and had a short life of thirty seven years. His significant influence on how we understand that children construct their knowledge is evident in today’s early childhood settings. Vygotsky managed to challenge the political viewpoints of his time which drew him some harsh criticism from his fellow researchers. This opposition has now been discarded as his theory of zone of proximal development continues to

gain wide acceptance. In defining what the zone of proximal development is in relation to early childhood education, I refer to Vygotsky's own writings which have been translated and revised. His explanation of how children add to their own body of knowledge is described by Vygotsky as "the discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance indicates the zone of his proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 186).

Vygotsky believed that through social interactions, children were exposed to specific ways of living. Vygotsky's theory focuses on the relevance of cultural (Brennan, 2005) and social influences to infants thinking and learning. A critical factor in this is the spoken language and its relevance to promoting and extending learning experiences. Through language, educators can stretch learning by verbal support, while a new activity is trialed. This Vygotsky called the "zone of proximal development", and this is used extensively in current teaching practices. "The zone of proximal (or potential) development refers to a range of tasks that the child cannot yet handle alone but can do with the help of more skilled partners" (Berk, 2008, p. 227). This can be an adult or another child and involves supporting the learner through verbal and physical communication, to assist new attempts at experiences outside of the learner's current level of ability. Gradually as the learner becomes more familiar with the new task the supporting partner will slowly withdraw and allow the learner to take the leading role. This process is known as 'scaffolding' and involves promoting learning as a social and cultural interaction (Berk, 2008) and is referred to in the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

This has significant implications for practices with infants less than one year of age. The notion of supporting social and emotional development through interactions with educators can be linked to Vygotsky's theory, and used as a positive framework for establishing these responsive and reciprocal relationships. As Berk and Winsler (1995) discuss, through interactions with educators, parents, and other children, infants begin to actively build and grow new cognitive abilities in an environment of collaboration. The relational aspect of this theory cannot be underestimated. It is the combined effort of the infant and the educator working together to experience and make sense of their world. Overarching this is the cultural dimension, educators work with "cultural tools" which as Smidt (2009) defines as "the objects and signs and systems

developed by humans over time and within communities to assist thinking” (p. 18). This “joint attention”, (Frankel & Bates 1990, cited in Berk & Winsler) discuss the importance of caregivers who provide sensitive and interesting opportunities to maintain a focus of interest, such as a reading book together. Berk and Winsler go further in this explanation “Vygotsky regarded children as active agents in development and contribution to the creation of internal mental processes by collaboration with others in meaningful cultural activities” (p. 23).

Central to this notion Vygotsky regarded the role of language as the ‘most powerful tool, encompassing speaking and listening, reading and writing’ (Smidt, 2009, p. 19). As educators establish relationships with infants the human voice becomes a tool whereby a variety of learning can be explored. Through songs, stories, pitch and rhythm the educator’s voice can convey a wealth of contextual and cultural meaning. Smidt (2006) in an earlier work discusses mediated learning as “the use of communicable systems” (p. 31). Smidt further qualifies this definition with her own account of what Vygotsky was alluding “the ways in which ideas and thoughts could be communicated by one person, to another, or to groups of others” (Smidt, 2006, p. 31). The relevance of Vygotsky’s ‘symbolic tools’ as language used to communicate together can change our relationships with each other as we interact and learn from each other. As part of the learning process, the culture or environment is absorbed alongside the spoken word, bringing attention to this aspect of Vygotsky’s theory.

Infant educators operate within a community of practice in the early childhood profession. Educators provide a notion of ‘practice’ or as Wenger (1998) identifies “a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do” (p. 47). In trying to ascertain what the common strategies are for infant educators I wish to highlight how these practices embody the community of early childhood education and the lived experiences that these educators provide. As we link the infant educators together we are creating a ‘community of practice’ specifically focused on the infant pedagogy based on mutual understanding and experiences within this education field. “Communities of practice are the prime context in which we can work out common sense through mutual engagement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 47).

2.6.5 Behaviorism verses the holistic approach

John Watson pioneered behaviorism as an observable phenomena that he felt could be used as a law governing humans as well as animals. This was based on rigorous and scientific methods about behavior. Defined as “a scientific approach that limits the study of psychology to measurable or observable behaviors” (Mpofu, 2010, p. 12), this idea is widely used in the form of positive reinforcement to guide behavior in early childhood education rather than punishment which is now considered to be inhumane. In her article, McMullen (2010) reflects and considers the behaviorist approach observed in her time spent with infants in centers. While visiting the classroom McMullen struggled with the notion that infants are “passive; external stimuli and reinforcement of responses determine whether one learns or performs any given action” (p. 3) and finds that this experience has reinforced her beliefs about providing nurturing and responsive educators who are in tune with infants rather than being aligned to a particular theory. A holistic approach espoused by *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) is based on this differing set of principles, whereby infants and educators are encouraged to establish trusting and sensitive relationships. McMullen (2010) re-counts her experience in a behaviorist infant classroom in 2009 and the challenges she experienced with the structured environment that the infants were exposed to. McMullen struggled to gain understanding of this theory in respect to infants and their needs. “In my opinion, the behaviorist environment did not contribute to their social-emotional growth, or to their rights to be happy and enjoy their lives as productive, contributing members of the classroom” (McMullen, 2010, p. 12). While this perspective is less objective than others, it does serve to show that being sensitive to infants can be found in a holistic framework.

2.6.6 Attachment and theories about trust

To explain how attachment theory relates to educators and young infants in early childhood education, a significant emphasis is placed on the writings of the theorist John Bowlby (1969) who provided an in depth discussion of how attachment is formed between an infant and mother. Bowlby was also inspired to re think how psychoanalytical theories were verified. Understanding this theory is fundamental for educators to support infants to gain a sense of security in the context of an early childhood education centre in New Zealand. Balaban (2006) states that “adult-child attachment is a basic necessity for healthy human development” (p.

112). By defining how relationships can form, through observational and theoretical perspectives, Bowlby defined how infants can come to trust adults and rely on educators. Bowlby specifically looked at the aspect of how human infants come to elicit behaviours of protection and nurturance to ensure opportunities to grow and develop into mature humans, ready to reproduce themselves, and therefore continuing the species.

In 1950 Bowlby was approached by the World Health Organisation to advise on the mental health of children who were homeless. His resulting findings, after meeting with the world's leading professionals in the area of child care and psychiatry, and reading literature, was that "what is believed to be essential for mental health is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment" (Bowlby, 1969, p. xxix). Further investigations on children who were separated from their mothers for periods of weeks or months and who were cared for in settings such as hospitals or residential nurseries showed that the child displayed deep emotional misery and distress. Up to this time this was not linked to the lack of a stable caregiver or primary caregiver, "but attributed to almost anything but loss of mother-figure" (Bowlby, 1969, p. xxix). Although hard to understand how, this became a ground breaking perspective, although it was not altogether new, as Freud had also alluded to this. However, his concepts were "arrived at by a process of historical reconstruction based on data derived from older subjects" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 3) rather than directly observing children's responses.

As Bowlby states himself "because some of my ideas are alien to the theoretical traditions that have become established, and so have met with strong criticism, I have been at some pains to show that most of them are by no means alien to what Freud himself thought and wrote" (Bowlby, 1969, p. xxxii). Bowlby wanted to understand about personality development and how maternal influences could affect children's behaviours and mental health. His techniques for examining how this could be so, were described as being the very opposite of how psychoanalytical theory of the time was investigated. Symptoms were often the catalyst for trying to discover the history of the behaviours, rather than working the other way around

where the child is seen as the beginning with events that have the power to shape or influence the personality development.

Bowlby was, in his day, a radical and courageous man who was willing to read his data for what it was, rather than theorising what it should be. “From time immemorial mothers and poets have been alive to the distress caused to a child by loss of his mother; but it is only in the last fifty years that, by fits and starts, science has awoken to it” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 24). However, there are differing views in the literature when it comes to discussing children who are in, “out of home care”, such as early childhood education centres.

Cortazar & Herreros (2010) write about children’s social-emotional development through Bowlby’s (1969) attachment theory. Written to encompass early childhood education in the United States, Cortazar & Herreros contend that attachment theory, while supposedly supporting children’s emotional development, could be causing children a disservice by assuming that all children start from a secure base. They pose that children have individual histories of attachment and that the dominant practice of assuming this is a secure attachment, may not be an appropriate one. The assumption underpinning this ‘image of the child’ (Penn, 1999) is what the developmental appropriate practice (DAP) curriculum is based on, the notion of ‘best practice’ (Penn, 1999). “The guide to developmentally appropriate practice also draws implicitly on American cultural norms, for instance continuously stressing individuality, independence, self-assertiveness, personal choice and the availability of possessions” (p. 18). Cortazar & Herreros (2010) challenge this dominant discourse and its effect on how the curriculum is constructed based on the assumption that children start from a secure base.

Bowlby is currently criticised as placing too much emphasis on the exclusive role of the mother. Other significant people can also form attachments to infants, as Watson (2001) discusses in her article where she revisits the relevance of attachment theory within the early childhood context. Watson, acknowledges the importance placed on an adult to be available as “each infant needs to grow in the knowledge that there is one older and wiser person available who will watch over them, who enjoys being with them and who will be special in their life forever” (Watson, 2001, p. 23). However, she notes that Bowlby was aware of the fact that

parents often have to work outside the home environment. Researchers reflect on Bowlby's workings to consider this and have gained insight into his thoughts on other significant adults being available for children. The emphasis is more on this other 'significant person' being consistently (Bary, 2010) available if the primary caregiver such as the mother, father, grandparent, is not. "Specialist professional knowledge is assumed to be necessary to do the job of childcare or alloparenting" (Penn, 2009, p. 184). An example of alloparenting is an early childhood educator who can also establish an attachment with the infant. Van Ijzendoorn (2005, p. 86), writes "mothering should be supported by non-maternal care in order to share the heavy burden of raising human infants" and agrees that Bowlby did not intend attachment theory work to be directed exclusively to the mother of the infant. This alloparenting where infants are cared for by others in the social network is considered by Van Ijzendoorn to be important - "human infants are evolutionarily built to become part of a network of attachment relationships from which they derive protection and security" (2005, p. 86). Therefore, how these relationships are established is critical, based on trust through sensitive interactions between the educator and infant. Attachment seems to provoke interesting and strong emotional responses, which is understandable, as this is a basic instinct which ensures the survival of the species and evokes a respect for the infants' outside experiences and relationships that are fundamental to their development.

Rolfe (2004) describes interactions between educators and infants in depth, that the development of attachment to an educator is a critical element. "Attachment theory has a great deal to say about how we can make early childhood settings more caring, emotionally nurturing and developmentally supportive place for children and adults to be" (Rolfe, 2004, p. 5). Not only does this address the infant's needs but also the needs of the educators who also may want to feel a sense of confidence and competence. In order for infants to thrive both the physical and emotional needs have to be met, in a predictable manner.

Gonzalez-Mena has witnessed this approach first hand, and describes carefully her experiences of the relationship between a child and educator, that it is not a copy of the parent/child relationship but one which still has a "...sense of security and a feeling of belonging..." (Gonzalez-Mena, 2004, p. 13). Educators know that there are times during the day where the

infant is fully dependent on the adult to assist, such as nappy changing, or feeding times, so this time is spent fully focused on the infant, interacting and learning together. Gonzalez-Mena advises, “Put the emphasis on learning not teaching” (Gonzalez-Mena, 2004, p. 15). These include interactions with infants that are responsive, reciprocal and respectful, building a trusting relationship (Ministry of Education, 1996). Gonzalez-Mena emphasises the importance of educators who use a particular way of caring for infants in a considered and sensitive manner.

The opportunities to venture into assessment through the ‘learning story framework,’ enables educators to expand their own personal philosophy, and actively see themselves as professionals within their chosen profession through evidence based documentation. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007, p. 147) state that “documentation tells us something about how we have constructed the child, as well as ourselves as pedagogues”, that “it enables us to see how we ourselves understand and ‘read’ what is going on in practice” The ability to gain perspective on our own practice is perhaps a most helpful tool in identifying our own philosophy and reflecting upon our personal pedagogy (Hill, 2003), as defined in the document Quality in Action (Ministry of Education, 1998) which states “...the knowledge, skills and attitudes resulting from the theory, principles, and practice of the teaching profession” (p. 87). Bronfenbrenner (1979) uses the ecology of human development to unpack these personal pedagogies, and how they can interlink human beings and be influenced by external factors.

2.6.7 The Importance of trust

In an article written in New Zealand, the influence of the RIE philosophy is again used to emphasise that “we see infants, not as objects to be manipulated, to meet our expectations, but as unique, authentic, competent human beings deserving of our highest respect” (Perry & Rockel, 2007, p. 5). How this is integrated into early childhood settings of New Zealand is a challenging and diverse topic. However, the similarities of this thinking are apparent when it is compared with our curriculum document that states “an infant must establish an intimate, responsive, and trusting relationship with at least one other person” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). Petersen & Wittmer (2008) define responsiveness component which “refers to both how well an adult understands a child’s cues and how sensitively and accurately the adult

responds” (p. 41). Leavitt (1994) states that themes for responsiveness are empathy, respect for the individual child, and reciprocity. For example, routine care moments provide the opportunities to establish a bond that promotes a sense of security and predictability enabling infants to feel secure in the knowledge that basic needs will be met.

Trust in the educator is formed by repetition and predictability of events and contributes to healthy brain development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2001). This in turn, can support the infant to develop a sense of efficacy as they participate and communicate in activities that are happening around them (Petersen & Wittmer, 2008). Chapman (2007) believes that during these routine and care times the opportunities to interact together “need to be individualized, relaxed, gentle, full of conversation and self help. This is the time that the child has 100% attention of the adult” (p. 6), and refers to the approach taken by Gerber (1998) of an interactive, sensitive and responsive relationship based on respect and trust. A tension is created when educators perceive the infant either as competent, or as being in need of adult ‘help’ and directly relates to pedagogy and philosophy in teaching practice, and this image of the child.

Rolfe clearly defines the importance of trust and the importance that it holds in an infant’s early survival (Rolfe, 2004). Through daily, predictable interactions, infants start to trust that they will be taken care of, enabling the infant to feel competent (Rolfe, 2004). Even at this early stage children can begin to experience autonomy which is also discussed in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). Infants may be seen to be vulnerable but they can also be competent and confident, gaining trust and forming strong attachment with caregivers and educators through sensitive caregiving. Attachment theory helps us to consider that infants in early childhood centres need “a sense of security and a feeling of belonging, yet it is not a copy of a parent-child relationship” (Gonzalez-Mena, 2004, p. 13). “Infants need this relationship because they cannot physically attach themselves to people to get nourished and cared for” (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2007, p. 99). Recchia & Shin (2010) discuss how infants need intimate relationships in order to develop a foundation of self-worth and trust in others. This security is often discussed alongside the notion of trust, but how does trust become something that infants will want to establish?

Erikson (1902-1994) one of the leading figures of human development, stated that “mothers create a sense of trust in their children by that kind of administrations which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby’s individual needs and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness” (Erikson, 1995, p. 224). Erikson’s theory was psychosocial development. The concept is trust verses mistrust is part of this theory. The infant comes to rely on the availability of the mother to provide an easing of the body’s needs, such as feeding, bowel elimination, and comfort. “The general state of trust, furthermore, implies not only that one has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer providers, but also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one’s own organs to cope with urges” (Erikson, 1995, p. 222). Erikson refers to the “first demonstration of social trust in the baby is the ease of his feeding, the depth of his sleep, the relaxation of his bowels” (p. 222). The outside world, away from the security of the womb, slowly becomes a safe and predictable place or the realm of the infant’s world, supported by the mother’s constant and sensitive caregiving practices. As long as this is evident, Erikson believes that the infant starts to predict and become familiar with the inside internal discomfort and “senses arouse a feeling of familiarity, of having coincided with a feeling of inner goodness” (p. 222).

Erikson’s concept of trust verses mistrust (Erikson, 1995) is a description of the implication of infants finding that the world is not always a safe, secure place in which to thrive, develop and start to establish attachments. Whether these attachments are with the mother or another adult providing care, the main emphasis needs to be on the consistent message that the infant’s needs must be met. Here, the context of where the infant is being cared for plays a significant role in deciding who this adult will be. Whether in centre-based care, home-based care, or an extended family arrangement the infant may be placed within an environment which is unfamiliar, with a person who is unfamiliar and without the maternal caregiver present for protection, security and familiarity. Developing trust and having an attachment figure available is a strong factor in supporting infants to settle into an early childhood centre context.

2.6.8 Other literature that supports the research question

This section focuses on how relationships are established in early childhood settings and what strategies and resources are used to support and build positive, sensitive, experiences with

infants. Responsiveness according to Rolfe (2004) relates directly to how an educator interacts with the infants in their care. Rolfe states this includes being in tune with the emotional and physical status of the infant by observing their behaviours, looking for and correctly recognising signals and cues (Rolfe, 2004: Gerber, 1998). Degotardi & Davis (2008) contend that this is a particular challenge in an early childhood centre context. Whereas parents are constantly asking themselves and are able to determine what infants want, what they know, how they feel, educators are professionally striving to do the same, but with less history of the child to support their interpretations. Educators therefore have to call upon their own knowledge and beliefs of children to be able to begin to understand the infant's efforts to communicate and be understood by the infant. A willingness to be incorrect in interpretation and to try again also recognises the infant's right to be an active participant in their own care and education. "There is still resistance to the idea that infants and toddlers can be active participants who communicate, listen and have their own opinions" (Nyland, 2005, p. 26). Bary (2010) makes a valid contribution to the literature on infant and toddler pedagogy when stating that "it is vital that we develop a curriculum that is underpinned by pedagogy based on relationship development" (p. 18).

Educators need to be highly aware of the importance of responsiveness when working with infants. Brennan (2005) states this is "the combined dynamic of the teacher-child relationship" (p. 216). This relationship relates to how an infant gains a sense of trust in an environment which may be unfamiliar or new. "In order to appreciate why the development of trust is so central during the first year or so of life, it is necessary to truly comprehend the complete or almost complete dependency of the human infant during this period of development" (Rolfe, 2004, p. 96). This relational (Newton, 2008: Gibbs, 2006) way of responding to infants is paramount to create trusting, and secure environments for infants. "Our ability to have sensitive, reciprocal communication nurtures a child's sense of security, and these trusting secure relationships help children do well in many areas of their lives" (Siegel & Hartzell, 2004, p. 3). Leach (1994) espouses that this comes from responsive adults who are sufficiently supported and self-confident themselves to engage in the constantly evolving interactions between themselves and children. Goodfellow (2008a) describes these interactions as including presence, a characteristic of adult-child interactions, "presence is situated within caring relationships" (p. 17), and is seen by Goodfellow as an indicator of quality care.

Rolfe (2004) provides a reminder of the essence of infant relationship building between the educator and infant in care. Shearsby & Thawley (2002, p. 27) term this as “crucial relationships” where educators are able to establish and maintain connections through affectionate and genuine interactions, and educators use “openness and warmth, in a respectful and supportive manner, and “secure attachments form when a caregiver is consistently responsible for meeting the physical and emotional needs of the child” (p. 28). Securing a trusting bond can establish a sense of security through responsive and sensitive care and set up future expectations of relationships. “Because attachment is a lifelong process, the significance of warm, satisfying and reliable attachment relationships continues through the lifespan” (Rolfe, 2004, p. 123).

Biddulph (2005) describes the relationship between an infant and the parents who “get to know their baby and its nature, its needs and its means of communicating them” (Biddulph 2005, p. 61). This poses the problem of how educators get to know babies, their nature and means of communicating, when the infant is not previously known to them. Human babies have a set of responses designed to elicit attention and love which includes eye contact, and verbal references, which in turn are responded to with a friendly tone of voice, smile or touch. Biddulph (2005) believes that “this is the beginning of human conversation” (p. 127). These interactions are vital to infants and educators throughout the day as they build a history of confidence and enjoyment within a developing relationship.

2.7 Summary

By summarising some of the theories that I perceive as being central to infant care, it is evident that there are implications in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) that early childhood educators in New Zealand may rely on, to frame philosophy and practice for Early childhood education as well as practice in New Zealand.

In this literature review I have discussed the historical and current writings on infants and their relationships to educators and I surveyed the theories that underpin practice. In particular, I have explored the notion of attachment and its history, and included the writings of Bowlby

(1969) as a primary source for the research. Moreover, the current curriculum documents for early childhood education and the relevance that they represent to educators who work with infants in a social cultural context have been discussed. I included Bronfenbrenner's (1979) perspective on the ecological model as this is one of the theoretical approaches that influenced the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). I have also discussed what other researchers have identified as important qualities, traits and practices in educators building sensitive relationships with infants.

Chapter Three Research Design/Methods, choosing the topic

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the overall design of the research and the background to the decisions made by me as the researcher. I define the genre and language, used and interpret how this directly affects the outcome of the data collected. In locating and identifying the key terms used in the study, I endeavor to clarify my thinking and clearly state my intentions for doing the research. There is little point documenting the findings of the data, if I have not discussed carefully the processes that lead to such outcomes.

This topic has been a growing area of intense interest for me from the beginning of my tertiary education at university. The subtle nature of interactions between infants and adults captured my attention and through post graduate papers I have been able to identify exactly the nature and extent of this interest in early childhood education. It was a natural progression for this to lead onto my thesis topic, and an opportunity to immerse myself in literature that was significant while engaging in the research process as an emerging researcher.

For conducting this research I have used qualitative research methods in the form of semi-structured interviews. However, when analyzing some of the data it was necessary to include a quantitative method of analysis in the form of a graph for interpretation purposes. Using both methods provided an opportunity for a more balanced and rigorous discussion.

3.1 Defining my theoretical stance

This part of the thesis discusses the overarching theoretical perspectives from the researcher's perspective. The design of the research reflects the notion of 'grounded theory' which Patton (2002) defines as "...theory that emerges from the researcher's observations and interviews out in the real world rather than in the laboratory..." (p. 11) and is pivotal in understanding the outcomes from the researcher's world view. Without clearly stating this perspective, the research becomes blurred and not transparent in its correlation between the chosen theory and the links to the actual process and analysis of the data. Qualitative inquiry occurs as the researcher supports the building of a theory grounded in the data, which is an important and defining factor in this

process. One cannot discuss grounded theory without recognizing Glaser and Strauss's (1967) critical contribution to this approach to research. These writers state that "Our basic position is that generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at theory situated to its supposed uses" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3). Here the theory has a quality of 'fit' so that the theory and the data work together to make an understandable and valid contribution to both academic and 'layman' grasp of the concepts under investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Charmaz, Clarke, Morse, Stern, Corbin, & Bowers (2009) further note in their writing that a researcher using the structure of grounded theory can be more than just using empirical or measureable data, but can challenge our own notions on constructing reality as a researcher. By "turning back and examining ourselves...we can learn to recognize our standpoints, adopt new perspectives, and turn in different directions..." (Charmaz et al. 2009, p. 129). By examining the processes that we as researchers go through as we write, analyze, ponder, critique, and disseminate, we are constructing our own lived experiences, "turning back prompts us to examine how we construct and reconstruct reality" (p. 129). This combines the very nature of research as a question to 'ourselves' alongside the participants, promoting a constructivist view of reality.

3.2 The Theoretical paradigm of the research, what is it?

The implications of social interactions and how as individuals, our cognitive abilities or thinking is spurred on by relationships with others is a critical element of this research, as "the child is a member of the social world" (Smidt, 2006, p. 30). Educators use strategies to build responsive relationships with infants that take into account the differences and personal tendencies of each child. Gergen (1999) explains that constructivism is a process for each of us as individuals. Constructivism can provide a useful reminder of the power that experiences can have for educators and children alike. Schwandt (cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008) states that "constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it" (p. 10). Educators build upon their previous knowledge about infant pedagogy through daily 'lived experiences' with the children in their education and care. This is the unique opportunity to get to 'know' and build specific knowledge about each child as an

individual, even if he/she is located within the ‘collective’ of an early childhood education center.

Mutch (2005) defines a paradigm as “a particular view of the world, linking a theory and research style” (p. 222). For the purposes of this research, I define the paradigm as being the inquiry and acquisition of information, a constructivist “theoretical approach to learning that focuses on the learner building new understandings through cognitive processing or social interaction” (Mutch, 2005, p. 216). Corbin & Strauss (2008) define ‘paradigm’ as “an understanding of the circumstances that surround events and therefore enrich the analysis” (p. 90). Theoretical ideas helped to form a structure whereby the data can be unpacked and analysed in detail for common overarching and emerging themes. This formed a stable foundation from which to analyse and disseminate the data in a meaningful and authentic way, and became a critical element of conducting the research process.

3.3 Why qualitative research?

This research is a direct result of exploration to further my understanding of how educators and infants under a year old form relationships with each other in the context of New Zealand early childhood education centers. My approach is qualitative, gathering data through conversation and then linking these to appropriate theories, or ideas to help me to illustrate the lived experience of the educators by giving them a voice. I have chosen a qualitative approach as this entails a specific focus on the relational aspect of looking at the phenomena in question. Mutch (2005, p. 223) gives a detailed definition of qualitative research as “a research approach that looks in depth at fewer subjects through rich description of their thoughts, feelings, stories and /or activities”. This is in contrast to quantitative research that “reduces numerical data to quantifiable explanations”.

Both approaches have valid contributions to make, however, the depth of knowledge gathered from qualitative methods provide ‘fine detail’ and this directly supports the research topic. Through careful analysis of research data the qualitative approach forms an in- depth study of the phenomena under investigation. The implications for educators to reflect on and fully appreciate the complexity of their role of educator and how this impacts on families, society and the wider

community gives rise to the tangible reason why this research is important for New Zealand families. As discussed by Mac Naughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford (2001, p. 4), “some studies have at their core the quest to describe or to understand”.

3.4 Developing a research question

The research question was developed over many years of undergraduate and postgraduate study. My interest in how educators and infants interact, and respond to each other, caused me to reflect on my own pedagogical practices and philosophy. This further developed into an ongoing focus on the practices associated with educators and their own personal practices working with infants. This research spoke to me in a way that other early childhood education undergraduate papers did not. I wanted to explore in depth the reality of working full time with infants for educators but in a way that was considered authentic. This afforded educators an opportunity to establish close relational ties, but how was this achieved with infants who were less than a year old? Therefore, this research is significant in its focus on the relational aspect between educator in experiencing and getting to know individual infants and is, as Patton states, “more interested in deeply understanding specific cases within a particular context rather than in hypothesizing about generalizations and causes across time and space (Patton, 2002, p. 546).

I identified the core question by using professional dialogue and reflecting and re evaluating my overarching concepts. I wanted to look at the phenomena in its natural context. Using the learning story framework and *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), enabled me to identify and analyse the learning processes from both the educator and the infant’s perspective without directly observing them. This avoided ethical dilemmas relating to judgement and teaching practices and kept the data authentic (Gibbs, 2006) because the teachers reflected and discussed their own teaching, rather than me as the researcher, interpreting their actions.

My interest was not only with the relational aspect of teaching but included thinking about the demands placed on infant early childhood educators, while considering this in the context of the many different aspects of the community they serve. This awareness was a pivotal point in my discovery that it was the relational aspect of the interactions which fascinated me. This led me to

refine my research question into a more specific area to explore, rather than a broad view of infant care. It was not the fact that infants were in early childhood education, but more how those working with infants managed to establish relationships with infants less than a year old in centre environments. What were the challenges that educators faced? What were the highlights? What was missing for educators? What really worked well and supported their work? This is the theoretical background for the inductive part of the data analysis.

3.5 Deciding on the research methodology/design

This is a small scale qualitative study on teachers' relationships with infants. The research methods were determined purposefully to explore the varied and complex nature of relational experiences between the infant and educator. The approach of case study was chosen as this enabled the researcher to look specifically at the rich, deep aspect of working with infants in an early childhood context. "If individuals or groups are the primary unit of analysis, then case studies of people or groups may be the focus for case studies" (Patton, 2002, p. 439). In this case the educators themselves, their practices, philosophy and pedagogy, are the focus of the research. "Thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting" (Patton, 2002, p. 437).

Through the perspective of educators who participated it is possible to see and feel their world and what happens in it, or as Patton (2002) writes "...qualitative studies share the capacity to open up a world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places" (p. 438). The decision to look at specific case studies rather than generating general information, perhaps in the form of a survey, was a purposeful and intentional part of conducting this research so that the educator's perspective was authenticated by acknowledging their professional and personal philosophy and teaching practices. I also decided against using quantitative methods at this stage as I felt this would cause the research to be impersonal, and as the focus of this research is specifically the relational aspect of working with infants, an important part of keeping the research authentic was to quote the participants directly when analysing the emerging themes. It was also to do with the relational aspects of participating in research with others and the knowledge that teaching and learning is relational.

3.6 The merits of case study

I have chosen case study as the methodology for the study as “a qualitative case study seeks to describe that unit in depth and detail, holistically, and in context” (Patton, 2002, p. 55). The case study approach leans naturally towards theorists that are familiar in early childhood pedagogy and teaching practices. For this reason three cases have been used to inform the research question. As stated before the main purpose of conducting this research is to hear and analyse the participants ‘lived experiences’ and how these inform teaching practices and philosophy. As a sole researcher with restricted time and budget, this method allowed me to gain significant data quickly and efficiently. The case study approach enabled me to be flexible in my data gathering while working in a framework that was directly linked to my participants. However, the process of using a case study as a means to collect and analyse data is not an easy one and there were a few challenges along the way which I had to navigate. These included of locating participants that met the stated criteria, arranging times and places to conduct the interview and transcribing the narrative if the participants had an accent from a different culture. These will now be discussed in further detail.

3.7 Ethical considerations for the research

In preparing the ethics application, the ethical implications of the research to the participants and to myself as the researcher needed to be carefully considered. My overarching questions had to include the possibility of sensitive and personal information from the participants and needed to consider the implications of disclosure about personal and professional practice. The application included references to the Treaty of Waitangi and the partnership, participation, and protection considerations that I undertook with participants. For me this also extended to the need for cultural sensitivity to participants from other cultures. Full ethical approval was sought and granted.

3.8 Data collection processes

As a qualitative researcher, the options available for gathering data are flexible. I wanted to engage educators in discussing their pedagogy of teaching in a natural but confidential manner, allowing for the individual personality and passion for teaching to be strongly acknowledged. Semi formal interviews supported this notion, and I drafted an interview questionnaire focused

on establishing sensitive relationships with infants under the age of one year (see appendix B). I opted for semi-structured questions so as to allow for extra flow of information from the participants to expand or pursue a topic of interest. I chose the framework of an interview sheet to keep the interview short in length and focused on the topic. This enabled the participants to firstly pre-read the interview sheet, then decide on their perspective on the issues and the response they wished to give. The participants were encouraged to feel confident and competent during the interview process, and ensured that the data gathered was relevant and specific. During the interview I was constantly aware of the need to read the participants body language, looking for indications of discomfort both physically and emotionally and being sensitive to “nonverbal as well as verbal responses from research participants” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 27).

I concluded individual interviews with each participant, and taped these using a digital recorder. I made paper notes to further backup the interview. However, when analysing the data, only the recorded conversation was used as evidence. I completed all of the transcribing myself so that I could listen to the expression and tone of voice, not only the words in isolation. Transcribing therefore formed the first stage of analysis.

3.9 Choosing the participants

Finding the participants to take part in this research was a challenge that I had not anticipated. Identifying educators who were fully qualified was difficult because many who work with infants are not qualified. I was surprised and sad that this was the case as I had assumed incorrectly that educators who worked with infants would be fully qualified and registered. However, this confirmed that my research was needed to recognise and affirm the status of early childhood educators working exclusively with infants, as I believe that this is an important specialised area of teaching. It seemed to be overlooked by centre managers as being an unimportant consideration when employing staff. This was my first stumbling block.

From this experience I had to amend my ideas of selection of participants to take part in the research. I had already decided on purposeful sampling whereby there was specific set of criteria to be met to include the participant in the research. However, I had to expand these criteria, to

include those who were working with infants a minimum of three days, rather than five, and were fully qualified in early childhood education. This became somewhat more viable, and I was able to locate three participants who fitted the new criteria from the responses that I received. All were still in the Auckland area which enabled me to gain easy access. I was restricted with my own personal circumstances of being a primary caregiver for my two young children. I was also aware of the similar personal restrictions of educators and the valuable time that they would need to give for the research project. I did not want to make this a laborious task, but an informative and interesting journey into exploring the wider picture of educating infants. Therefore the interview was a quick and efficient way to discuss the specifics of the educator's perspective while avoiding adding to the educators workload and stress levels.

I firstly approached the 'gatekeepers' of three privately owned centres for permission to invite participants to be interviewed. These were either management or centre owners. However, one was not able to provide qualified staff so I was unable to pursue contact with this particular centre further. Two others proved to be fruitful and I was able to gain consent by leaving my contact details and an invitation to be part of the research in the lunchroom for the participants. I was e-mailed or phoned directly to arrange a meeting/interview time with each individual participant.

Finding a suitable meeting time and place became a significant issue in the quality of the interview process. I met one participant at their place of work and found that this interview was noisy and more difficult to transcribe due to distracting background noises. Two other participants I met off site, one on AUT university campus, and the other at my own home. Both of these interviews provided a deeper insight and an opportunity to engage in a conversation that was productive and more focused.

3.10 Context sensitivity and its challenges to the research

The context "identifies the sets of conditions in which problems and/or situations arise and to which persons respond through some form of action/interaction and emotion" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 88). This research involved three early childhood educators who work with infants under twelve months of age for at least three days a week. All three participants were of

different national and ethnic cultural background allowing a variety of perspectives and philosophies to emerge. The significance of the context within this research is important as it outlines the conditions that define the process of data gathering. My constraints were time, availability of location to conduct the interviews, and locating the participants who fitted the criteria. I was sensitive to the motivation of the participants to be included and to the management of the centres and the children who did not need to have their routine or day disturbed by an intrusion to conduct research. I was careful to engage in a professional manner with each centre. I was aware of the management's disappointment in not meeting the criteria to be included in the research. This was difficult and sensitive, and I had to communicate my decision to not include those educators who did not meet the criteria, without looking somewhat surprised that management had employed unqualified staff for the education and care of infants under one year old.

3.11 Trustworthiness of qualitative research

“Qualitative research in recent years has moved towards preferring such language as trustworthiness and authenticity” (Patton, 2002, p. 51). Both of these criteria within the research project play a significant role especially in the reporting and analysis stages. Trustworthiness or rigour explains the relationship between my own perspective and how this must stay true to the participants own views without interpreting it through my own values and beliefs, while still acknowledging that I will have a certain level of bias. However, being conscious of this bias means that as the researcher, I am constantly striving for the participants ‘truth’ rather than my own. This intellectual rigour is an important aspect of keeping the research data in perspective in the context of early childhood education, and specifically in the context of working with infants. Shenton (2004) explains that provisions of trustworthiness can be made to strengthen the researcher's analysis. These include strategies that Guba, (cited in Shenton, 2004) notes as supporting the investigator in processing the data. Four main concepts emerge from Guba's proposal: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Shenton (2004) goes on to expand each of these concepts, clearly defining the strategies and behaviours that he advocates as being supportive for analysis.

Credibility signifies the notion of gathering the data indicated within the research proposal. Do the methods employed reflect the nature of the study under investigation? Do the methods deliver the kind of information needed, and do they correlate with the research question? During my investigation I experienced difficulty in finding early childhood educators who met the criteria of being fully qualified. From this I had to slightly change my criteria to include more part time educators alongside the full time educators as some early childhood education centres employed both unqualified and qualified staff to work with infants under one year old. I maintained my original focus to interview the educators who were fully qualified.

My chosen method of data gathering was in the form of interviews. However, I was also aware of the importance of triangulation, As Shenton (2004) states, “triangulation may involve the use of different methods...which form the major data collection strategies for much qualitative research (p. 65). Three interviews were recorded and supporting artefacts (learning stories about the infants that the participants were referring to) were gathered. The artefacts were purposefully collected to add a different dimension to the study. These supporting artefacts, however, were not analysed as part of this project but used as a conversation starter for the interview process, and provided a tangible point of reference to keep the participants focused on the research questions. Shenton (2004) suggest this is of value to give further insights and background about the participants, even ‘helping explain the attitudes and behaviour of those in the group under scrutiny’ (p. 66).

A further strategy that enhanced the credibility of the study included the researcher using probes. “A probe is a follow-up question used to go deeper into the interviewee’s responses” (Shenton, 2004, p.372). Probes were very helpful in within the interview. These probes were not always verbal; rather as Shenton (2004) discusses they were non-verbal, head nodding, waiting for the participants to think, and being attentive, which yielded more elaboration of the topic within the context of the conversation. I found a major drawback was interviewing participants who were previously known to me, which both hindered and improved my technique. I had to ensure that the precious time we had was productive and I was able to gather the appropriate information as discussed in the research methodology. I found that the language barrier caused some difficulties in the transcribing of the interviews, especially the differences in accents. This difficulty caused

me to be especially vigilant during the transcribing process and hindered my progress in my careful deciphering of the interviews.

3.12 Authenticity of the researcher and the participants

As a researcher the significance of the participants sharing insights with me was a privilege and further illuminated the close, relational bond between the educator and the infant in their care. The notion of authenticity in regards to me as a neonate researcher was to be honest about the nature of the research and its intended use to inform educators about their pedagogical practice with young infants. In addition I was in no doubt that I was learning more from this experience about how to conduct a research project in a professional and ethical manner. My motivations for extending the knowledge of infant pedagogy are linked to an advocacy philosophy, and the practical measures that can be utilised to ensure this is happening in early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The participant notion of authenticity forms the basis of this research project. What are the motivational aspects of working with very young infants and is this driven by philosophy of each educator? Gibbs (2006) defines authenticity as “one’s sense of harmony with beliefs, identity and action” (p. 8). Kovach & Da Ros-Voseles (2008) states “authentic care giving is when you believe in what you do and you do what you believe” (p. 17). By staying open to new possibilities and being guided by the infants in education and care practices, educators should be kept fresh, alive, and purposeful. This approach to infant pedagogy engages educators’ own values and belief systems, keeping them true to themselves and the infants, rather than to centre philosophy, and management structures.

3.13 Why interviews?

Interviews were my choice of data gathering from which to conduct the research. I felt that interviews, particularly semi-structured ones, enabled me to keep the educator focused on my research questions, while still giving voice to each individual’s perspective.

I was mindful of the comment, “the advantage of a focused interview is that a framework is established beforehand and so analysis is greatly simplified” (Bell, 1999, p. 138). This flexibility

between maintaining a balance between my question and the participants perspective led naturally to me using the interview process. However, constructing the interview questions proved to be a more difficult task as the complexity of asking questions, or the right kind or type of questions, became clear as I started to design the interview form. What held true for me, was the core question of how educators interacted with infants, and recording how this was done in the educators own words. Hence, I was careful to include some probes to expand and give opportunities for further discussion on the points that the participants felt were important. These formed the basis of the overarching themes in the analyses and discussion of both inductive and deductive analysis.

3.14 The indicative questions to the participants

A significant part of this research is the aspect of conducting and obtaining data which is grounded in the perspectives of the participants lived experiences. “One must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). For this I have used inductive analysis which “begins with specific observations and build towards general patterns” (Patton, 2002, p. 56). I had no preconceived hypotheses but intended only to work with the data gathered at this specific time and place “...grounded in and emerge from direct field experience rather than being imposed a priori as is the case in formal hypothesis and theory testing” (Patton, 2002, p. 56). My data gathering provided me with rich and deep narrations from which to start the process of analysis which was driven by the information in the transcripts.

3.15 Indicative Questions

1. What does a ‘sensitive and responsive relationship’ mean to you as an educator of infants and is this important to you?
2. What techniques did, or do, you use to establish these responsive relationships between yourself and the infant?
3. Do you incorporate responsiveness as part of your practice and if so why?
4. What are your challenges or strengths in establishing responsive relationships with infants?

5. Is there any extra support you would like to have in order to focus on establishing these relationships within a centre, or wider context, for example, political or professional development?
6. How does the learning story framework document these relationships being established and supported for you?
7. How does the curriculum *Te Whāriki* link to establishing these relationships?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to include that you think is relevant to the research topic, such as your philosophy of teaching infants?

3.16 Locating the participants within the research question

Locating the participant within the research question was an important part of staying ‘true’ to the participant perspectives. Acknowledging that there were many different and valid points to be heard from the three participants meant that I had a responsibility of reporting my findings in a true and ethical manner. Each participant was able to articulate her own understanding of her relationship with infants and how this directly influenced working theories and pedagogical practice. It was important to me that the voices of the participants were strongly evident throughout the process so I was careful to ensure that the interview was recorded with a suitable technology to allow for the interview to be heard clearly and the transcribing was clear. I did the transcriptions myself and was pleased that I had restricted myself to only three case studies as the potential to become swamped and overwhelmed is ever present. I wanted to remain within my allotted timeframe and to analyse and write up the findings from the data collected to finalise this thesis.

3.17 Learning stories and their relevance to the research project

I included tangible evidence of the teaching practices exercised by the participants in the form of learning stories (Carr, 2001) for two purposes. Firstly, for the reason of triangulation, that the reliance on one strategy such as interviews was not sufficient for analysis. I wanted to be rigorous in collecting the data, and to have more than one form of data. I chose the learning story as an artefact. These are written and analysed as standalone documents which suspend an event

in time and space for consideration. Although the rapid fluctuations of an infant's growth and development can be overlooked, the learning story framework provides an effective and powerful reminder and account of what has taken place from the *educator's* perspective. This subjective method of documentation provides families with an insight into the infant's learning and development throughout their daily lived experiences. Alongside this, educators who articulate their teaching and observational techniques support the notion of professional and knowledgeable educators who are immersed in educational understanding, and can display this to the wider community. Learning stories support the practice of detailing the complex background behind the activity or as Wenger (1998) discusses "by focusing our attention in a particular way and enabling new kinds of understanding" (p. 60). By concentrating on one particular aspect of infant's social, physical or emotional growth, a spotlight is shone on the phenomena allowing for in-depth and significant insight for discussion with educators, and whanau/caregivers and allows the research to engage in authentic and rigorous methods for analysis.

3.18 Analysis of the data

My first challenge in starting to analyse the data was a strong sense of confusion. How does one 'do' data analysis? After referring to books and articles for enlightenment my sense of unease did not cease. I decided to start at the beginning, with the transcribed interviews that I had already started to immerse myself in.

This proved to be an advantageous decision. Reading through the transcripts illuminated the overall themes and general ideas coming from the participants verbal discussions. I read through each one, time and time again over a period of a week and then gathered the responses to the questions together. I went through each question and colour coded each participant discussions, green, red, blue and myself as the interviewer as black. This was a tremendous help in creating a visual representation of making sense of disparate pieces of data. At the end of this procedure I was left with one colour coded, transcribed interview with the many different 'themes' in it represented by the different colours. This highlighted each question and the corresponding response in a way that was quick and effective. I then proceeded to form a written mind map of the discussion points for each participant so as to become familiar with the overall topics. There

were three maps, one for each participant in the study. I transferred these topics from the mind map onto a corresponding list for each participant again and from here combined them together again. From this sixteen different themes emerged. These were culture, building relationships, traditions, learning stories, reflections of own practices, leadership, safety issues, challenges, philosophy, parents, nutrition, interactions, emotions, family history, strategies, and staffing. These themes could be further categorised into themes from the microsystem, themes from the exosystem and themes from the meso system, to bring the findings in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory. What were these themes telling me about how infant practitioners work? In a flash of peripheral understanding I suddenly made the link to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concepts of ecological theory with the round circles of influence surrounding the educator rather than the child. This model informs the New Zealand curriculum document for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 1996) so why could this not be applied to the infant educator's perspective? This was an important step in shaping my thinking. However, it did challenge my thinking of the research process. I wanted the outcomes of the research to be grounded in the data, rather than fitting into a model already used within early childhood education. I then realised the reality that it was both deductive and inductive, a rather interesting and surprising, unexpected insight for me as an emerging researcher. After listing these I found myself looking at these emerging themes in a different way.

3.19 Data analysis, inductive or deductive or both?

The data analysis involved a process of refining the transcribed digitally recorded interviews. As I transcribed the tapes myself, I became knowledgeable about what they contained and gained an overview of the general emerging themes. I envisioned this process to be an inductive one, whereby the categories arose out of the data directly (Mutch, 2005). I was surprised to find that not only was this the case, but that I could see a deductive model emerging that reflected the "logic that moves from hypothesis or theory to data collection" (Mutch, 2005, p. 217), as I synthesised the data. Social cultural theories were evident in the data from which I could conclude an initial hypothesis. This deductive model included all the three participants responses combined into one document for analysis. As both inductive and deductive theories arose in the analysis, I have included both in the findings.

3.20 What was the inductive model?

Patton (2002) discusses the influences of both the inductive and deductive approach to data analysis by saying “over a period of inquiry, an investigation may flow from inductive approaches, to find out what the important questions and variables are (exploratory work), to deductive hypothesis-testing or outcome measurement aimed at confirming and/or generalizing exploratory findings, then back again to inductive analysis” (p. 57). This is exactly what happened in this research project. The information gathered posed a serious question to the already accepted notion of ecology or as Bronfenbrenner (1979) states “development never takes place in a vacuum; it is always embedded and expressed through behaviour in a particular environmental context” (p. 27). This perspective also provided an opportunity for a big picture view or a wide angle lens perspective to be taken to the research data.

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* pays particular notice to this, and includes Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory as a fundamental part of the curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 1996). The ecological systems theory states that the child is at the centre of the model with all other influences being signified as ‘rings’ around the child. The most influential of these, is the child’s intimate family unit or micro system, then the early childhood centre, grandparents, where the child lives or ‘exosystem’. Next then are the activities that the child or immediate family engage in such as sports clubs, church groups, friends exo-system and lastly the macro system or country the child lives in, the laws and policies that effect them. The way that these layers link together or do not is known as the mesosystem.

This is the deductive model I used, except that I replaced the educator at the centre. From the data I could see a distinct pattern that replicated the similar issues that children have; in essence, the same influences that impact on children also can be used as indicators that impact early childhood educators as they establish responsive relationships with children.

3.21 Data analysis-how I analysed the inductive data

I started to understand the data from a different perspective, and viewed it with a more specific lens. I had no preconceived ideas about the outcomes of the research questions. My aim was to investigate the phenomenon under focus in a holistic and authentic manner. Patton (2002)

suggests that “the strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be” (p. 56). In analysing the data I took the following steps.

Firstly I familiarised myself with the data by completing the transcription myself. By listening to the auditory conversations and reading my written script, was able to colour code the answers to the corresponding questions and compiled a document incorporating all the questions and answers together for each participant. This afforded a reliable way of gathering the relevant information in one place for further focused coding. Secondly, I then proceeded to brainstorm the individual main themes in a written form, from each transcript, so that three participants documents were merged into one document. From this one document I looked for similarities in themes within, and across the transcripts such as Charmaz, (cited in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002) described. I found sixteen themes in total from the merged document of the participant’s manuscript. These are further discussed in chapter four.

Often these were very close notions in the spoken word; however, they had slightly different interpretations by each participant due to experiences, culture, or age. The commonalities showed themselves in each conversation which I pinpointed through the semi structured questions asked. It is worth mentioning that the bias of me as the researcher is unwittingly injected into the analysis as “the prism of their disciplinary assumptions and theoretical perspectives” (Charmaz, cited in Gubrium and Holstein, 2002, p. 683) is ever present. Through this lens the researcher interprets and defines “what is happening in the data and begins to grapple with what it means” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). The coding synthesized the three different perspectives to gain an overall idea of the participant experiences.

Thirdly, an analysis strategy was chosen for its closeness to the overarching nature of the research process and to highlight how educators describe their work. Charmaz (2006) was especially illuminating in her interpretation of grounded theory and unpacking data for its meaning in the participants perspective. The use of gerunds or a “verb which functions as a noun” (Oxford Dictionary 2006, p. 422) is very useful when exploring the participant perception of the particular role they have in establishing reciprocal and responsive relationships. The use of

coding meaning that the three participants use of action words can now be further investigated because “action codes show what is happening, what people are doing” (Charmaz in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 685) keeping the codes “simple and precise” (Charmaz, 2006). Like a type of shorthand this enables the research to be truly grounded in the participants’ actual narrations, and forms a clearly defined area to theorise that is exciting to explore, and the ability to incorporate many perspectives, looking for differences and/or similarities throughout the data. The inductive nature of this part of the research process provided an invaluable opportunity to discuss some general ideas on the overarching themes in this particular context. However, the discipline of ensuring rigour (Patton, 2002) throughout the process means being aware of my own interference in analyzing the data, so I was mindful of the boundaries of manipulating the data.

Next, starting with the interview transcripts I stripped them of the researchers ‘voice’ so that I was left with only the participants’ verbal responses. I then compiled them together to get one document which I manually coded myself looking for the ‘gerunds’ or the doing words described by Charmaz (2006). I combined these into a graph to present the information in a way that was readily understandable and useful. There were thirteen gerunds used throughout the transcripts. The notion of using quantitative data analysis was a surprise to me, but I wanted to follow the research methods described in Charmaz’s (2006) work which added rigour to a lengthy document. Using the graph provided a different view of the information, by showing what gerunds were used throughout the interview. This could be an interesting path to do further analysis on, but my divergence was to add weight to my discussions, or as Shenton (2004) discusses, I invested in quality processes to support my trustworthiness and show a rigorous connection between the data and research outcomes. Identifying the gerunds within the transcripts helped to reify the main ‘doing actions’ that educators used in their everyday practices. Clearly, however, this does not relate to the original research question and design but was an interesting outcome and part of my research journey to be further developed at some future date.

Finally I linked the data to Bronfenbrenner’s theory of Ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Armed with my gerunds and themes, which were grounded within the data from the participants, I gained significant insight. I had a feeling of familiarity when reading through the analysed data,

that somehow I knew these concepts. Of course, it was *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) based on the principles of Bronfenbrenner. My research participants had given me the data to show this as a working theory.

As a matter of respect and professional integrity I included member checking practices to ensure that participants were given an opportunity to read their own spoken word in a written format. I used e-mail and delivered the transcripts myself to the participants for inspection. This gave participants time to digest and agree or disagree with the written form as participants intended when transcripts are narrated (Shenton, 2004). I sought the expertise of my other colleagues to provide invaluable insight and perspective to my work, often challenging my assumptions. This provided an enriching and growing experience for me as an emerging researcher as I started to de-sensitise to the arduous task of becoming able to discuss my ideas in a public arena. Shenton (2004) supports this “peer scrutiny of the research project” (p. 67) and concludes that this is a positive and constructive way to provide further rigour.

3.22 Summary

In conclusion I acknowledge that this research is a unique snapshot of a specific time and place and my own journey of research expertise. However, each part of this chapter discusses the reasons for my chosen methods, how I gained the research data, and the analysis process.

Chapter Four Findings and Results of the Research

4.0 Introduction

This chapter sets out the findings in an orderly manner so as to make sense of them. Firstly I list the interview questions and then briefly discuss the background of the participants. I then organise the teacher's responses to the interview questions in sequence so that comparisons and similarities could be made. Themes are identified with the active verbs or gerunds (Charmaz, 2006) which are analysed and graphed to give further insight and detail into the role of infant educators.

I initially wanted to remove my own dialogue, as interviewer, from the transcript. However, on reflection, taking this out meant that the responses were not clear. The interview questions were designed in such a way that there was time for open ended pauses, and questions. I wanted the depth of discussion to be included in the narration, rather than it being a directed and totally guided conversation weighted by my perspective as the researcher. Therefore I have included the transcripts without any changes, or removals of comments or my further questions added by me during the interview. The responses from the three participants are then collated with the relevant questions.

4.1 Questions to the participants

The questions to the participants were aimed to gather detail about educators teaching practices with infants under twelve months of age, and how the participants established interactions with them during the day. I was specific in how I designed the questions, focusing closely on the topic of research and weaving it throughout the questions. The questions were asked in an informal manner, supporting participants to feel confident and comfortable as they thought through their answers. There was scope for participants to add extra discussion if they wanted to expand on concepts and I encouraged this throughout the interview while staying mindful of my purpose.

4.2 General information about the participants of the research

I now provide in detail some general background information of the research participants in order to obtain a backdrop that informs the research. I will also describe each participant's background, including their reasons for choosing to work with infants under twelve months of age.

4.3 Participant B

Participant B was part of a large privately owned early childhood centre. As a qualified early childhood education teacher with a nursing background participant B offered her own personal philosophy and teaching strategies. She was deeply aware of the personal and social aspects of caring for young infants and took her role as educator very seriously, stating her views with passion and conviction. However, participant B was also a fun loving and sensitive person who had worked with infants for a period of years. She was born in New Zealand and was in her late fifties. Her perspective on how child rearing has changed proved to be invaluable to me as a researcher, and her contribution of volunteering information about this was evident throughout the process of gathering data and writing up.

4.4 Participant L

Participant L was not a New Zealand born resident and was able to bring with her an alternative perspective to how other European countries in the world teach and care for their infants in out of home care. This participant was in her late forties and used theories of child development to support and underpin her teaching practices. This participant was very articulate and had reflected deeply on the differences in childcare between New Zealand and her own country. The private early childhood centre where she was the supervisor was culturally and socially diverse and offered many challenges to staff in how they consulted and collaborated with each other. This was reflected throughout the discussions in participant L's wide and knowledgeable understanding and sensitivity to the community.

4.5 Participant J

Participant J had recently come to New Zealand and was finding the differences in culture to be challenging. However, her positive and reflective nature ensured that she was able to glean

information and insights from these experiences. She was employed in a private early childhood centre and progressively became more involved with teaching and caring in the infant's room. Participant J was questioning her own culture and looking at ways infants are cared for in the New Zealand culture. Through reflective and thoughtful discussions with fellow educators and management, participant J had had a significant paradigm shift in her thinking which enabled her to be receptive to the new philosophies and practices.

4.6 Question One

What does a 'sensitive and responsive relationship' mean to you as an educator of infants and is this important to you?

The participants responses directly relate to how each educator articulated her philosophy of teaching. There was specific mention of the importance of being aware of the infant's emotional responses, through eye contact or body language and general observation.

“.....we do read their eye, and facial expression, their eye contact, and body language, yes we do need to notice what they need and what they are interested in, and when they need adults help or support sometimes” (participant J, p. 112).

Educators noted that the interactions between themselves and the infant were dependent on a relationship built with trust as the foundation.

“for me, probably I would understand responsive relationship as when I interact with the child, the child communicates back to me in a comfortable and confident way, and when I can read his body language, and I can read his body language as ‘I trust you’” (participant L, p. 120).

Within these responses, educators discussed how responding to the infant sensitively helped to support this trust and a respect for both the infant and the educator in a symbolic relationship, where image of self emerges from human interaction through gesture and language (Vaughan & Hogg, 2005). This demonstrates, “social interaction as taking place in terms of the meanings actors attach to action and things” (Bryman, 2008, p. 699). In this scenario, the ‘actors’ are the infant and educator who interact on a daily basis and share experiences together. The interplay of emotional and physical needs is met by educators who are aware of the cues, signals and their

meanings. Participant B was very thoughtful in articulating the notion of ‘responsiveness’. She goes on to discuss what it means to her as an educator,

“Responsive... as an educator..... to infants it... permeates in everything that you do...from the moment a parent walks in the door with a young child to visit, you are responsive to actually welcoming, active listening, observing, questing and following through,and also being very respectful at the same time” (participant B, p 108).

For this practitioner the responsiveness never goes away but is with her as a part of her being,

“It is who you are as a person, and it is also, should be and for me it is, reflected in your practice, 24/7” (participant B, p. 108).

4.7 Question Two

What techniques did, or do, you use to establish these sensitive relationships between yourself and the infant?

Educators responded to this question in various ways. They responded that by looking at the individual child, individual educator, and individual family, educators tuned into and noticed settling behaviors (Brownlee, 2010) that were displayed each day at drop off and pick up times. These created a history of ‘normal behavior’ which can be read by the educator on arrival to the early childhood center. Participant B is particularly aware of this aspect and uses it to gauge her responses at the beginning of the day. Not only is she looking at the infant but also the parents, and older or younger siblings, looking for cues which may impact on how the day will unfold in the center, such as if the child was showing signs of being ill or tired and taking the appropriate action to ensure a smooth transition.

“Ok, yes well that would probably come next because the techniques are to actually notice,... if someone comes through the front door, whether it’s a parent coming in with their first child for a first visit, or a parent coming in with a third child and knows you very well (participant B, p. 113).

In contrast participant L was very particular in how she listed her own settling techniques. Even though she specified that “I don’t think that there would be any particular technique” (p. 6) she was able to talk through the process which settled infants and released parents to move onto work or other commitments.

Approaches listed were the following:

- Get on the child's level
- Allow the child to choose the person who will relate easiest
- Very soft voice
- Lots of smiles
- Quiet singing or reading
- Let the child learn about you (the educator)
- Learn about your voice, tone of voice is very important
- Gently rocking him/her, walking and cuddling them
- Go through the same routine with them (participant L, 2010)

Participant J also had some similar techniques such as reading their body language and engaging in eye contact (Gallagher & Mayer, 2008). Interestingly, however, this educator discusses the notion of listening, not only with ears, but with the heart as well. Participant J was learning to trust the infants and observe them without interfering unduly but allowing the infant's time to explore their environment without her judgment.

“Yes we try to read them by their body language and eye contact, and listen to them, not only the voice, but the heart actually, to read them, yeah, and this year for me, I just think that it took me a while to sit back and watch, try not to interrupt too early, or (laughs), try to sit back, it's hard actually, at first” (participant J, p. 113).

4.8 Question Three

Do you incorporate responsiveness as part of your practice and if so why?

In my question I asked the participants about responsiveness. However, they all three immediately started to discuss trust and how to establish this with the infant. “My main rule, never lie to children, never ever, to a child, never, ever” (participant L, p. 8). The main focus here seemed to be to constantly guard against losing trust of the children and, therefore, undoing the hard work that goes into establishing this trust. The individual philosophy of the educator permeated the discussion, particularly around which theorist participants relied on to inform their practices. These included Erikson, for establishing trustful relationships - “you have to develop a trustful relationship with the child, otherwise you won't be able to teach, and they won't be willing to learn from you” (participant L, p. 8). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) was used to describe the relationship with the family, “Bronfenbrenner comes in the early stages when you are trying to find out about the child, because you have to have a very

close relationship with the family to learn about the child prior to him coming” (to the center) (participant L, p. 8). The impact of relationships between and including the infant and extended family often became evident during building of initial relationship with the parents in an informal daily basis.

Participant L emphasizes relationship building, “relationships are probably my main focus” (p.8). Participant J also makes reference to the same notion, “the relationship is the most important thing for the educator” (p. 8). This commonality between two participants is interesting, but what does this mean, ‘a relationship’? Participant B considers this and articulates her thoughts; however, she looks at the ideas around the responsiveness as asked in the question. In her discussion, she pinpoints or illuminates the exact behaviors which she considers to be important to ‘be a responsive educator’. I note too that Participant B acknowledges that the term may have changed its meaning over time.

“I quite like that term responsive relationships, because I think it’s been interpreted and used in many different words over the past years” (participant B, p. 120).

In responding to this question participants were a little unsure of the use of the word responsive and strove to give their own interpretations that linked with personal practice. Considerations were made towards theories that support educators underpinning pedagogy to highlight the personal and intense nature of working with infants.

4.9 Question Four

What are your challenges or strengths to establishing sensitive relationships with infants?

Participants identified many challenges and strengths in their role. However, they linked these together to form a balanced and rounded perspective of the reality of working with young infants. Challenges highlighted are those of philosophy with the parents, working together to create a comfortable working partnership where both the parents and educators evolve together, sharing information and knowledge for the infants benefit. This was mentioned twice by two different participants.

“you know the other big challenge, how a child is being raised, is a big challenge, lots of children go to sleep with their bottles, right? They sleep in their cots or car seats, to put

them down to sleep, daddies will put them in the car seat and have a big drive around. It is a big challenge, ok, to be overcome” (participant L. p. 115).

“the first one K, she used to be in the room just lying down, but the parents want to push her to sit up now, because she is the age to sit up now, and the parents I think not only Chinese parents but the Kiwi parents are like pushing the physically development things, they say oh, she sitting at home, but when we sit her here, she ask for sit up, but when we sit her up she accidently fall over, which quite challenged me ” (participant J, p. 117).

However, this proved to be a valid and informative learning opportunity for both parents and educators as each discussed their perspective. The challenge was turned into a strength because it formed the basis of conversations between parents and children and provided learning and insight into how different cultures and parents raise their children. Finding a balance between these two is a constant dance of observation and respect from educators to parents and back again.

4.10 Question Five

Is there any extra support you would like to have in order to focus on establishing these relationships within a centre, or wider context, for example, political or professional development?

Answers to question five seems to concentrate on political agendas and the availability of sourcing professional learning outside of working hours that is within the centre’s financial funding. Participant L was very insistent that politics should not be used to judge parents and dictate how they parent, such as may happen with the smacking debate.

“L: Yes and also there are many things that I disagree with political changes around child rearing its unacceptable, taking power off parents, totally, it’s unacceptable, instead of focusing on particular families they focus on all of us, how come I cannot smack my child? It’s not as if I am going to smack, I never smacked my child, but they are not allowed to tell me that I cannot do it” (participant L, p. 119).

Others concentrated on the extending of their own professional learning and working together as a team with the support of management to stay updated with current teaching practices and philosophy. The teacher registration funding available to those in the process of obtaining their full registration was used carefully. Professional learning was often sourced from universities or other institutions who would run conferences and workshops during the evening or weekend.

“Professional development is very useful, sometimes we go out for the course, like we go out at nighttime to listen to some professional teachers, which is really helpful, I like to

listen to the other teachers and other staff within the centre, they are wonderful, she supports us, when I do my, you actually do this every day but for me I still can't find the linkage between what I am doing" (participant J. p. 125).

"Pikler, Magda Gerber, J is actually sending me on a Magda Gerber course in Ponsonby with the learning center...." (participant B, p. 125).

The teacher registration was specifically mentioned by educators. It is of significant importance to employers and gave rise to discussion, educators working alongside each other as a team with the same focus.

"Everybody that's qualified and goes to Reggio tours in Melbourne that's overseas in Australia, and that comes out of the teacher registration, so it's actually, the teacher registration is used to benefit your practice"(participant I, p. 124).

This question opened the arena for a wider discussion on social and economic issues directly related to how early childhood funding is distributed in New Zealand. The implications of these can either support or hinder how educators gain access to furthering their professional understanding.

4.11 Question Six

How does the learning story framework document these relationships being established and supported for you?

The learning story concept (Carr, 2001) captures, through the educators perspective particular learning experiences of interest to children in a written document compiled by the educator. Often this includes photos of the event, object or person of interest and an explanation of what happened or what is happening. This can include a developmental milestone (Berk, 1998) or a special moment which is meaningful to the educator, parent or infant and forms a visual platform so educators and parents can dialogue together about the infant's progress or interests. Often this documentation gives the parent an insight into what is happening for their child that is otherwise difficult to capture throughout the day.

"from me from my perspective I like to put what happened throughout the day and then I like to put a short term review, where I will just explain why did I find this particular learning significant, what significant learning is, and where will I take my child next, what else will I do for this child to extend his/her emergent learning or interest in something, or to help them to develop, for parents, not every parent understands them, but they love reading them, and if you put lots and lots of photos then you do get some interest in it. But

what we do when we write up learning stories we follow them up, so from the parents perspective when it is followed up” (participant L, p. 120).

This is then extended to further learning experiences planned for infants to broaden the child’s understanding, and widen it. The educator documents these through photos (the center has written permission from the caregivers for this) and written explanation of what is happening, creating a sequence of detailed events that are individual to the infant and includes the educators’ perspective and narrative.

“ Yes so when you came up with your ‘what’s next’ you show this to your parents and then you evaluate what happened and then it becomes a little sequence, and that is very valuable and they love it, and they see the whole process, and then they love it (participant L, p. 120)

However, as participant L discusses, parents need to be carefully guided to understand the usefulness of learning stories, and to see the value in the document. These learning stories can take many hours to compile and link to the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996), but educators seemed to find pleasure from producing these as evidence of practice and demonstration of their own professional understanding of theoretical ideas on infant pedagogy.

“When they just see a little something happen in your short term review, even though they will read it and say ha, ha, ha, they did it, they don’t get the idea, but when you take them through the process step by step it just sinks in” (participant L, p. 120).

Participant J discusses how this gave her insight to the observations (Podmore, 2006a) that she had documented. The learning story document (Carr, 2001) gave her a foundation from which to discuss the issues of philosophy and ethics and how to approach parents to work together in partnership (Ministry of Education, 1996) with teachers within the centre context, especially in the case of differences in philosophy between the educators and the parents of the child, a sensitive area to navigate.

“Yes for me it is actually being responsive to the child, to the parents, and to the management and to the whole team; it is like, a big thing, not only to the child” (participant J, p. 114).

After having discussed with other staff and the manager, participant J was able to navigate her way around a sensitive matter, knowing that she had the support of the other team members. This

proved a powerful reminder of the importance of bringing difficult topics together for discussion and planning an action plan as a group of professionals working together as a team rather than as individuals. The power of *Te Whāriki* as a basis, and learning stories as a document, allows the center to unpack uncomfortable issues (Nuttall, 2003). This question gave me insight into the relevance of learning stories as a document that meets many different needs for educator, parent and employer.

4.12 Question Seven

How does the curriculum *Te Whāriki* link to establishing these relationships?

Using the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) as foundation for explaining what is happening within the learning story does not seem to be as important for these educators as being able to relate to the parents/caregivers in a way that makes sense to them. This can be a challenge as the curriculum document is written in early childhood terminology. Educators, therefore, spend time with parents to explain what terms mean and link these terms to the learning story written about their child.

“.... but we don’t put *Te Whāriki* goals and all that, the parents don’t understand” (participant L, p. 122).

“I am still using *Te Whāriki*; if I can’t find something I will go to the other book I read to link, to show the parents and the management that I am a professional (laughs)” (participant J. p 122).

“*Te Whāriki* Well I have been practicing before *Te Whāriki* (laughs) ...*Te Whāriki* I use actually now, today,.....I don’t use *Te Whāriki* in the traditional ‘Carr’ learning story set out as a framework for....the actually strands of *Te Whāriki*, I used to five years ago, because it is a fantastic book for referencing, for looking back on. I will see something in the environment that is happening with children and I know that it is linked to contribution, exploration or an essential learning area. I keep the story in my head and when it comes to putting it out, I will link it to *Te Whāriki* and use the *Te Whāriki* words within the story, but I won’t use subtitles” (participant B, p. 122).

Different cultural backgrounds and expectations from parents/whanau caused educators to reflect on their own philosophies and ways to introduce diverse educational practices in a professional manner. Participant B found this to be particularly challenging; however, she overcame this with team support and an open discussion with her manager, sensitively negotiating the matter and resolving it.

“...I have had a south African mum who was a legal, a practicing lawyer, who had a lovely challenging son with me. He used his voice for everything, no tears, just the son’s voice, and her family, the child was not allowed to cry, period. When I tried to explain to her his son’s voice and how he used it, and I linked it very professionally and carefully to the philosophy of how the approach is within the center, she smiled and nodded. Then she said to me, I know the center has a philosophy of respect, but she said but I also have my own philosophy at home and I would prefer you to practice my way” (participant B, p. 121).

Educators have a delicate balance to maintain here, and participants found it helpful to have the early childhood curriculum available to use, others such as participant B were using it in combination with her own experiences and background of nursing.

“you will always meet a parent that has their child in such a regimented routine, that you just smile and you just work with them, you work with the child and you work with the parent. And you grow as a person and as a teacher, and as an educator and your pedagogy grows” (participant B, p. 121).

I was surprised to learn that educators did not use *Te Whāriki*. I had presumed they would rely heavily on this document. However, one participant was teaching in early childhood education before *Te Whāriki* was introduced in 1996, and had moved into using it in a practical and culturally sensitive manner. By interpreting the individual needs of the children and families attending the center, the curriculum supported teaching practices while allowing for diversity.

4.13 Question Eight

Is there anything else that you would like to include that you think is relevant to the research topic, such as your philosophy of teaching infants?

Educators discussed in depth their own reasons for looking at the philosophy of working with infants. They had varied reasons which were significantly different to each other. Participant J who had immigrated to New Zealand from China found that she was given an array of choices to make about how to interact and respond to young infants within her care. Her cultural background gave her a beginning; however, she wanted to learn different ways of teaching and acknowledged the impact that other educators had on her own teaching practices.

“yes, the relationship is the most important thing for educator. Very important and how to say, quite a challenge for me when I started working with the babies, because we do quite different things in China with the babies, traditionally, and I had my boys, really make me reflect what I did with them, it’s like a culture things and your beliefs that are so different” (participant J, p. 124).

“ um, we hold the babies a lot in China, we think that they need that a lot, we think that when he cries that we pick him up and give him a cuddle, but that actually when I work here and by the training and professional development things I realized that I didn’t really understand him completely, I didn’t take him as a competent baby” (participant J, p. 124).

Participants recognized the value in the Magda Gerber (1998) approach of using respect towards infants as a way of teaching and interacting on a daily basis. Participant L stated that she found that some younger educators tended to treat the infants in a way which was not comfortable or professional to her personally.

“It became part of my philosophy when I started working with under two’s because lots of my girls, they would treat babies as, you know little play things. You can’t play with them, they are not puppies, they are children, they are normal, they are human beings who deserve respect and they are very capable, but the girls just don’t see it” (participant L, p. 123).

This was a challenge that became a motivation for this participant to become more active in promoting the RIE philosophy alongside other theorist such as Piaget, Bronfenbrenner, and Vygotsky (Berk, 1998). The actual caring of infants could be done in an educational way with the support from employers. This was further supported by professional development in the RIE philosophy, and a widening of educators thinking on some of the more routine practices such as meal, sleeping and changing times, normally scheduled into the day. Participant B discusses this in detail,

“well, it’s only really this year that we have gone into the philosophy in depth, (the RIE) as a research project because what the toddlers have done, the teachers have really focused on the toddlers. We did a reading from Massy University, Palmerston North where there is a center down there, it’s a center of innovation down there, and they put out a paper ‘*burn the rosters, free the teachers*’, and J downloaded that from the internet and thought oh, let’s do it, and so that’s what we did (laughs) basically the next week, so we have actually gone through that, (participant B, p. 125).

Participant B also spoke of the transition process of infants and families starting full time care in the center and how they support this transition, especially with pre-visits prior to starting to attend. In the answer to the question about the pedagogy of teaching and caring for infants participant B describes a sensitive and attuned way of observing infants, and their families in a respectful, however, knowledgeable way.

“So it is actually part of our philosophy to sit down, sit slightly back, observe, let the child get to know my voice as I am talking to you, make that eye contact, I mightn’t even touch

the child in the first two or three visits, but I know that the child, if it's on the floor, watching, listening, we have got low mirrors, so they are observing without being, or feeling threatened, and we read the body language of not only the child but also of the mother as well" (participant B, p. 125.)

The acknowledgement of the interplay between the parent and the educator and the sensitive manner in which this educator is aware of the subtle things such as voice tone and eye contact clearly signal the respect and professional understanding of this educator who strives to offer individual, and responsive care to the infant and the family.

4.14 Question Nine

Do you see yourself in a leadership role within the context of the early childhood centre?

This last question was asked to participants to see if they could link their practice with future outcomes for children. Do educators see themselves in a leadership role when working with infants? I define leadership in an early childhood context as connecting with people, willing to pass on expertise and knowledge to better the communities and society in which we live. The responses that I received from educators were not unpredictable, as often the very notion of leadership is perceived as arising from the business model. That is hierarchal and controlling, rather than distributed throughout the team (Aitken, Clarkin-Phillips, Tamati, Thornton, & Wansbrough, 2009). However, I was interested to see that in the domain of their own centre infant educators clearly perceived themselves as having some influence. Participant B aptly describes her leadership and presence (Goodfellow, 2008a). She put pressure on her employer to enroll this particular infant who was in need of excellent care (Goodfellow, 2008b) that this educator was willing to commit to.

"when he came in for a visit, he was like a little fetus curled up on mums chest, at three months, and I said to N, my supervisor, make a space, he is not going anywhere else, make a space, and she said, B we are full, and I said well create a space, (laughs) we will move someone out of the infant room that's almost ready to move, as mum was wanting to come in at about another six weeks so that worked out actually quite well. I said I don't want him going anywhere else, he is coming to us, and he did" (participant B, p. 126).

Participant B's status within the early childhood center was highly regarded, even though she was filling many different work related roles,

"As assistance supervisor there, I am also, got to have responsive relationships with all the team members and be accountable for them as well, when the supervisors not there. So it's

a multi task, I am an assistant supervisor, a primary caregiver, as well as everything else that's involved with it as well" (participant B, p. 126).

This included the direct establishment of relationships with the parents as well as the infant or any extended family such as siblings. Participant's B personal history of child rearing of her own children gave her the confidence. This confidence was underpinned by her academic achievements at university in gaining a degree in early childhood education, and combined with her own experiences as a mother of her own children.

"Parents come with a list of questions and I smile and I laugh and I say good on you lets go for it. Let's sit down, put your child down on the floor or wherever you are comfortable, and let's just go through your questions, it doesn't faze me one iota." (participant B, p. 127).

"I am fully registered, and I am also associate teacher for students. I am multi tasking and I am supporting the girls who are going through their teacher registration as well" (participant B, p. 127.)

Participant L did not see herself in a leadership role. However, when I asked her directly she stated that for the 'community' she was. She did not see herself as a leader per se,

"I am not a very good leader (laughs)" (participant L, p. 127).

But for the community,

"Oh, in the community why not, the community yes" (participant L, p. 127).

Participant L elaborated on this in more detail,

"You know I am not trying to be a leader myself, I am trying to bring everyone into a position where they feel comfortable around me and I love people to feel confident to speak up for themselves, because I really value honesty, I even told my staff, that if they have to take time off for some weird reason, it might be better to tell me the truth rather than I just don't want to come to work today, that's it" (participant L, p. 126).

Participant J discusses how it was to follow the teacher's rules in China and behave according to the culture. Participant J was not able to see herself in a leadership role at the present time.

"When I was not a young child but older, I would just follow what the teacher said, teachers just try to say, I do this, but you need to do other way, no right way, so you just do that" (participant J, p. 127)

"Actually, it's the combination of the practice, you find something challenging so you go to the book, or go to the professional teachers like my colleagues" (participant J, p. 127).

4.15 Emergent themes - The findings from the inductive analysis

After the initial findings were collated, a deeper and more systematic analysis was constructed. Each set of responses was mind mapped into themes and then cross referenced to show the strongest areas of commonality from the participants' responses. There were nine questions in total with sixteen themes emerging: Culture, building relationships, learning stories, reflection of own practices, leadership, safety, challenges, philosophy, nutrition, interactions, emotions, family history, and staffing. These sixteen themes were clustered to form three main themes, which are now discussed.

Philosophy theme: (Emotions, interactions, reflections of own practice, building relationships)

Beliefs and Values theme: (Culture, traditions, and family history)

Professional Practices theme: (Safety, staffing, nutrition, and learning stories)

4.16 Philosophy Theme - Emotions, interactions, building relationships, reflecting on own practice

The participants responses regarding philosophy of teaching can be linked to each teacher's philosophy. Some choose a specific theorist. For example, the RIE (Gerber, 1998) approach to teaching infants was discussed in some detail by all three participants.

“So I started bringing in Magda Gerber philosophy and Emma Pikler Philosophy because they show how independent, how confident, and competent, and they show you everything, (the infants) even though they don't have language, they have body language, and if you are clever enough you can read their body language” (participant L).

“When I first come across, we are doing the Magda Gerber approach, and it really challenged me, for me, I think if they cry they do need your cuddle, but actually after the learning things that the relationships, responding thing, it is not like you go for them and they need you, you need to wait and know what reason, really know what they need. Yes, the relationship for me is actually changing, that way” (participant J).

“the Magda Gerber approach, I don't think we ever stop learning the approach there are things in it which I can quite happily challenge in regards to the Kiwi culture...um but I think the overall philosophy has done wonders for the teaching practice of all the girls, because its reflected throughout the centre and I think it's actually done a lot for the centre because word of mouth is always better than advertising” (participant B).

The notion of respect towards infants from all these teachers is evident and the impact of this philosophy on the teaching pedagogy and practices is reflected throughout the data. However, this was not the only approach discussed by participants. One participant talked at length about the influences of other theorists that helped to inform her teaching practices and how this served to strengthen the relationships made with infants and to understand who they are as individuals in a partnership of respect and caring.

“I heavily rely on Erikson, Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner you know” (participant L).

The relationships and interactions between the educator and infants were defined and discussed in depth, with the interviewer using focus questions to unpack exactly what it is that educators ‘do’ with infants to establish responsive relationships. The fact that these educators are working with young infants both challenged and motivated educators to become careful and sensitive observers (Podmore, 2006a) of the different ways that infants communicate through their own five senses. The first research question endeavoured to explore how ‘responsive practice’ was achieved and if it was regarded as a necessary part of caring for infants in a day-care context by the participants.

4.17 Beliefs and Values Theme - Personal culture, traditions, challenges, and family history.

The aspect of culture and the impact on personal practices was a strong theme that was woven throughout all the participant interviews. Educators own perspective of ‘how things are done’ in relation to infant care and education was a prominent feature of the findings. Those participants who were not of New Zealand culture found the way things were done here particularly challenging to their thinking. The personal culture of individual educators directly impacted the organisation, where educators were challenging and questioning the New Zealand practices. This was a positive way of starting to integrate and understand personal and cultural philosophies. Through discussions and further professional development educators were exposed to new ideas from each other and discuss this in the transcripts.

“quite a challenge for me when I started working with the babies, because we do quite different things in China with the babies, traditionally, ...really made me reflect what I did with them, it’s like a culture thing and your beliefs are so different” (participant J, p. 127).

The significance of this shift of thinking to a more conscious teaching awareness became a focus of educator's professional learning and discovery and provided opportunities to explore different ideas on teaching practices and philosophy. In particular participant J talks of how she was influenced by her own cultural background in China. This was not challenged when her son was young; however, by working in New Zealand, participant J is able to see the differences in philosophy. "I realized that I didn't really understand him completely, I didn't take him as a competent baby" (participant J, p. 1). This quote demonstrates a significant change of teaching pedagogy and philosophy that was undertaken by this educator in strategies and teaching philosophy. This participant also found that working with infants confronted her own history of being cared for in her culture.

"when the children cry you are able to give them cuddles, and lots of Chinese people still hold the children in their arms and only put them down when they go to sleep" (participant J, p. 117).

The cultural and philosophical difference of spending time with infants impacted significantly on the future directions and decision making of this educator. After the initial confusion at the differences between culture and practices, this participant made a conscious decision to 'adopt' some of the different practices and started to experiment with the outcomes that this would afford her. The widening of the teaching and philosophy lens made for some challenging and conflicting dilemmas, but through discussions with other educators and colleagues she was able to re-establish a sense of equilibrium.

"Yes finally, it takes time to do that actually, but for me it really challenged and takes time to find the balance and get the support from the whole team" (participant J, p. 117).

Other educators talked of how infants are perceived and their frustrations at the lack of basic understanding of infant needs and commitment shown by the some educators with whom they worked. Through using a chosen philosophy, participant L established a framework on which to base the everyday interactions and learning opportunities.

In this particular scenario, the Magda Gerber (1998) philosophy was used to support the change in thinking, especially the aspect of respect of infants. This framework provided participant L with a framework to instigate a more professional and respectful way of caring with infants. By mentoring other staff about these philosophies of practice, participant L influenced and guided

unqualified staff to look at their own teaching practices with more depth. This in turn then provided the infants within their care with sensitive and relational interactions where infants are treated as people rather than as objects.

4.18 Professional Practice Theme - Influences on infant educators

One main theme in the research to emerge strongly was the notion that parents/caregivers or extended family can influence the relationship that is established with the infant. In such a case, educators are keenly aware of the role they play in supporting both the infant and the parents/caregivers. This is especially so if the separation process is not going smoothly so that the parents are starting to become concerned that their child will not settle into the early childhood context.

“...you are not only dealing with the infants, young infants and getting them settled, you are also dealing with the mother hormones, guilt, they are leaving their child with a stranger basically, even though they have done the pre-visits, which is a pre-requisite, and also dads and grandparents, they are very much a part, especially today because you often get a mother or a father picking up, or a grandparent dropping off or picking up” (participant B, p. 125).

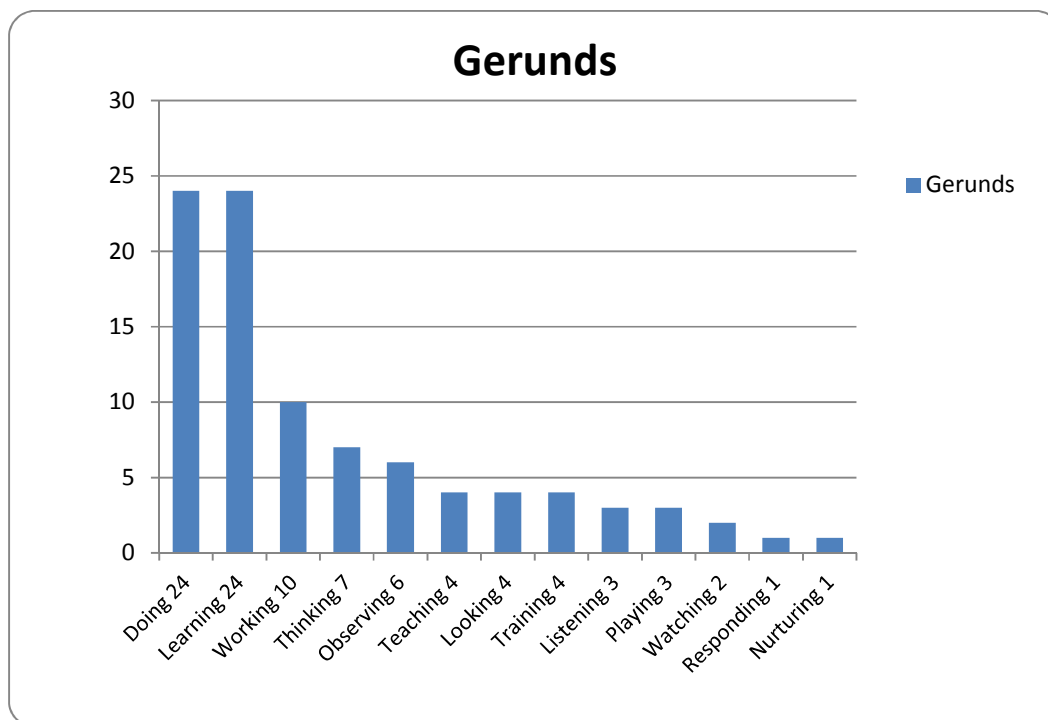
Social differences are reflected here. Often the infant has to cope with more than one separation throughout the day. It is therefore not surprising that an infant’s reactions to these changes can cause some distress and educators to reflect on their own responses to how to settle infant. The process that educators use to settle infants is considered as a critical part of the infants learning and development and can often be a defining theme in the philosophy of the early childhood educator. Educators find themselves feeling partly responsible for supporting many facets of the infant’s immediate family support systems. Infant educators offer a specialised service which supports the local community in which they operate often in an influential, yet quiet way: does this qualify under the title of leadership, or is it time to create a new definition for educators who see themselves in a leadership role using relational and social competency as a yardstick?

4.19 Figure 1. Using Gerunds to interpret the data

After scanning the transcripts for gerunds I then mapped these out on a graph. What was surprising was the variety of words used to describe educators work and tasks. The ‘doing’ and ‘learning’ terms were used the most (24 times) to express teaching and learning strategies when

working with the infants under the age of twelve months. In fact these terms were used consistently to describe the functions of the educator’s daily routine. Further analysis could look deeper into the underlying meanings of these words for practitioners, for example what actions were being taken by educators when they were engaged in ‘doing or learning’ with infants?

Figure 1. Graph of Gerunds (Charmaz, 2006)



4.20 Gerunds Graph

I had not intended to include mixed methods “both qualitative and quantitative” (Bryman, 2008, p. 695) within this research project, however, the process of unpacking how educators interpreted their role with children became very fuzzy. In using Charmaz’s (2006) gerunds to weed out the ‘ing’ roles proved to be an interesting discovery. One of the findings of this process was that educators seemed to see their roles in varied and differing ways. A challenge to using this process was that it needed to be explained clearly to the participants. However, in doing this, the spontaneous and authentic nature of the process may be lost or changed as participants would then be aware of them, rather than using them as a way to describe their work. There is much

scope for a more rigorous analysis to be conducted, as I was restricted by time and resources and it was not my intent to analyse these gerunds further for their meaning. This was a limited opportunity to further my knowledge about Charmaz (2006) work, due to time restrictions and scope of the research. However, perhaps this is an area of further and more rigorous research in the future. I have, however, included a graph of the active verbs or gerunds (Charmaz, 2006) found within this research, which shows the types of responses given by participants about their work with infants in an early childhood centre context. Teachers see their roles as active and can articulate what they do using professional early childhood language rather than seeing their role as ‘minders’ or ‘carers’ of infants. This was a heartening piece of evidence showing that in fact educators define themselves positively when establishing sensitive relationships with infants.

4.21 Summary

This chapter outlined the findings and results of the research and included details of the answers to the nine questions within the semi-structured interview. The emergent themes are detailed and the uses of Gerunds (Charmaz, 2006) are displayed on a graph for interpretation. The emerging themes are discussed and it is recognised by the researcher that there is further analysis that could be conducted on the use of the Gerunds within this project.

To summarise, the findings were:

- Educational training impacted the understanding of sensitive and responsive practice by educators.
- Teachers’ philosophy of teaching was built from their experience with infants.
- Infant educators’ own culture, beliefs and values directly affect their practice with establishing sensitive relationships with infants.
- Infant educators acknowledging their own pedagogical expertise.
- From the research gathered my finding show that Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems (the micro-system and exo-system) have become increasingly interwoven as infants spend more time in an early childhood education centre environment in New Zealand.
- The use of Gerunds that describe how educators establish sensitive relationships with infants through the use of ‘ing’ words (Charmaz, 2006).

In the next chapter I will provide more discussion about these findings. I will interweave these findings with the literature, to explain how early childhood educators who work with infants under twelve months of age establish sensitive relationships within the context of an early childhood centre in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Chapter Five Discussion

5.0 Introduction

The initial aims of the research were to investigate how educators establish sensitive relationships with infants and the strategies and knowledge that early childhood educators use when working with very young infants. However, it quickly became evident that this was not a straight forward procedure to research as each educator's practice was based on different personal philosophy and culture, and often invisible to the outsider. Therefore, in the following section's I discuss each theme and outcomes from the research and link it to literature.

Exploring the notion of 'responsive practice' which leads to sensitive relationships involves examining the interactions between the educator and each infant. Participants responded to this question, often verbalising different techniques and strategies that support their teaching. The research questions explore if this is an important aspect of working with infants. All the participants agreed that, indeed, this was an important aspect of their work; they all went into some detail to explain how this is so.

“for me, probably I would understand responsive relationship as when I interact with the child, the child communicates back to me in a comfortable and confident way, and when I can read his body language, and I can read his body language as ‘I trust you’ “(participant L, p.108).

“Responsive... as an educator..... to infants it... permeates in everything that you do...from the moment a parent walks in the door with a young child to visit, you are responsive to actually welcoming, active listening, observing, questioning and following through,and also being very respectful at the same time” (participant B, p.108).

“For me ...I work with the under one year olds, and they don't have the verbal, I mean they have verbal, but not the real language things, and we do read their eye, and facial expression, their eye contact, and body language, yes we do need to notice what they need and what they are interested in, and when they need adults help or support sometimes (participant J, p.108).

These comments point to the intuitive and sensitive nature of working alongside infants. Interactions are meaningful to educators and are seen as critical to establishing responsive relationships with infants. “It is very significant that the human infant and her caregiver spend so much time exchanging smiles, and other facial expressions, coos and other sounds, caresses and various forms of touch, and a veritable rainbow of communicative gestures” (Hobson, 2002, p.

252). Hobson expresses beautifully the wide nature of these interactions and the significance of the educator being receptive to these, recognizing them, and being responsive back to the infant in a manner that is meaningful to the individual infant. “The acts, the gestures, the expressions are part of deep interpersonal engagement” (Hobson, 2002, p. 252). The participants’ answers to some of the research questions were reflective of Hobson’s discussion here.

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22) the New Zealand curriculum document for early childhood education notes this in the introduction to infant curriculum “in order to thrive and learn, an infant must establish an intimate, responsive, and trusting relationship with at least one other person”. The key curriculum areas identified involve “one-to-one responsive interactions (those in which caregivers follow the child’s lead)” and “sociable, loving, and physically responsive adults who can tune in to an infant’s needs”. This links well together with the research participants comments on the importance of building relationships and how this is practiced. Rolfe (2004) supports this view, discussing how educators overall patterns of exchanges can shape a relationship “what this means is patterns of interactions, not individual behaviors, that show what a relationship is really like” (p. 32). Educators, who consistently and sensitively meet the needs of an infant over a period of time, create a *history* of stable care giving with a particular child. An example would be in primary care giving situations, where particular infants are the main responsibility of a chosen or assigned educator. In order to establish feeding, sleeping and changing routines, these must be predictable and ordered patterns which the infant can trust throughout the day.

Participant L discusses this further where she talks about reading the body language of the infant as a form of concrete communication. “I can read his body language as ‘I trust you’ (participant L, p. 1). What exactly does this mean?

“I will see the child’s response to me with trust, with smile, with willingness, runs towards me, happy to be with me....um, doesn’t have any concerns, or any signs of being unsettled around me, ...” (participant L, p. 112).

Read (2010, p. 18), talks of “a mutual pleasure in each other and the relationship developing empathy. You understand something of me and I understand something of you, together we have the beginnings of an understanding of each other”. This is a powerful indication that the child

has a sensitive and 'secure base' from which to operate as outlined by the theorist Bowlby in Read (2010), who states that infants need a secure base to explore from. In his discussion of attachment theory, Bowlby identifies that children need "a trusted figure from whom to set off and to return to as a safe haven, whenever necessary" (Read, 2010, p. 14). For example when infants first meet a new person, the infant will immediately look towards the primary caregiver for a signal, such as facial or body language, of whether this person is trustworthy. From this the infant interprets how he/she responds towards meeting the new person, and is discussed in the educators transcripts when settling infants into the early childhood context.

5.1 Overview of the participants and emerging themes

Discussions of educators' perceptions of their own teaching practices were reflective of the type of centres in which the study was conducted. These were private early childhood centres which catered for ages zero to five years of age. All research participants demonstrated varying experience, from diverse ethnicities, and age range. However, all worked with under twelve month old infants, according to the research criteria at the time of the research collection. One of the main achievements of this project has been to highlight educators who were able to articulate their purpose, or reason for working with this age group. This is an important but often overlooked part of educator's professional identity.

Through questions about their pedagogy, practitioners were given the opportunity to express themselves through their practices answering exactly about how they establish sensitive and responsive relationship with infants. Initial reactions from the participants were ones of intrigue, why would a Masters student want to know about this? In turn, I was asking myself the same question. A niggling persistence of wanting to know how in New Zealand educators established these relationships was my own motivation. I had read widely, but the lack of the New Zealand perspective worried me and I needed to find this out for myself. The themes that emerged included personal philosophy, beliefs and values, and professional practices. All were influenced by personal and external factors that shaped the educators identity.

5.2 Theoretical underpinning, educational training and philosophy of teaching that impacted the understanding of sensitive and responsive practice by educators

Included in the theme of philosophy were emotions, interactions, reflections of own practice, building relationships and leadership. These have been taken directly from the research transcriptions as recurring findings. Explaining the personal philosophy of the educators from the data includes some wide reaching ideas, especially in the personal reflection of how infant educators interact with the infants on a daily basis. Personal emotions from educators and infants factored highly when talking about interactions between the two parties. They especially focused on the non-verbal and verbal communication signals and cues (Gonzalez-Mena & Widmeyer Eyer, 2007) that infants developed or displayed, and how the educator was aware or specialised enough to recognise these and respond. Invariably this then led to a discussion of being a reflective practitioner (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002) and of critiquing one's own professional practice as an educator when working with under twelve month old infants. I do not feel that this reflective practice would be evident in the research in such depth, if the educators who undertook the research project were not fully qualified in early childhood education. This is an important point to consider as future educators must build on theoretical and evidence-based approaches that underpin the reflective nature of being an educator in this sector, including how to establish sensitive relationships with infants.

The notion of establishing, building, and maintaining meaningful and sensitive relationships with infants was discussed in detail by educators, not only with the infant but with other significant stakeholders such as the parents/whanau, grandparents or any other appropriate person in the infants life. Sustaining these relationships was a constant dilemma for educators who understood the connection between the centre and home/family life. The smooth transition between each of these contexts could often be the making or breaking of an infant's emotional equilibrium (Piaget cited in Crain, 2000) and was recognised as a key feature of infant care and education by participants. Another major finding was that educators have responsive relationships with infants, and that this responsiveness is often surrounded by the philosophy of teaching that the infant educator subscribes to, either from a known theorist such as Magda Gerber (1998), Vygotsky (1979), or from their own culture and experiences. The learning story (Carr, 2001) provided a visible platform from which educators could discuss their practices.

5.3 Infant educators own culture, beliefs and values directly affect their practice when establishing sensitive relationships with infants

Educators beliefs, values and culture, traditions, challenges, and family history are discussed here as the next theme to emerge. The very nature of the make-up of New Zealand as a bi-cultural (Jenkins, 2009)/multi-cultural society seemed to assist educators to question their own understandings of their practice. Centres were chosen for employment by practitioners that ‘felt comfortable’ or seemed to have values and beliefs that were in line with the educator’s own. However, this often changed as educators built relationships with their own specific group of children, families and the wider influences such as change of regulatory requirements. Often the educator spoke of how her own values and beliefs had been challenged, and been re-defined by spending time reflecting on personal circumstances and history (participant L). This included how the educator was influenced by their own parent’s child rearing, and cultural practices. Educator’s culture sometimes directly affected their pedagogy, often conflicting with, or causing in deep consideration perhaps supported by university studies on theory and practice. However, this was seen as a valuable learning experience by educators who were able to make conscious decisions from these reflections and experiences enhancing their own understanding and knowledge about infant pedagogy. The early childhood education environment (where the educators worked) also had an influence on educator’s perceptions on establishing sensitive relationships with infants. Furthermore, educators noted the impact that other educators, supervisors or managers who worked alongside the research participants had to strengthen or challenged practices. Mostly through their support, educators felt they were able to reach out to new ideas and philosophies and explore their meaning within their own unique working context.

5.4 Infant educators need to acknowledge their own pedagogical expertise

Included in the themes of professional practice are safety issues, staffing, nutrition, infant’s parents, and the documented learning stories. These themes were the ones that directly included the day to day professional practice of the educator and the challenges that they have faced. Paramount to the lives of infants and those that are in their immediate environment is the notion of safety (*Te Whāriki*, Ministry of Education, 1996: New Zealand Regulations, 1998). Although infants are competent and capable, they still need a high level of surveillance. Adults are

responsible for their protection and overall welfare as infants are dependent on being cared for and nurtured for infants. The ratio (New Zealand Regulations, 1998) of infant to adult within the early childhood centre context is one which caused much debate. Educators spoke of the high dependency infants have on educators, and the obligation educators felt towards all the infants in their care at different times of the day within the transcripts.

Of particular concern was the misalignment of practice to philosophy whereby what was actually happening with children was contrary to what was stated in the centre philosophy. This concerned educators who strove to provide the optimum care and education for infants but felt that they were pressured into being responsible for too many infants at the same time, especially at times of high need such as feeding, nappy changing and sleeping times. Educators wanted to give unhurried and sensitive time for bottle feeding (Gerber, 1998) but felt restricted by the needs of the other infants calling for their attention. The regulations state that the ratio for New Zealand infant educators is one to five, however, most function with a lower ratio of one adult to four infants (New Zealand Regulations, 1998). Even this can be unsatisfactory as often the needs of infants can be unpredictable, and educators have to juggle the needs of four infants at the same time. This is where the professional development offered by management and undertaken by educators offered constructive and positive ways to negotiate these challenges. The opportunity to discuss infant care and education with other stakeholders and educators offered a valuable opening for educators to enhance and discuss matters that directly link to this age group, often in the form of professional development.

Participants engaged with professional development within restrictions, such as limited time and finances, and reported that these were very beneficial in furthering their own personal journey of understanding infant pedagogy. A sense of purpose and ‘being part of something bigger’ was evident throughout the discussions with participants of the research project. Discussing philosophy and different ways of ‘seeing’ infants and their physical and emotional progress supported educators to seek different and individual ways of connecting with infants according to their personality and interests, which in turn supported the establishment of responsive and sensitive relationships to be established. A significant finding from this research has been the implications for practice in the field of infant pedagogy. Educators themselves are seeking

support and guidance on how to expand their own and societies understanding of child-care in early childhood centres. Opportunities for more funded conferences, both national and international, is another way to bind the communities of infant educators together for a common course giving them ‘voice’, purpose, direction and opportunities to show leadership potential. This would show a higher degree of professional visibility to society and would be a positive endeavour to gain the attention and support of parents and caregivers, adding further weight to the professional discussions on infant pedagogy. There seems little doubt that parents and educators alike want the best outcome for young infants, but having the time to share in each other’s practices and perspectives is a difficult and often challenging endeavour.

5.5 The lack of qualified staff working with infants under twelve months of age

As part of the research, locating educators who were already qualified and working with infants under twelve months of age became a challenge, posing an interesting dilemma as often those who were with the youngest children were not qualified. They were, however, often in the process of becoming qualified. The criterion for taking part in this research project was that educators had already achieved a qualification. Therefore participants were more difficult than anticipated to locate, which in itself was a significant finding. For example I had permission from management of a centre to approach educators, but on reading the criteria to be given to participants, we found that the educators did not meet the qualification criteria. This was disappointing for both me and the early childhood centre.

I noted from the transcripts that educators felt a sense of pride and achievement in articulating their personal educational backgrounds in which they had invested their time, energy and considerable financial resources to their chosen profession. It was confirming as the researcher to see this sense of professional pride as educators discussed their practice. Participants commented that access to more information to inform their practices, often difficult to locate would assist this pride. Literature and opportunities to share pedagogically expertise would be a positive step in supporting and extending infant pedagogy. The fact that I was researching this topic was greeted with much approval by the educators and seemed to validate and strengthen their own decision to work in this field especially as qualified and experienced practitioners working with infants.

This lack of expertise was referred to in the transcripts. Some educators noted that working with staff that were not qualified posed challenging ethical dilemmas. These included the lack of respect given to infants,

“..they would treat babies as, you know, little playthings. You can’t play with them, they are not puppies, they are children, they are human beings who deserve respect and they are very capable, but the girls just don’t see it.” (participant L, p. 116).

It was interesting to note that while educators struggled to work alongside unqualified employed staff there was still a commitment by these qualified and experienced educators to pursue a higher quality of care and educational practices. Professional development was sourced and paid for by management in one centre, recognising the need to support new educators into the profession, and extensive mentoring commitments were undertaken by qualified educators to build a motivated, knowledgeable and professional early childhood team. I acknowledge that educators are sometimes working within difficult and restraining environments whereby they are often the only qualified educator amongst the teaching team. Educators show tenacity; strength and commitment to teaching in early childhood education and to infants in their education and care by inducting and mentoring new educators, often while on the job themselves. *Te Whāriki* acknowledges this expertise by stating that “the care of infants is specialised and is neither a scaled-down three or four-year old programme nor a baby-sitting arrangement” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). In fact, Rockel (2010) states that educators see themselves as professionals with extremely high personal and professional standards. Educators are able to articulate and justify detailed and thoughtful ways their pedagogy of care for infants is practiced, based on sound evidence, theory and personal tacit experience.

5.6 Gerunds, and educators professional identity

As part of the study, participants were somewhat confused that I, as the emerging researcher was interested in what the infant educators had to say about their own methods of establishing responsive relationships with infants. This was surprising to me as I had the distinct impression that what these educators had to say had not been asked about before, and was not seen as an important part of their role within early childhood education. This was a significant finding. The

educators themselves did not see this part of their role as being visible. However, upon discussion they were able to go into detail about how they establish responsive relationships during the day with infants. This in itself was telling, and as they spoke, all the educators were able to articulate their own personal methods and reasons as to why these worked within their practice. I suggest that the infant educators themselves need to be aware of their own strengths when it comes to communication and connection. Perhaps it could be suggested to start to support each other as a working network of professionals based in New Zealand who are investigating sensitive relationship building with infants.

The security of knowing that you are cared for is a fundamental need of infants. This is describes as “being understood in a manner that is experienced as being loved and delighted in, for who you are, rather than for what you might be doing” (Read, 2010, p. 65). As a secondary primary caregiver (after the parental/whanau first relationship) early childhood educators can take specific steps to help support this secure base from which infants can explore their world. Read (2010) talks about “the quality of preparation that goes into the fostering of long-term secondary care giving and the commitment to authentic shared nurturing is within the control of a society committed to the protection of children” (p. 12). Indeed, this is a powerful acknowledgement of the need for educators who are reflective on their practice and are mindful of the ongoing influences of their practices and philosophy, perhaps alluding to the notion of leadership.

“I am not trying to be a leader myself, I am trying to bring everyone into a position where they feel comfortable around me, and I love people to feel confident to speak up for themselves, because I really value honesty” (participant B, p. 121).

Participant B seemed to be defining her role as an inspirational leader. Educators were very unsure of the notion of leadership and how it related directly to themselves as early childhood educators working with young infants. When prompted about the community and leadership, the response was positive and affirming. Educators perceived themselves in a community leadership role almost as if this was already stated as part of their job description.

“Oh, the community why not, the community, yes” (participant B, p. 121).

Other educators, however, seemed to understand the responsibility of leading from an advocacy role. They were very clear in their decisions about the placement of infants and the importance of being with an educator who was very sensitive and able to interpret (Degotardi & Davis, 2008) the needs and cues of a premature infant, who needed full time primary care.

“when he came for a visit, he was like a little fetus curled up on mums chest, at three months, and I said to my supervisor, make a space, he is not going anywhere else, make a space, and she said, we are full, and I said, well create a space (laughs).” (participant B, p. 126).

Interestingly, this kind of leadership could be seen as a strong advocacy role and seems to be more easily accepted by infant educators. Rather than educators seeing their work as practical leadership, they perceive themselves with a more political agenda of responsibility, accountability and issues such as ‘fiscal management’ as focused on by the National Party elected in 2008 (Dalli, 2010). Perhaps teachers need to see themselves as a critical part of society with a valid and extremely important role to play in being leaders by surrounding infants with sensitive and responsive educators. These educator/leaders who have reflected on the importance of social and emotional skills in the very young can lead other educators to have a more complex understanding of their own leadership role within their early childhood education center context. From the transcripts the educators seemed to interpret that when I was discussing leadership, I was referring to hierarchical (Aitken et al, 2009) or positional leadership, therefore I was more direct in my question. What I was wanting was the relational (Bary, 2010) aspect of interactions between the educator and the infant, and if this was seen by the *educator themselves* as leadership within the early childhood context. When I redirected the conversation back to leadership within their role of educator and carer with infants through the question ‘do you see yourself in a leadership role?’, however, the response was somewhat different.

“Someone who can inspire everyone. I am very inspirational for the under two’s but for some reason I fail to inspire the over two’s” (participant B, p. 121).

Dalli (2010) discusses this challenge, “strength is also required to turn visions into organised strategies; learning from the history of the sector in the 1990s, collaboration and coordination are both essential requirements of a critical ecology, and advocacy and leadership go hand in hand” (p. 71). This offers a political perspective, however, the research participants perceived

themselves more as community leaders, living and teaching among the community in a supportive role. “Possessing appropriate knowledge and skills enhances their ability to effect change and allows practitioners to make services responsive to the current family and community needs” (Rodd, 2006, p. 36). This is a distinctly different type of leadership, one that is based on relational and sensitive attunement to the community and its families. Dalli’s (2010) call for the early childhood profession to become more reflective, responsive and self-critical could be reflective of this type of leadership and offers an alternative to already established but possibly inappropriate perception of leadership in the early childhood sector. This correlates with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model as the inter-lap of political, community and personal aspects blur, affecting each other in ways not before seen in early childhood education as educators seek to become recognised professionals in their field of expertise.

Implications for practice for practitioners include the acknowledgement of the role that they play themselves, that is “that educators need to empower themselves for their position” (Hedges, 2002, p. 3). How can society see infant educators as fundamental to children’s health and welfare if they are not able to advocate for themselves in the first instance? The most powerful outcome of this journey is one of empowerment (Hedges, 2002: Ministry of Education, 1996) for our infant educators. Our early childhood curriculum talks of this for children. However, the educators themselves need to see, hear and feel this sense of purpose. *Te Whāriki* defines empowerment as “giving power or authority that enables a person to take an action or role” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 99). This research has illuminated the significant role that infant educators have in society within New Zealand early childhood sectors and strengthened the focus on striving for educators who have gained specialised knowledge of infants under one year of age. From the research transcripts, empowerment is alluded to, when the participant advocated for the infant who was a premature birth infant. This educator reflected on practices that shed light on better ways to do things from the infant’s perspective. The sense of empowerment needs to come from a solid base of informed theoretical, knowledge gained through personal awareness, experience, and formal education. Manning-Morton (2006) aptly discusses the implications of professionals who have this and how this solid base directly relates to educators sense of self-worth and self awareness “early years practitioners must develop a professional

approach that combines personal awareness with theoretical knowledge” (p. 42), so that educators can sufficiently meet the needs of infants and young children.

5.7 Challenges to the findings

Challenges included the location of early childhood centres with qualified infant educators to participate in the research. A future study could be expanded to different locations in Auckland or, indeed, New Zealand, or overseas to give the research a wider perspective and comparison. However, for this project the time frame and location ensured that some limits had to be put into place so that the project could be completed within a specified time frame.

5.8 Summary

Within this chapter I have discussed the main topics from the research data, and the literature links to the research project aims. I have included possible implications for professional practices for infant educators, and I have discussed in depth significant recommendations which emerge from both the data and the literature which I now list. Based on my findings and evidence from the literature,

- I recommend that at least fifty per cent of teachers who work with infants are fully qualified. It is my perception that often it is the older children in a mixed aged centre that the qualified teachers teach. Evidence from my research points to the need for qualified teachers to also be with infants.
- I recommend that educators need to acknowledge their own expertise in infant pedagogy and that it is a complicated and professional endeavour, not just babysitting.
- I recommend that Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems can give educators an insight to the shift in society and the importance that educators have in infants and family lives.

- Gerunds indicate that educators identify themselves as actively engaging with infants using professional early childhood education genre to describe their pedagogy of care practices.
- Educators need to see themselves as leaders in the field of infant pedagogy and establish networks for the sharing and dissemination of practice and reflection.
- I recommend that in teacher led programmes, educators have a need for a specific paper on infant pedagogy which includes how to fine-tune educator's methods and understanding of communication skills with infants under twelve months old.

Chapter Six Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the implications of the research, re-visit the research question, and the major findings. I acknowledge the limitations of the research, and offer possible future directions that could be taken. Finally, I conclude with my own reflections on this research journey and offer courage and strength to those who come after me in researching infant pedagogy.

6.1 Implications for practice in early childhood education

Implications and suggested recommendations for educators support sensitive relationships with infants. I suggest that infant educators continue to fine tune their own personal communication skills (Jalongo, 1996) and awareness so that infants signals are seen and taken as communication tools which the educators can use to support their own planning and understanding for the infants in their education and care. As part of this, I feel that current degree programme needs to include a specific core paper on infants under twelve months of age. This paper needs to focus on physical changes and emotional growth and learning of the infant as well as looking at the history of infant care within New Zealand. Educators need to use the New Zealand curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 1996) as a foundation document for planning for infant's development within a Maori/New Zealand context. Educators need to be aware of what is specific to our New Zealand culture alongside diverse other ethnic groups, and makes our curriculum different while still remaining focused on the establishing sensitive connections between children and adults living and learning together.

Further to this, the notion that these educators are in leadership roles (Rodd, 2006) where they are providing much more than is initially understood such as medicine administrator, safety warden, emergency person, teacher, career, advisor, financial consultant, emotional support, parental rights advisor to name but a few of the many and varied questions that parents and caregivers often ask of educators caring for young infants. Educators must recognise these positions that society places upon them and endeavour to support the infant's educator's role that unwittingly combines many of society's needs and focus them into the early childhood centre context.

6.2 Where to for support in this profession

Support for infant educators requires a continued growth in the trend of conferences, guest speakers, discussion groups and articles being written. However, while the challenge is to make infant pedagogy more visible in practice, the actual achievement of this offers many challenges, particularly in the area of articulating how this is done. Infant educators are so busy with the infants in their care that it is often difficult to step back and become aware of what they are doing to instigate discussion, support and personal growth. The exhausting nature of the physical act of caring with infants often renders educators emotionally and physically tired at the end of the day and there is little incentive to network outside of the centre so as to communicate what practices are being used. While there is time given to the curriculum documents such as learning stories, often the actual pedagogy is overlooked, due to lack of time or acknowledgment that this is important by the wider community.

Articles are an efficient and rigorous way to continue to debate differences in practices and a sharing of ideas. These are already written in different New Zealand publications and widely distributed, often from authors who outline national and international perspectives on infant pedagogy. The limitations of these articles are that they are high in educational jargon and often need to be carefully read to be understood. They are written by academics who are entrenched in the practice of university writing and often are no longer practicing with children directly. Maintaining the interest of infant educators when they are presented with a difficult and intimidating article to digest is a challenge. My suggestion therefore is to have simple, easily digestible insights from practitioners and academics alike that can be read during a coffee or lunchtime break. Short written pieces such as in the learning story framework which we use for our infants portfolios to quickly demonstrate the different ways educators are practicing. There needs to be an incentive, such as a guest speaker, or a book purchased and offered for educators to connect with as part of their working day. Professional dialogue needs to be encouraged and supported by centres that put specific paid time aside for the extension of infant pedagogy. Most educators need to be de-briefed at the end of the day, and manage to do this perhaps in their own time at home, but what a waste. Those discussions need to be captured and used as a springboard to extend and strengthen the professional field, not used as evidence against educators lack of knowledge, but as real life situations that are being lived and worked though by real educators

who have specific experience and skills to contribute to the field of early childhood infant pedagogy and education.

6.3 Original question re-visited, drawing together all the arguments and findings

How do educators establish sensitive relationships with infants (six weeks to twelve months of age) in an early childhood centre context of Aotearoa/New Zealand?

Clearly educators do establish sensitive relationships with infants, this is done by:

- Sensitively observing cues and gestures of infants as they interact with people places and things.
- Getting to know the infants family and their cultural preferences.
- Reflecting on practice and relevant theories and linking together to inform practice that is specific for the individual infant.
- Using the early childhood curriculum as a guide *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) to support practice and learning stories to document the infant's physical, emotional and social development.

The significance of the original question has not changed as time has lengthened, nor has my commitment to how this research underpins practice with infants. However, what has changed is my own perspective of where and how this fits into mainstream early childhood practices. The tensions of including such a relational aspect of professional competence causes yet another stressor adding, rather than diminishing, the role of the infant educator. This was not my purpose; in fact, it was to unravel the complicated and emotional nature of infant pedagogy and attempt to simplify it. This task has been undermined by the enormous responsibility that these educators hold, and the sheer intricate, intense professional knowledge that is needed, and inherently understood by the educators involved in the research project. Information on how educators establish respectful and responsive relationships with infants is not a readily available list of strategies and pre prescribed lists, but a carefully woven elaborate and deep-set examples of personal and professional worldviews and insights that are combined together to create wise purposeful interactions with infants.

6.4 Was this research worthwhile?

My initial reaction in coming to the end of this research project is fundamentally ‘What did I achieve here?’ I have spent many years reading and researching. Now writing about what I have found, although daunting, is also an exciting prospect. I can well understand why others perhaps find the task overwhelming. However, I have a responsibility to report my findings to the wider early childhood audience, and as I do so I am hoping that I can do justice to the participants and myself. This research was thoroughly worthwhile; I say that as I remember the looks of delight on the participants’ faces when I asked for their insights and knowledge. I now discuss the following concepts which have emerged as being pointers to the next round of research. These include concepts of empowerment and professionalism, leadership in early childhood education, and the political perspectives towards infants in childcare.

6.5 Limitations and implications summarised

The major limitation of this research is that the research was only conducted on the North Shore of Auckland. Wider educator participation of the research in the outer Auckland area could offer a possibility of differing perspectives. A longer research project would give the researcher time to analyse the data in different ways and comparing this with the already analysed data could be a useful activity. While I recognise the smallness of this project I feel that this is also its strength, as it remains ultimately from a North Shore of Auckland New Zealand perspective. The limitations encountered in the first instance when recruiting educators working with under twelve month old infants, inform our experiences and add another valid dimension to the discussion.

These limitations caused me to ponder the significance of wider questions reflected behind my original question “How do educators establish sensitive relationships with infants (six weeks to twelve months of age) within an early childhood context of Aotearoa/New Zealand?” I thought that this thesis was going to be about how educators establish sensitive relationships with infants and there is no doubt that I have done this. However, I have also uncovered some wider political, educational and societal implications that underpin how educators establish interactions not only with infants, but also how educators interact with the wider community,

and how they perceive themselves as educators, which could lead to further research investigations.

International perspectives could be another area of research, how do other countries see their infant educators as professionals? Lastly, from the perspective of the educator, who looks after the infant educators, what processes are there in place for the educators to get their own needs met? As Manning-Morton states; “the well-being of the children is linked to the well-being of the adults caring for them” (Manning-Morton 2006, p. 43).

6.6 Where to from here in the research process, suggestions for future research?

Suggestions for future research include the impact of the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and how it is changing for infants and families as more parents return back to employment (Honig, cited in Weissbound & Musick, 1981) while their infants are under twelve months old. This is a significant finding (Cryer, 2006) and starts to unpack the reality of family life for some New Zealand families. The merging of the mesosystem with “connections between children’s immediate settings” (Berk, 2008, p. 26) is becoming blurred. Where as previously a child in New Zealand under one year of age may have spent time with a primary caregiver, now the early childhood centre from the evidence in the research may be becoming part of the Micro-system “the innermost level of the system” (Berk, 2008, p. 26). As evidence of this shift in society are Berger’s early writings of “The Developing Person throughout the Lifespan” (1983). Within the ecological systems theory approach in this earlier text there is no mention of the early childhood centre being included within the Microsystems. What are discussed, however, are the interactions with other family members at home, the design of the home and its size (Berger, 1983). Interestingly, we are still having these same discussions; however, they are about the size, design and relationships within an early childhood centre perhaps rather than the home environment. My next question for research within this area could be: What are the implications for educators and infants because of this shift in society norms?

6.7 Summary and final concluding notes

This journey has been a long process, from initial interest as I started an undergraduate degree to currently using this knowledge to introduce and induct new students into the world of early

childhood education. Strong themes have been discussed from the research process and the participants' perspective. The strongest of these being, empowerment of our infant educators, support for recognizing the need for specialised education, and that educator's need time and space to discuss and create communities of practice based on the principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). The most significant outcome for me has been the shift in societal practice whereby infants spend large amounts of time in the care of an educator outside of the home, and the impact this may have on children and families. I hope that through this research, I add to the evidence that shows that infant educators are an important, indeed, undervalued and fundamental part of where New Zealand society seems to be heading.

I have a commitment to infant pedagogy (Rockel, 2010), the joining of the academic and practical to become something better than we are now struggling to do. Through our diversity we are stronger and more understanding, less judgemental and more able to listen to what our infants, families, and whanau need from us as educators to support them in raising the next generation of society. My hope is that this thesis adds to the knowledge and current understanding of early childhood education and proposes some new and interesting facts and perspectives for consideration.

I wish all those who work with infants to have the strength of character to thoughtfully reflect and challenge their own thinking, network and discuss their practice with others in this specialised field of infant teaching, and to do the same to others in this field of speciality, therefore ensuring that we are continuing to underpin our practice with wisdom, authenticity and rigorous professional knowledge based in a New Zealand context.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information sheet

Participant Information sheet

Dear Educator/Infant Educator

Date:

My name is Karen Johnston and I am currently at Auckland University of Technology in a Masters of Education programme. In order to complete my qualification I am endeavouring to conduct a piece of research that relates to educators and infants establishing responsive interactions within an early childhood centre context in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

This would include one semi-structured interview with some set questions, and an unstructured opportunity for discussion. By using the learning story framework I am interested in how you, as the educator interact, and build relationships with the infants in your care (six weeks to twelve months of age).

Learning stories would provide a focus for our interview, which have been constructed by you as part of your assessment criteria for portfolios and linked to the curriculum *Te Whāriki*. Your chosen learning stories would have to have the permission of parents/caregivers/whanau for the documentation to be used as part of our discussion. Confidentiality and anonymity will be protected along with the right to withdraw from the process at any time.

If you wish to participate please indicate your interest below,

Name:	
Centre of employment:	
Age of infants in your care:	
Position held:	
Contact Phone number:	
Best time to contact you:	

Thank you for your time and consideration for this project.

Kind regards

Karen Johnston

Appendix B: Indicative questions for interview

Indicative Questions for Interview

This interview will be about one hour in length and will follow the format below. The data will be recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed by the student researcher and returned back to the participant for inspection and clarification before being used within data analysis. No educators, infants or early childhood centre will be named or identified within the data collated.

Questions

What does a sensitive and responsive relationship mean to you as an educator of infants?
How do you as an educator, establish sensitive and responsive relationships with infants who are six weeks to twelve months of age?
What techniques do you use to establish these sensitive and responsive relationships?
Why do you incorporate responsiveness as part of your practice?
What are your challenges or strengths, to establishing sensitive and responsive relationships?
Is there any extra support would you like to have in order to focus on establishing these relationships?
How does the learning story framework document these relationships being established and supported?
How does the curriculum <i>Te Whāriki</i> link to establishing these relationships?

This is a voluntary research project, if at any time you wish to withdraw please advise the researcher. A consent form must be completed before engaging in any interviews for data gathering purposes.

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

24th July 2009

Project Title

'Educators establishing sensitive relationships with infants, within an early childhood, full time day-care context of Aotearoa/New Zealand'

An Invitation

My name is Karen Johnston and I have a degree in Early Childhood Education. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). As part of the course requirements I am conducting a research project into early childhood educators and how they establish sensitive and responsive relationships with infants who are under twelve months of age within the context of full time day-care. I am particularly interested in educator's pedagogy, beliefs and values associated with these interactions. I would like to invite you to participate in this voluntary project, to further discuss how you interact with very young children together within your working day.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research is proposed to further develop early childhood educators understanding of how interactions with infants impact both educators and the infants they work with. I propose to further strengthen the view that educators working with young infants have specific qualification needs which need to be addressed, within the tertiary sector.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

I will approach your management for access approval to the centre. Invitations to participate letters will be available in the staff room for you to register your interest confidentially. You need to be working with infants in a full time capacity, have a degree or diploma of early childhood education, and be able to document as learning stories infant's interactions with you. The interviews will be conducted at a time suitable to yourself.

What will happen in this research?

The project involves a one hour interview with me, Karen Johnston, at the AUT Akoranga School of Education building. Within the interview you will be asked if you can bring along two "learning stories" in order to start our discussion. These will **not** be used as a form of data collection. Please see the protocol for 'learning stories' included. The interview will be recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed by

myself, Karen Johnston. Within these discussions there will be structured and unstructured questions about your interactions with infants.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Discomforts to you, could be locating the AUT campus. You may experience tiredness due to already completing a day's work if the interviews are conducted after hours.

Risks include your personal safety while on campus, locating rooms and transportation after interview. You may feel that your teaching is under scrutiny, as discussing practice, philosophy and pedagogy can be a personal issue.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Directions will be given in detail, including parking permits and locations. Refreshments will be available to you, along with appropriate rest breaks if needed. You will be escorted to your car by the AUT security if necessary. If any of the questions become uncomfortable for you, the interview will stop. Access to counselling services on the AUT campus will be made available to you if needed at any time due to the interview and research process.

What are the benefits?

You have the unique opportunity to focus on your personal interests with working with infants. Through this experience you will be able to 'give voice' to a rapidly growing movement of teachers who choose to work in this age group, and articulate how teaching pedagogy and philosophy impact their teaching.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your confidentiality is of upmost importance to me, both for yourself and the centre in which you are employed and where the data has been collected. No names, places or educators will be identified within the interview transcripts. I will be transcribing the tapes myself recorded on site. These will then be coded to remain confidential for the purpose of data analysis and reporting. The information collected during this process will be kept in a locked, secure room, and destroyed after six years by incineration.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

This research is voluntary. Travel to, and from, the AUT University campus, and time to read through the transcribed text before data analysis can proceed.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

The participant sheet will be left in the staff room for you to uplift at your chosen time for one week. This is a voluntary project, and if at any time you wish to withdraw you may do so without giving reason. If any information gathered prior to the data gathering completing needs to be amended or withdrawn, you may do so without explanation.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you wish to participate, you will need to complete a Consent Form, which is attached with this participant information sheet. Please do not hesitate to contact myself, Karen Johnston via phone or e-mail, to arrange an interview time, which may take up to one hour to complete.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

An opportunity will be available to you to be given a copy of the research on request.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Anne Grey. AUT School of Education, Akoranga Campus, North Shore. Anne.grey@aut.ac.nz or phone 09 921-9999 ext 7231

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Karen Johnston AUT at kvjohnston@xtra.co.nz
Mobile Number 021-318-100

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Anne Grey

Programme Leader
Early Years Programmes
School of Education
Auckland University of Technology
Private Bag 92006
Auckland
PH: 09 921 9999 ext 7231
Fax: 09 921 9884
E-mail: anne.grey@aut.ac.nz

Thank you for taking the time to consider this research project.

Kindest Regards
Karen Johnston
Mobile Phone Number 021-318-100
E-Mail kvjohnston@xtra.co.nz

Appendix D: Consent form

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14th August 2009,
AUTEC Reference number 09/174

Consent Form



Project title: *“How do educators establishing sensitive relationships with infants (six weeks to twelve months of age in an early childhood context of New Zealand/Aotearoa?”*

Project Supervisor: *Anne Grey (School of Education)*

Researcher: *Karen Johnston*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 24th July 2009.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant

name:

Participant

signature:.....

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 August 2009
AUTEC Reference number 09/174*

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix E: Safety protocol for student researcher conducting interviews

Safety Protocol for Student Researcher conducting interviews

- Permission will be required from the school of education to use a classroom on campus
- Entry will be booked with the administrator, and keys collected, and returned on conclusion
- The researcher will abide by the safety protocol for conducting interviews on the AUT campus at Akaronga Drive, Northcote.
- The researcher will contact Anne Grey (the supervisor) via telephone or text to be aware of time and location of the interview.
- At the completion of the interview the researcher will text the supervisor that the interview has concluded.
- AUT security will be notified of the use of a classroom in the school of education and may be called upon to assist with escorting to transport.

Appendix F: Transcripts of the participant interviews

Data Analysis from Transcripts taken in March 2010

1 What does a 'sensitive and responsive relationship' mean to you as an educator of infants, and is this important to you?

I: So maybe we could start with what does a responsive relationship look like or feel like to you?

J: for me ...I work with the under one year olds, and they don't have the verbal, I mean they have verbal, but not the real language things, and we do read their eye, and facial expression, their eye contact, and body language, yes we do need to notice what they need and what they are interested in, and when they need adults help or support sometimes.

I: Ok so let's first of all....what I am actually looking at is the responsive relationship and I suppose really my question is 'what is a responsive relationship to you, working with your under twelve month olds?'

L: for me, probably I would understand responsive relationship as when I interact with the child, the child communicates back to me in a comfortable and confident way, and when I can read his body language, and I can read his body language as 'I trust you'.

L: So then I will say that I have a responsive relationship, because I will see...I will see child's response to me with trust with smile, with willingness, runs towards me, happy to be with me....um, doesn't have any concerns, or any signs of being unsettled around me, then I will say we have responsive relationships with this child.

I: What I am really looking at is responsive relationships

B: I can see that

I: What they mean to you as an educator of infants... and whether you think that's important?

B: I quite like that term responsive relationships, because I think it's been interpreted and used in many different words over the past years

I: Yes

B: Responsive... as an educator..... to infants it... permeates in everything that you do...from the moment a parent walks in the door with a young child to visit, you are responsive to actually welcoming. Active listening, observing, questing and following through, and also being very respectful at the same time.

B: It is who you are as a person, and it is also, should be and for me it is, reflected in your practice, 27/7 and also actually away from your practice in the community, because if you actually live in the community that you practice you meet the infants, the toddlers, the children and their parents in the coffee shops and in town, so...what does it mean...it is huge, and it is very important..... how you respond, and practice as a professional. How you do that is actually quite a different question.

2 What techniques did, or do, you use to establish these sensitive and responsive relationships between yourself and the infant?

I: and is there any particular techniques that you use to establish that relationship?

L: Oh well, I don't think there would be any particular technique for children, but you know you always take each child as an individual. First and foremost of course, you will get on the child's level, you will allow the child to choose the person who will relate easier, and the person who the child likes, will pick up the child, walk with the child, give the child as much time and cuddles, and one to one attention as the child needs, very soft voice, lots of smiles, maybe quiet singing, just you need to sing quietly or read some stories or books or chant some rhymes, just because when the child doesn't know you first and foremost he has to learn about you, right, he has to learn about your voice, tone of voice is very important. How gentle you are rocking him is very important, with under two's you know when they are in the mummy's tummy and they are walking, it rocks them down, and soothes them down, right, we have to walk with them, and cuddle them, and have them in a very comfortable embrace, and walk with them for quite a long time until they will settle down. If you are doing it for quite some times, it depends on the child, some children will settle down quiet easy, because they feel that they can always can come and get some cuddles, but, I have children who would not settle down for one month. And you still go through the same routine with them, it depends on the child's individuality actually.

I: and eventually they settle?

L: They do settle, and even if it takes a month for them to settle down, um, usually children who have issues, children who have been abandoned by their parents, by one of their parents have issues settling down. Children from, with both parents don't take so long to settle down.

J: Yes we try to read them by their body language and eye contact, and listen to them, not only the voice, but the heart actually, to read them, yea, and this year for me, I just think that it took me a while to sit back and watch, try not to interrupt too early, or (laughs), try to sit back, its hard actually, at first

I: Yes, very hard

J: Yes when you see two infants who are eight and nine months old and they are touching each other, they crawl to each other and try to touch with their rough fingers, you just like hold your breath shall I go or shall I just wait (laughs) they just take a lot of time for me to hold back to just observe, to give them time to solve their own, not problems, but to get a chance to have the relationship between them, so...

I: to interact together, to let them have that experimentation

J: I used to, predict what was going to happen and if it was not a good thing I stepped in and I did stop the conflict and things, but thinking now I think I cut off the relationship not on the right time, but yes

I: Well, yes let's jump to number three, what techniques do you use, to establish responsive relationships?

B: Ok, yes well that would probably come next because the techniques are to actually notice,... if someone comes through the front door, whether it's a parent coming in with their first child for a first visit, or a parent coming in with a third child and knows you very well.

B: So you look up every morning, when parents come in, when you open up in the center, you look up you call them by their first name, good morning, John, David, Mary how are you today,

and then you also, in the same breath you welcome the child or children into the center as well, and then you also, the techniques are that you are reading and you are observing as well. So you can look at a parent and know that they have had a rough night you can look at a child and know that they are coming in 100 percent healthy ready for daycare, or you can look at a child and know that there is something not quite right.

3 Do you incorporate responsiveness as part of your practice and if so why?

I: So it's really a matter of trust?

L: Of course, yes. And our main rule in our center, it's my main rule, never lie to children, never ever, lie to a child, never, ever. Because you will lie once, and they will discover once that you lie to them and that's it, you will lose your trust straight away, they won't believe you, even in small little things, if you took something away and you said 'oh well, I will give it back to you at the end of the day', let's say, and you didn't, that's it.

I: They remember

L: they do, they do, and of course they do

I: yes, and sometimes that gets discounted

L: lots of the times, lots of the times though

I: So a lot of this responsiveness is coming back, by the sounds of it, by the way that you are practicing. Does that link in with your philosophy?

L: yes it does, it does, I heavily rely in Erickson, Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner you know. Erickson is most important because you have to develop a trustful relationship with the child, otherwise you won't be able to teach, they won't be willing to learn from you. So Vygotsky comes second, and Bronfenbrenner comes on the early stages when you are trying to find out about the child, because you have to have a very close relationship with the family, to learn about the child prior to him coming. But again even if you don't know the child, like let's say we have respite care children, it doesn't take a long time to learn about him, you can start building trustful relationships and then you learn, it doesn't contradict like the theorist, but they say, I heavily rely on these three theorist, yes, but trustful relationships are properly my main focus, like if you say ...let's say for example, "you go to sleep to someone", he will just go to sleep because he trust me, and he knows I am around, and I wouldn't be able to do it if I didn't develop this previously, if I didn't go through the settling process, if I haven't been truthful. If I had failed him in some way, he wouldn't just believe me, he wouldn't just do it, right, so yeah.

I: do you think that responsiveness is something that is important to you?

J: Very, yes the relationship is the most important thing for educator. Very important and how to say, quite a challenge for me when I started working with the babies, because we do quite different things in china with the babies, traditionally, and I had my boys, really make me reflect what I did with them, it's like a culture things and your beliefs that are so different.

I: What is it that is so different?

J: um, we hold the babies a lot in china, we think that they need that a lot, we think that when he cries that we pick him up and give him a cuddle, but that actually when I work here and by the training and professional development things I released that I didn't really understand him completely, I didn't take him as a competent baby.

B: I quite like that term responsive relationships, because I think it's been interpreted and used in many different words over the past years

I: Yes

4 What are your challenges or strengths to establishing sensitive and responsive relationships with infants?

I: ok. I am just wondering, I have got here (on the interview question form). What are your challenges or strengths to establishing responsive relationships with the infants, probably both of those are really interesting, but perhaps the challenges first?

L: Challenges, you know it comes down to personality, everything comes down to personalities, you can not, not every child loves me

I: And that's ok.

L: and that is ok, that's fine, and that's why we always let the child choose the caregiver

I: so the child chooses the caregiver it's not the other way, they are not allocated

L: Because they are infants of course, they would cry with me, but they wouldn't cry with someone else,

I: Right, so you are watching for that

L: So we pass them on and part of the morning is that we are watching which person is better accepted by them and then that person will be working with settling them in

I: So you are doing a lot of observing?

L: Yeah, yeah, you have to be very observant, if you are unable to read the signs of their body language, you would be in trouble, because you won't be able to settle them in. You don't know them, they don't know you

L: Yes, unfortunately we have a couple of under two's who are here from seven thirty to five thirty every day, five days a week..... it is not right.

L: They do settle, and even if it takes a month for them to settle down, um, usually children who have issues, children who have been abandoned by their parents, or by one of their parents, have issues settling down. Children with both parents don't take so long to settle down.

I: So I am just thinking what the challenges would have been

L: the challenges are that you don't know the child, right?

I: Personality of staff was one,

L: Personality of staff and personality of child is a challenge, um, parents attitude will be a challenge, a big challenge (laughs)..um resources sometimes would be a challenge. You know the other big challenge, how a child is being raised, is a big challenge. Lots of children go to sleep with their bottles, right? They sleep in their cots or carseats. To put them down to sleep their daddies will put them in the carseat and have a big drive around. It is a big challenge, ok, to be overcome.

I: You can't do that in a center

L: No, and you are not going to do it. It's not healthy for your child, yeah, so those are the challenges we are dealing with, the feeding would be a challenge,

I: Even at nine months

L: Even at nine months, yes you have to find out what temperature, you would give him his milk and he wouldn't drink it, you have to heat it up, he wouldn't drink it, you have to heat it up, he wouldn't drink it (laugh)

I: So then you cool it down,

L: Yes then we cool it down and he will drink it, it's so funny, some children are very particular, but it's really interesting. They would not eat their food, full stop, I don't like it and mum would provide the same food every day, and so we started to be a little bit cunning, because we know that the child won't have anything else, so we mash something mash potato or meat..

I: so does the center provide the food or the parents

L: The parents are supposed to provide the food.

I: ok, so it's coming from home, ok, and is it a hot meal?

L: its supposed to be milk and something, some mash, something, but we notice that some parents fail to provide a variety of foods, so because we have this garden outside, we cook them little something, we mash it and we feed them, because they have to have some variety, because if they don't try it now, later on they will be addicted to chips.

I: yes because this is the time

L: yes this is THE time to teach them what the food is, you give them a little something to try, otherwise where will he learn?

L: Our fees are only three dollars and fifty cents an hour we are the cheapest, only three dollars and fifty cents an hour, we don't have, as we are a community center

I: You are community based

L: Yes, we don't, we have funding, we have free hours for over two's, we can't put our cost up, we can't do it

I: So you are working around it

L: Yes, in everything we do with our person donations all the time (laughs) but it's ok we love doing it

I: Yep, ok. I was just thinking...the staff that you have come in, are they already qualified?

I: No, so they are unqualified and you are mentoring them

L: yes I mentor them in a way but I will lose fifty percent of my staff next year because of 2010, because they are not willing to get qualified.

I: So what happens then?

L: We advertised, we got three candidates who will probably come, they are in training with AUT, off course I don't know what their personalities are, I will differently saving up under two staff, um..I encouraged one to get into training, the other one will hopefully go into training but I don't know what is going to happen. I am losing only one staff in the under two's.

I: So staffing is an issue?

L: It's a big issue

I: and the qualifications that the staff have got

L: You know qualifications...

I: Is that meaningful to you?

L: No personalities are more meaningful. I have unqualified staff who can run all programme's for both centers, and she is much better than any qualified staff that I have now, but yeah unfortunately

J: um, we hold the babies a lot in china, we think that they need that a lot, we think that when he cries that we pick him up and give him a cuddle, but that actually when I work here and by the training and professional development things I released that I didn't really understand him completely, I didn't take him as a competent baby.

J: yes really actually, the first one K, she used to be in the room just lying down, but the parents want to push her to sit up now, because she is the age to sit up now, and the parents I think not

only Chinese parents but the Kiwi parents are like pushing the physically development things, they say oh, she sitting at home, but when we sit her here, she ask for sit up, but when we sit her up she accidentally fall over, which quite challenged me I think we need to respect the parents but we still need to respect the child's needs, physically the child is not ready to sit up, but the parents really want her to sit up, so we, I took this to the staff meeting. According to the Magda Gerber's approach we don't do that we don't put them in the position where they can't move their body or change their position. For the parent's expectations, we have to balance this, they really want us to. I think for them I say the more we sit her up the more she will learn to sit up, yes. But yes according to the philosophy this is quite a challenge. We had a discussion at the staff meeting, and we sit her up sometimes but we try not to do this for her all the time.

I: So you have found a balance in between

J: Yes finally, it takes time to do that actually, but for me it really challenged and takes time to find the balance and get the support from the whole team

I: the staff supported you?

J: yes actually, I thinking shall we do this, shall we do this, but not, can't find the right thing for me, so I brought it to the staff meeting and everyone said their own opinion and the manager, actually yes. Like I think she (how to say), she is starting this philosophy early, she went to Magda Gerber course at college early in the year in Auckland and she brought lots of things here to make us reflect on what we are doing.

I: Sounds like you did a lot of reflecting on that, almost an ethical dilemma really because you want to keep the parents happy

J: like at the moment, sit back and try to observe, it is hard when the parents are around, you they think that you are not doing anything, you just ignore that, we try to explain that in the e-mail, when I do a reflection, we do e-mail weekly, we take turns so I try to get that in the e-mail to let the parents know that we are not just sat there and are not doing nothing.

I: No there is a lot of thought going on in the background

I: so tell me if you want to, is the culture that you have come from in China, is it that the children are held a lot, is that the difference between...

J: yes, actually from my parents and the grandparents, when the children cry you are able to give them cuddles, and lots of Chinese people still hold the children in their arms and only put them down when they go to sleep.

I: oh

J: I actually had that problem with my son. He couldn't go to sleep by himself in the cot

I: well that is quite hard

J: It is very hard, I actually brought him in when he was thirteen months old and he was still on breast feeding at that time, and it was so hard, he was dragging on my legs the whole time and wouldn't let me to touch the other children, yes, that make me reflect a lot on whether we are doing the right thing. It is so different, it is actually frighten the parents, the generations.

J: actually it's the combination of the practice, you find something challenging so you go to the book, or go to the professional teachers like my colleagues.

I: You are a professional teacher too you know,

J: Try to be (laughs)

B: You do not step over that professional boundary of being a professional teacher and getting personal, you just can't. Because at the end of the day you are the carer of their child, they want a professional, high quality care for their child or children and you are there to deliver, and to give it so you must never forget your professional practice. Yes they are the parent of the child, so it's a matter of actually establishing those relationships really early, working on it, because each parent/child is quite different and you can't put all the parents in one mold because it just doesn't work that way.

B: Some parents will get on better with me and some will get on better with someone within the team, you just go with it.

B: that is a challenge, when you have eight children who are breastfeeding to sleep on the breast, who sometimes we have had children, young infants who have never had a bottle until they have been left. Those are the challenges and we just work with it. We will say to the parents, um, when they have said to us that they just won't take a bottle, and we say ok, fill the bottles up, leave the powder in a separate container, depending on the age of the child, we will bottle feed, we will spoon feed, whatever they will take, sometimes if they are a little older we might say do you mind if we add a little bit of baby rice to it as a thickener, just to get it off the spoon, and then if they can shorten their working hours for at least until they have settled, then, and the bottle is established when we are fine. Most parents will really work with us. Most will, not everyone, but most will. But I think that the important thing is making the time to listen and making yourself available even if it is at 5.30 at night when the centers closing (laughs) your eyes are hanging out and you know there are questions to be answered.

but with the daily dairies I have had to be careful how I shape my wording because it's how I speak, and it's quite powerful.

I: Some parents react differently?

B: yes and that's exactly what I thought (laughs). I was put in my place, quite nicely, very nicely, and I said to her, I said can I come back to you tomorrow with an answer, and she looked at me and said yes, because she was coming full time and I was looking after her son at that time in the infant room. We did, we got back together the next day, and I said to her, your philosophy is an absolute challenge to that/us?

I: did you go and talk to the center manager about this?

B: oh yes, I did, I followed it with them, and got the feedback.

I: So you didn't feel that you were on your own.

B: No, and she said well what are you going to do, and so I told her what I was going to do. I just wanted to think first and come back, to make sure that my practice was not too much outside of the square of the center. So I said to the mother, it's a real challenge to us, to not let your son cry at all... because they did everything for him even to the point that when he stood up, they helped him down, so he did not know how to fall, or get down from height, you know he didn't know to put his hands down on the floor, he just went 'splat' on his nose cause he had never fallen or stumbled. I said I can't guarantee that, I said for him to be totally silent would be taking away his voice, and I said I can't take away his voice. I said I will work with you.

5 **Is there any extra support you would like to have in order to focus on establishing these relationships within a centre, or wider context, for example, political or professional development?**

L: I might do another graduate diploma in primary education.

I: Why primary, how long have you been working with the infants for?

L: Eighteen years now, I guess it's enough nurturing.

I: and what about in this particular center

L: Its only two years

I: So the burn out

L: Yes and also there are many things that I disagree with political changes around child bearing its unacceptable, taking power off parents, totally, it's unacceptable, instead of focusing on particular families they focus on all of us, how come I cannot smack my child, it's not as if I am going to smack, I never smacked my child, but they are not allowed to tell me that I cannot do it

I: So the politics is starting to influence how you see early childhood education

And since National has come into power has that made changes

L: I am afraid it made it worse

I: Ok great, so is there any extra support that you would like to have to focus on establishing these relationships is there anything extra that you would find helpful to help establish relationships with these little infants, these little children?

J: Professional development is very useful, sometimes we go out for the course, like we go out at nighttime to listen to some professional teachers, which is really helpful, I like to listen to the other teachers and other staff within the center, they are wonderful, she supports us, when I do my, you actually do this every day but for me I still can't find the linkage between what I am doing to those dimensions things

I: ok so I think that we have looked at um, would there be any extra support that you would like to have in order to focus on establishing a responsive relationship with infants within the center, in other words professional development, and I know that you are doing your Pikler

B: Pikler, Magda Gerber, J is actually sending me on a Magda Gerber in Ponsonby with the learning center, I will have to get back to you with the name, she actually was taught under Magda Gerber herself, in San Francisco, I will have to get back to you with the name. Um, it's a ten day back to back course about 3,500 its very intense we have homework to do before, during and after on the Magda Gerber approach. I don't think we ever stop learning the approach there are things in it which I can quite happily challenge in regards to the Kiwi culture. Um, but I think the overall philosophy has done wonders for the teaching practice of all the girls, because its reflected throughout the center and I think it's actually done a lot for the center because word of mouth is always better than advertising.

I: You can actually feel it when you walk in,

B: Well you would know as an outsider,

I: and I felt it more this time, than last time when I came in, I came in about 18 months ago, quite a while ago, yeah, but I really felt it this time, but it could have been me?

B: will it's only really this year that we have gone into the philosophy in depth as a research project because what the toddlers have done, the teachers have really focused on the toddlers. We did a reading from massy university Palmerston North where there is a center down there, it's a center of innovation down there, and they put out a paper burn the rosters, free the teachers, and J downloaded that from the internet and thought oh, let's do it, and so that's what we did (laughs) basically the next week, so we have actually gone through that,

I: so that came from J who is the owner?

B: Well J, N, it was put as a team decision, everything, j will come in and subtly say something in her very J way which makes me smile, and then we will discuss it at a team meeting, so it is actually a team decision we actually have got to want to do it as a team, cause it will not work in isolation.

I: What I was trying to get at was that you are already being supported by your employer

B: Yes absolutely

I: Everybody that's qualified and goes to Regio tours in Melbourne that's overseas in Australia, and that comes out of the teacher registration, so it's actually, the teacher registration is used to benefit your practice.

B: ok and are you provisionally registered are you, or are you fully registered?

I: I am fully registered, and I am also associate teacher for students. I am multi tasking and I am supporting the girls who are going through their teacher registration as well.

6 How does the learning story framework document these relationships being established and supported for you?

I: Yeah, and do you find this learning story process here helpful? Like articulating it.

L: This is for reflections, reflections helpful? No.

I: No?

L: I would use this type of reflections,

I: What about the learning story?

L: the learning story is wonderful

I: for you, or for the parents?

L: I see I should have brought something, from me from my perspective I like to put what happened throughout the day and then I like to put a short term review, where I will just explain why did I find this particular learning significant, what significant learning is, and where will I take my child next, what else will I do for this child to extend his/her emergent learning or interest in something, or something or something, or to help them to develop something or something or something, for parents, not every parent understands them, but they love reading them, and if you put lots and lots of photo's then you do get some interest in it. But what we do when we write up learning stories we follow them up, so from the parents perspective when it's followed up

I: So you do another learning story

L: Yes that relates to...

I: so you are taking it to the next level

L: Yes so when you came up with your 'what's next' you show this to your parents and then you evaluate what happened and then it becomes a little sequence, and that is very valuable and they love it, and they see the whole process, and then they love it. When they just see a little something happen in your short term review, even though they will read it and say har, har, har, they did it, they don't get the idea, but when you take them through the process step by step it just sinks in.

I: Yes, so it makes it meaningful for the parent's, and from my experience with my children that have had that done, with that 'building up' they have then read that as a older child, and can follow it though and that's very valuable for the child.

I: and you find that the learning stories help you to look at the responsiveness?

J: yes really actually, the first one K, she used to be in the room just lying down, but the parents want to push her to sit up now, because she is the age to sit up now, and the parents I think not only Chinese parents but the Kiwi parents are like pushing the physically development things, they say oh, she sitting at home, but when we sit her here, she ask for sit up, but when we sit her up she accidentally fall over, which quite challenged me I think we need to respect the parents but we still need to respect the child's needs, physically the child is not ready to sit up, but the parents really want her to sit up, so we, I took this to the staff meeting.

I: It's a huge responsibility. And do you find that the learning stories help you to articulate what is going on with the infants, relationships wise, do you find these helpful. I think that's my question here,

B: Number two

I: Yeah

B: using the learning stories you have chosen how do you as an educator establish responsive relationships with infants who are six weeks to twelve months of age?

Those, what I have said to you basically, I incorporate or try to incorporate those into the learning stories, I think I have given you learning stories, on little S here. He was born premature; he was borne about 25 weeks old.

I: 25, whow

B: when he came in for a visit, he was like a little fetus curled up on mums chest, at three months, and I said to N, my supervisor, make a space, he is not going anywhere else, make a space, and she said, B we are full, and I said well create a space, (laughs) we will move someone out of the infant room that's almost ready to move, as mum was wanting to come in at about another six weeks so that worked out actually quite well. I said I don't want him going anywhere else, he is coming to us, and he did.

So I have actually incorporated my first impressions and um.. a lot of the relationships that I struck up with mum, he has now been with us, he is now just on seven months now, and he is rolling onto his tummy, all his milestones are spot on ,except he is still incredibly tiny, and he is still a little bit susceptible to germs and bugs and viruses. But he copes with a cold very, very well.

I: and how many days a week is he with you

B: without antibiotics, which I am stoked about, he is with us full time, 7.30 to nearly 5.30, so when it comes to establishing relationships with parents we need to, little Samuels mum came for lots of pre visits, so she got to know us, she got to know how we handle all the infants in the infants room, there is eight for two of us, on busy days, quiet times, busy times, they make the time to ask us questions, get to know each other, we watch them, they watch us, and that's exactly what I have written in the learning story. We learn so much by just having a parent sitting in, even if the parents sits there with the child on their lap the whole time, its tells, it holds a lot of meaning.

7 How does the curriculum *Te Whāriki* link to establishing these relationships?

I: And do you find that *Te Whāriki* helps when you are doing your learning stories; does that kind of give you a structure or something to start with?

J: Yes, I used it a lot when I started doing the learning stories.

I: Was it your starting point was it?

J: Yes, recently, I still use it, but... you choose the learning story, so really we are doing the learning story so that every page is a leaning story, we try to, to get the children's different stories in the book and the continuation in the book to let the parents see that he is trying, and making process, and the development process, to be honest the parents, when I read my own boys book I am not too cared about what he has learned during the day,...sorry (laughs)

I: No that's fine, but what is it that you are interested in, you want to know.

J: I actually want to know what he is doing during the day. I don't know what he learned during the day.

I: Whether he has had a good day, did he enjoy his day, how was he, was he happy or sad,

J: so I try to balance that with the management and they ask you to show your professional side to the parents so I try to, I am still thinking of the way we are doing the learning stories, are we doing the way as parents expect it or are we doing it the way the management expect it

I: Who is this actually for?

J: yes still think it still maybe for, need to find a balance point for sides

I: Do you find that the learning story framework, supports does it support how you document your relationship building do you find that the learning story helps that or does it not, or does it not make any....

J: what do you mean by the framework?

I: the learning story, the way that you have written it out here, do you find that helpful, do the parents find this helpful.

J: honestly I don't know about the parents

I: but for you writing it does it help you to see what is going on

J: I try to let the parents and other teachers understand what I am presenting for the child, yes I think everyone is doing this their own way, trying to be ourselves,

I: Yes and I think that's the beauty of the leaning story is that you can do it your way

J: Yes I like to do it my way not copying the others, but when I see the good ones, I really like it, I can combine it with mine one to develop mine as well. Yes at the moment I am doing the way like , you say what is happening in the picture, and the things going on, and I try to link it to *Te Whāriki* or to something or theory or philosophy and try to involve the other teachers voice to.

I: so that one document is doing a lot of things

J: Yes I try to read through if I have a chance to read through the book, we are doing the primary caregiving diary, yes, most of them, but I am not in charge of the babies portfolios but when I work and I find something interesting I will talk with the other staff members and try to get their books.

I: that's brilliant

J: I am still using *Te Whāriki*; if I can't find something I will go to the other book I read to link, to show the parents and the management that I am a professional (laughs)

8 Is there anything else that you would like to include that you think is relevant to the research topic, such as your philosophy of teaching infants?

L: It became part of my philosophy when I started working with under two's because lots of my girls, they would treat babies as, you know little play things, you can't play with them they are not puppies, they are children, they are normal, they are human beings who deserve respect and they are very capable, but the girls just don't see it. So I started bringing in Magda Gerber philosophy and Emiler Plikler philosophy because they show how independent, how confident, and competent, and they show you everything, (the infants) even though they don't have language, they have body language, and if you are clever enough you can read their body language. Yes, mind you though not everyone can read body language, not everyone is attuned to children. I found that motherhood helps but not to everyone, no, there are lots and lots, I don't know I would call them 'cold' mothers, which there is nothing that you can say that will sink in unfortunately, and they don't respond, they don't have this responsive relationship with their own children, it's quite, yeah, we have children that the minute the mum enters into the center the children will run away, and you have to go and chase them down, bring them back, take them to the car seat and put them into the car seat.

I: because they don't want to...

L: they don't want to go home

I: that is so sad,

L: funny eh,

I: I would be gutted, if that happened to me as a mother

L: Yes me too, that's why you are not in that situation you see, for some people it would be the normal way of doing things, they have their baby, the baby grows up in the car seat, or the early childhood center, and if something goes wrong its someone's else fault, yeah.

L: I spoiled my own children, I always do, I love children, very much, and I don't avoid this word, do you know what some people they say, oh I have been at Glenfeild Kindergarten for my practicum and there was a big group of children, four and a half years old, and she turned around and said to me, "Lily, I love you so much" and I said "I love you to". And while I one of the Glenfeild Kindergarten teachers she jumped on me saying "how could you, we don't use the word love, we say, you are very special to me to". Oh well, it might be my wrong translation, I don't know we do use love lots around our children, and we tell our children we love you, and I think from my perspective when a four and a half year old tells you that she loves you, and you only spend three weeks say, she expects you to say "I love you too" in return doesn't she? And when you don't return it...

I: What are you telling her?

L: Yes, it's like you are slapping her in the face, you know, I wouldn't trust this person if they would not return it back to me and I was four and a half years old. For me it's kind of difficult to except, you know, I think no. I do love my children and at our center we tell them we love them, otherwise how could they spend ten hours, every day, being with us, you know it would be a very sad place for them.

I: You are investing your 'person'.

J: Very, yes the relationship is the most important thing for educator. Very important and how to say, quite a challenge for me when I started working with the babies, because we do quite

different things in china with the babies, traditionally, and I had my boys , really make me reflect what I did with them, it's like a culture things and your beliefs that are so different.

I: What is it that is so different?

I: So how long have you been working with the babies for?

J: I have been working her for three and a half years

I: oh who a long time

J: the baby's room, I think when the girl left, I think about one and a half year, I started to go into the baby room. Doing the shift work there and learning a lot from B, her verbal things like she teach me how to do these (learning stories) I just watched her and got lots from her, yes amazing.

B: yes, they do, within the very one ones, the youngest we have had is about ten weeks although we are licensed from birth. We have two main primary caregivers within the infant room, that's myself and S who is Macedonian. So we have been working together now for two years, so we have a good working relationship. Those young infants that come into the infant room, I am quite protective of them in the sense that I do not allow anyone to hold them. I won't. I am quite protective in the fact that I would like them to establish as relationship with myself and S first and know that they are settled, and that can take quite a few weeks depending on weather they are full time or part time. And then move on from there with relationships, once they have settled they will start to learn and notice the other little peers and infants around them.

And that's when I sort of relax a little bit, and then if someone else wants to come in and sort of introduce themselves to them, then I will give them the 'nod' (laughs).

But I am actually quite protective of them at first, when they are very young, because you are not only dealing with the infants young infants and getting them settled, you are also dealing with mothers hormones, guilt, they are leaving there child with a stranger basically, even though they have done pre visits, which is a pre requisite, um.. and also dads and grandparents, they are very much a part especially today because you often get a mother or a father picking up or a grandparent dropping off or picking up. Like um last night I met the father for the first time in six months, so(laughs)..He came in and the daughter looked, and I looked and thought, um...don't know you, when I looked behind him and I say his wife and I thought ah, but the daughter was sat quite happily on my lap without moving, as if to say dad you are not normally here, is this ok? And she looked at me and she looked at dad, and I know you but you are not normally in this setting, so she hesitated, I hesitated, and it wasn't until the mother came in that I thought 'ok' (laughs). So techniques, you wait and your pause.

B: So it is actually part of our philosophy to sit down, sit slightly back, observe, let the child get to know my voice as I am talking to you, make that eye contact, I mightn't even touch the child in the first two or three visits, but I know that the child, if it's on the floor, watching, listening, we have got low mirrors, so they are observing without being, or feeling threatened, and we read the body language of not only the child but also of the mother as well.

I: Would you have many parents come in and visit that then don't take up a position?

B: No, for the simple reason that we have a waiting list at M/G and to be honest we just don't have the time to have everybody come in and observe. Yeah we just don't have the time. Once they have been given the space, Nicky our supervisor handles all the bookings and placements for the child and she does it deliberately so there is no cross communication.

Once a child has got an established date for starting, depending on the parent, and every parent is different, we ask them to start coming in for visits from approx ten days before, they can come early, and some parents are in every day

B: Piker, Manger Gerber, J is actually sending me on a Magda Gerber in Ponsonby with the learning center, I will have to get back to you with the name, she actually was taught under Magda Gerber herself, in San Francisco, I will have to get back to you with the name. Um, it's a ten day back to back course about 3,500 its very intense we have homework to do before, during and after on the Magda Gerber approach, I don't think we ever stop learning the approach there are things in it which I can quite happily challenge in regards to the Kiwi culture,. Um but I think the overall philosophy has done wonders for the teaching practice of all the girls, because its reflected throughout the center and I think it's actually done a lot for the center because word of mouth is always better than advertising.

I: You can actually feel it when you walk in,

B: Well you would know as an outsider,

I: and I felt it more this time, than last time when I came in, I came in about 18 months ago, quite a while ago, yeah, but I really felt it this time, but it could have been me?

B: will it's only really this year that we have gone into the philosophy in depth as a research project because what the toddlers have done, the teachers have really focused on the toddlers. We did a reading from massy university Palmerston North where there is a center down there, it's a center of innovation down there, and they put out a paper burn the rosters, free the teachers, and J downloaded that from the internet and thought oh, let's do it, and so that's what we did (laughs) basically the next week, so we have actually gone through that,

I: so that came from J who is the owner?

B: Well J, N, it was put as a team decision, everything, j will come in and subtly say something in her very J way which makes me smile, and then we will discuss it at a team meeting, so it is actually a team decision we actually have got to want to do it as a team, cause it will not work in isolation.

B: I have had a South African mum who was a legal, a practicing lawyer, who had a lovely challenging son with me. He used his voice for everything, no tears, just the son's voice, and her family, the child was not allowed to cry, period. When I tried to explain to her his son's voice and how he used it, and I linked it very professionally and carefully to the philosophy of how the approach is within the center, she smiled and nodded. Then she said to me, I know the center has a philosophy of respect, but she said but I also have my own philosophy at home and I would prefer you to practice my way.

9 Do you see yourself in a leadership role within the context of the early childhood centre?

I: Do you think that under two staff...do you see yourself in a leadership role at all?

L: I am not a very good leader (laughs)

I: OK, so what do you describe leadership as being, how do you see leadership?

L: Someone who can inspire everyone. I am very inspirational for the under two's but for some reason I fail to inspire over two's.

I: Ok, but you don't see yourself in the community as being a leader?

L: Oh, in the community why not, the community yes

I: within your center of providing those under twos with something that, later on is going to carry them on

L: You know I am not trying to be a leader myself, I am try to bring everyone into a position where they feel comfortable around me and I love people to feel confident to speak up for themselves, because I really value honesty, I even told my staff, that if they have to take time off for some weird reason, it might be better to tell me the truth rather than I just don't want to come to work today, that's it,

B: and as assistance supervisor there, I am also, got to be responsive relationships with all the team members and be accountable for them as well, and the supervisors not there. So it's a multi task, I am an assistant supervisor, a primary carer, as well as everything else that's involved with it as well.

B: Parents come with a list of questions and I smile and I laugh and I say good on you lets go for it. Let's sit down, put your child down on the floor or wherever you are comfortable, and let's just go through your questions, it doesn't faze me one iota. And I often say to them on the first day because there is often tears even though they have visited, there is often tears for the first time, I will say to them phone, phone I don't care how many times, phone, because I wasn't allowed to do that with my child, so and that was twenty years ago, so you know, I have been there as a parent and I know what it feels like, so I say just phone, if you want to come in, if they are breastfeeding, we have got five breastfeeding at the moment, and when we do with responsive relationships, how do we establish responsive relationships, a lot of breastfeeding mothers and how do we incorporated that into our practice, a lot of breastfeeding mothers, breastfeed their children asleep on the breast. Every time which is a real challenge, I think you have something about the challenges or strengths.

B: will it's only really this year that we have gone into the philosophy in depth as a research project because what the toddlers have done, the teachers have really focused on the toddlers. We did a reading from massy university Palmerston North where there is a center down there, it's a center of innovation down there, and they put out a paper burn the rosters, free the teachers, and J downloaded that from the internet and thought oh, let's do it, and so that's what we did (laughs) basically the next week, so we have actually gone through that,

I: so that came from J who is the owner?

B: Well J, N, it was put as a team decision, everything, j will come in and subtly say something in her very J way which makes me smile, and then we will discuss it at a team meeting, so it is actually a team decision we actually have got to want to do it as a team, cause it will not work in isolation.

I: What I was trying to get at was that you are already being supported by your employer

B: Yes absolutely

I: Everybody that's qualified and goes to Reggio tours in Melbourne that's overseas in Australia, and that comes out of the teacher registration, so it's actually, the teacher registration is used to benefit your practice.

B: ok and are you provisionally registered are you, or are you fully registered?

I: I am fully registered, and I am also associate teacher for students. I am multi tasking and I am supporting the girls who are going through their teacher registration as well.

I: so you have your bachelor of education?

J: No I am doing the upgrade from the diploma to the degree

I: You are a professional teacher too you know,

J: Try to be (laughs)

I: you are a professional teacher too, I mean that's just the fact that you are wanting to reflect and ask questions, Do you think that you see yourself in a leadership role when you are working with the babies at all?

J: Not really, because I am the third person there, and I try to

I: but when you are interacting with the children do you think that you are teaching them

J: No, you mean to provoke them, no I try not to do that. When I was not a young child but older, I would just follow what the teacher said, teachers just try to say, I do this, but you need to do other way, no right way, so you just do that

I: you have had an amazing shift in thinking

J: Yes, it is so different; it is like I have been on the other end (laughs)

I: and coming to NZ where we are so laid back

J: but I like NZ and I am happy here

End of Transcripts

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