



BECERA 2024



**13th February
Birmingham**

**Early Years Education
as Political Activity:
Access, Choice,
Agency and Voice**

BECERA 
BRITISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Early Years Education as Political Activity: Access, Choice, Agency and Voice



the Studio, Birmingham

Tuesday 13th February 2024

HOSTED BY CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

BRITISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (BECERA)

BECERA is an independent organisation for those early childhood practitioner and researchers working in the British Isles who want a space to meet, enquire and discuss issues relevant to their work with young children and families.

BECERA aims to stimulate, support, create and disseminate rigorous, grounded and conceptual knowledge and its applications to our early childhood services. It does this through an annual conference where research is presented and subjected to peer-review. The knowledge generated from each conference will be made available in an online, searchable database.

WHAT ARE BECERA'S AIMS?

BECERA is particularly interested in practitioner research and exploring paradigms and methodologies which impact directly on services.

BECERA is interested in how knowledge is constructed, who listens and who speaks, and in capturing the voices of all, including parents and children.

BECERA will provide a unique British forum to bring together research, practice and policy and strengthen the early childhood research community in the vital contribution it makes to British practice and policy.

WHO RUNS BECERA?

BECERA is an independent, self-funding organisation run by the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC).

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD (CREC)

The Centre for Research in Early Childhood, more commonly referred to as CREC, is the home of CREC in Birmingham (Charitable Trust) and Amber Publications and Training (APT).

Established by Professor Chris Pascal and Professor Tony Bertram, CREC has been working to improve Early Years provision for over 25 years.

Located in the St Thomas Children's Centre near Birmingham city centre, CREC specialises in early childhood research which has relevant and meaningful outcomes for practice and policy.

Some of its research is transformed into training and development programmes designed for the specific needs of the early years sector.

CREC also delivers postgraduate and research degrees through its close affiliations with Midlands universities, particularly Birmingham City University and University of Wolverhampton.

In 2015, in partnership with the St. Thomas Centre Nursery and various Nursery and Primary schools across the West Midlands we launched the CREC Early Years Partnership SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training), delivering Early Years focused Teacher Training with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Since then over 80 teachers have successfully gained QTS through the programme.

CREC has a strong reputation for undertaking reviews, reports, evaluations and consultancy work with many UK local authorities, NGOs and countries.

Examples include the British Council, QDCA, OECD, Portugal, Qatar, South Australia, Birmingham and Gloucestershire.

CREC has also been EECERA's strategic partner supporting the delivery of the annual conference since 2009.

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WELCOME FROM THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Dear BECERA friends,

Life has been relentlessly challenging for all of us working in the early childhood sector for a a long time and these last months have revealed the deep impact of this continued pressure on our sector's wellbeing, resilience and sustainability. The current context has demanded extraordinary reserves of energy, creativeness, strength and compassion as we have navigated life during these continuing difficult times. We hope you have managed to stay well, positive and motivated during these tough times and, as we come together at this year's BECERA conference, we can all try and look ahead to a brighter future.

Our choice of focus for this year's conference on **Early Years Education as Political Activity: Access, Choice, Agency and Voice** reflects our belief that it is time to rethink what is the prime purpose of our early education and care programmes and shift our attention to creating a sustainable system that works for those who are at its centre: Children, Parents and Practitioners. We believe there is a need for us to recognise the political nature of our work which, when delivered well, opens doors of opportunity for all but when under stress and poorly offered, slams those doors shut for too many children, families and practitioners. Our work has shown that Early Years Education (EYE) is full of decisions and actions which might be considered highly political, demonstrably civic and deeply democratic. If politics is about a collective struggle to find agreement, then clearly: who has access to the debate; how voice and power is distributed; where choices lie; and what agency one has (to act out one's own decisions), can all be considered 'political activity' and therefore key components of democracies.

If we consider the voices and experiences of three key players in ECEC we can see how these ideas might play out in their lived realities.

Giving **children** opportunities and affordances to express themselves more confidently might be a basis for developing a lifelong disposition towards democracy. Helping children communally at circle time to become more thoughtful individuals who can articulate a judgment, defend it, justify it, and question it, whilst also understanding others' viewpoints, is pure Aristotelian philosophy in action and a basis of civic life. So, is 'What do you think?' the question that maybe we should hear more at circle time?

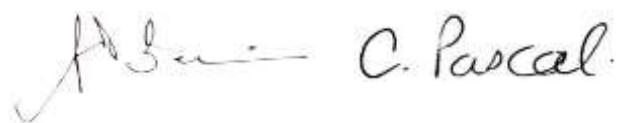
For many **parents**, an EYE setting may be the first time they come together and interact with others from outside their immediate family group or community, in this wider communal forum in which they are placing their young child. It's a shared purpose they all have in this civic place, the education and development of their child. It may also be the first time they have come into contact with a setting or school with

rules and regulations, policies and procedures which they must adhere to. This new interface, between parent and setting, provides an opportunity to learn with and from others about different child rearing practice, beliefs and behaviours, and to understand the challenges of placing your child outside the home. Access, choice, agency and voice are central to that process being effective.

For **practitioners**, at a time when recruitment and retention are low, and ratios are being altered, the role and status of early years educators becomes increasingly contested. Some see professional values being reduced and replaced by the introduction of management systems where educators become technicians delivering curriculum packages, while others see the implementation of multiple evidence informed programmes as enhancing quality and reducing workload. For some settings, the early years is seen as the holistic foundation for all that follows, but in others merely a waiting room, where developing 'readiness' is the mantra. The need for an articulate, informed voice, professional judgement and the ability to make one's own decisions, is arguably central to job satisfaction and wellbeing, but do all leaders agree and do they encourage this?

So, just three short examples of our conference theme in action and we know our conference delegates will share many more such narratives of where 'access, voice, agency and choice', are the basis of 'political activity' in EYE and through sharing these narratives we hope we can together create opportunities for action.

We are looking forward enormously to the opportunity to meet together and share our knowledge, research and passions about these issues at our 2024 Annual BECERA conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Bertram C. Pascal.', written in a cursive style.

Professor Tony Bertram and Professor Chris Pascal

On behalf of BECERA Conference Committee

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC)

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Prof. Tony Bertram, Prof. Chris Pascal, Dr Helen Lyndon, Sean Delaney,
Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), Birmingham, UK

MAJOR CONFERENCE SPONSORS

Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC)
& Amber Publications & Training Ltd (APT)



GENERAL INFORMATION

HOST

The host of the 14th BECERA Conference is the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC).

REGISTRATION DETAILS

The conference delegate fee includes: admission to the conference, delegate pass, refreshments and lunch.

COFFEE BREAKS AND LUNCH

All refreshments and lunch will be served in the Atrium (2nd floor). During the last 5 minutes of each break, please make your way to the room in which the plenary or your chosen symposium is located.

INFORMATION DESK

The registration and information desk will be located in the foyer on the 2nd floor of the Studio. After 9:30am queries should be directed to the CREC stand which will be located in the Atrium (2nd floor).

STAFF ASSISTANCE

The CREC team will be happy to provide assistance with practical matters during the conference. The team will be stationed around the venue during the conference and there will always be one member of the team at the CREC stand.

NOTES FOR PRESENTERS

Each symposium room is equipped with a PC and a data projector/plasma screen. We recommend you save your presentations as a Microsoft PowerPoint file to avoid any compatibility issues. We also recommend that you locate your symposium room in advance and arrive at your symposium room at least 10 minutes prior to your symposium start time in order to upload your presentation and ensure a prompt start. All PCs are fitted with USB ports and we recommend you save your presentation on a USB memory stick as well as in a cloud online.

NOTES FOR CHAIRS

Please be present in your symposium room at least 10 minutes prior to your session. It is important that the sessions stay on schedule so that individuals who want to listen to a specific talk may do so, and each presenter gets an equal opportunity to present their work. If a presentation is cancelled you may either convene a general discussion, or instead call a recess.

SYMPOSIUM ROOMS

Symposia will take place across 5 rooms across two floors. Depending on which room your intended symposium is in, it may take a couple of minutes to walk from room to room. We recommend you make your way to the symposium rooms in advance to make sure you get there in good time to find a seat. If your first-choice symposium room is full, please make your way to another session of your choice.

CONFERENCE BADGES

Your personal badge is your entry ticket to all conference sessions. We ask that you wear your badge at all times whilst at the venue. Please leave your name badge at the CREC table located in the Atrium at the end of the day/when you're leaving so that the insert can be safely disposed of and the badge and lanyard reused.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

The conference cannot accept any liability for personal injuries or for loss or damage to property belonging to the delegates, either during, or as a result of the meeting. Please check the validity of your own personal insurance before travelling.

WIFI

Please select 'the studio', password is 'customerfirst'.

SOCIAL MEDIA

We'll use @BECERAssoc and @_CREC accounts on X to share news, updates, thoughts and key messages from the day. We encourage everyone to post as well using hashtag #BECERA2024. Key themes and question will be picked up by BECERA panellists in the last session of the day.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Tuesday 13th February 2024

Time	Item	Location
08:30 – 09:15 (75 mins)	Registration & Refreshments	Second Floor Foyer & Atrium
09:15 – 09:30 (15 mins)	Opening session	Explore
09:30 – 10:10 (40 mins)	KEYNOTE I –Michel Vandebroek	Explore
10:10 – 10:40 (30 mins)	Coffee break	Atrium
10:40 – 12:00 (80 mins)	Symposium Set I	Show, Tell, Smile/Think, Explore
12:00 – 12:50 (50 mins)	Lunch	Atrium
12:50 – 14:10 (80 mins)	Symposium Set II	Show, Tell, Smile/Think, Explore
14:10 – 14:20 (10 mins)	Short comfort break	
14.20 – 15:40 (80 mins)	Symposium Set III	Show, Tell, Smile, Think, Explore
15:40 – 16:00 (20 mins)	Coffee break	Atrium
16:00 – 16:40 (40 mins)	KEYNOTE II- Nathan Archer	Explore
16:40 – 17:15 (40 mins)	Panel Discussion	Explore
17:15 – 18:00 (45 mins)	CREC Learning Circle	Atrium

Conference room locations

Explore – Second floor
 Atrium – Second floor
 Smile – Second floor
 Think - Second floor
 Show – First floor
 Tell – First floor

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

TUESDAY 13th FEBRUARY 2024

09:15 – 09:30 Opening Session

9:30 - 10:10 Keynote I

Academic rigour and ideology are inevitable (and not incompatible) in early childhood research

Michel Vandenbroeck, Ghent University, Belgium

Over the last two decades, we witness a remarkable paradox. The academia, as well as the public discourse is increasingly aware of the importance of quality of ECEC for children, parents and local communities. Yet, at the same time, we witness a disinvestment of public responsibilities in many countries, with dramatic consequences in for instance France and Belgium. In the same period, we also witness new “education wars”, including polarising ideological debates. To give but a few examples: universities are accused to be disproportionately left-wing; policy makers call for a “war on woke” in education; books are banned in schools when they discuss gender issues; ...

After the necessary criticism of postmodernist theorists on taken for granted assumptions in the humanities and on how these reproduce inequalities in education, this raises new questions regarding the relations between ideology and academic rigour.

SYMPOSIUM SET I: 10:40 – 12:00

	Symposium Title	Room
I/A	CHILDREN AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS	Show Room, 1st Floor
I/B	PEDAGOGIES OF WELCOME, ADVOCACY AND IDENTITY	Tell Room, 1st Floor
I/C	EXPLORING EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS IN ECEC	Smile/Think Room, 2nd Floor
I/D	EXPLORING PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL WELLBEING	Explore Room, 2nd Floor

SYMPOSIUM SET II: 12:50 – 14:10

	Symposium Title	Room
II/A	SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH WORK WITH FAMILIES	Show Room, 1st Floor
II/B	SELECTING APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGIES FOR EXPLORING ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: EXPERIENCES FROM THE BCU EARLY CHILDHOOD TEAM	Tell Room, 1st Floor

II/C	PROFESSIONALS' ROLES IN ENHANCING PRACTICE	Smile/Think Room, 2 nd Floor
II/D	PRACTITIONER RESEARCH IN AN INTEGRATED CENTRE	Explore Room, 2 nd Floor

SYMPOSIUM SET III: 14:20 – 15:40

	Symposium Title	Room
III/A	THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTITIONER RESEARCH AND CPD	Show Room, 1 st Floor
III/B	RECONCEPTUALISING AND CHALLENGING CURRENT EARLY YEARS POLICY AND PEDAGOGY	Tell Room, 1st Floor
III/C	CONSIDERATIONS OF SAFETY AND RISK	Smile Room, 2 nd Floor
III/D	PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE	Think Room, 2 nd Floor
III/E	WORKING WITH PARENTS	Explore Room, 2 nd Floor

16:00 - 16:40 KEYNOTE II

From micro resistances to collaborative action – the shape of agency and activism in contemporary early childhood education

Nathan Archer, Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom

In recent years, research has revealed the multiplicity of places in which early education activism is enacted. From the nursery to Whitehall to social media, various spaces have been co-opted for different forms of direct action in opposition to policy incursions in early childhood education.

Research reveals educator resistances are not always large scale, collective or mobilised but are often expressed in atomised contexts through a dispersed network of actors. Often this takes the form of 'micro resistances' which are local, quiet and unseen but multiple.

At the same time, numerous collaborative movements have emerged in response to specific policies, with action co-ordinated by national coalitions. However, notwithstanding the visibility and reach of these collectives, the neoliberal shaped early years market has atomised individual schools and settings, framing them as competitors rather than collaborators. This has resulted in reduced opportunities to collectivise.

Drawing on empirical research and personal experiences the author discusses the perceived critical agency and collective action of the early childhood workforce. The paper concludes with reflections on the potential for further collaborative advocacy and activism between organisations in building professionalism with, and a fair deal for, the early childhood workforce.

16:40 – 17:15 Panel Discussion

17:15-18:00 CREC Learning Circle

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

SYMPOSIUM SET I: 10:40 – 12:00

SYMPOSIUM I/A

CHILDREN AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS

ROOM: Show Room, 1st Floor

Chair: Carmela Garcia, Miss Daisy's Chelsea Nursery Schools, England/University of Dundee, Scotland

Children as active participants and capable contributors in a world where adults hold the power.

Carmela Garcia, Miss Daisy's Chelsea Nursery Schools, England/University of Dundee, Scotland

Challenging normative understandings of children's participation and sense of belonging in multilingual Early Years Education and Care.

Joanna Ainsworth, Education Coordinator, Think Equal / Research conducted as a Montessori Practitioner with the University of Exeter, England

Children's perspectives pre-setting transition in the Early Years Foundation Stage: implications for practice

Clair Sammons, Redcliffe Nursery School, England

SYMPOSIUM I/B

PEDAGOGIES OF WELCOME, ADVOCACY AND IDENTITY

ROOM: Tell Room, 1st Floor

Chair: Donna Gaywood, University of Gloucestershire, England

Pedagogy of welcome: ways to support refugee children in ECEC

Donna Gaywood, University of Gloucestershire, England

Whose agency and voice: conceptions of power in pedagogical approaches

Sharon Colilles, Bath Spa University, England

How can play provide affordances for the connectedness of newly arrived and host children in ECEC settings in England?

Alison Tobin, Birmingham City University/Centre for Research in Early Childhood, England

SYMPOSIUM I/C

EXPLORING EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS IN ECEC

ROOM: Smile/Think Room, 2nd Floor

Chair: Carmel Ward, Early Childhood Ireland, Ireland

Emotions and children's human rights education in early childhood: insights from children in Rwanda

Carmel Ward, Early Childhood Ireland, Ireland

An exploration of two-year-olds experiences of the emotional environment in early years' settings offering funded places

Louise Hannan, Centre for Research in Early Childhood/Bridgwater & Taunton College, England

There is something special between us: a case study where cariño is the loving relationship within assessment.

Alicia Blanco-Bayo, SEBDA, SRUK/CERU, SET, AMEI-WAECE

SYMPOSIUM I/D

EXPLORING PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL WELLBEING

ROOM: Explore Room, 2nd Floor

Chair: Karen Williams, **University of Wolverhampton, England**

Playful connections in the early childhood sector: reflections on professionalism and voice from a higher education classroom in England

Jenny Robson and Micky LeVoguer, University of East London, England

Professionalism and the informed voice: exploring student narrative

Karen Williams, Catherine White, Suzannah Warner and Chloe Southall, University of Wolverhampton, England

The Froebel partnership: agentic professional development within a cross-national community of practice.

Chris Pascal, Tony Bertram and Helen Lyndon, Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), England

Co-author(s): Sally Cave (1), Anne Denham (2), Tina Bruce (3) and practitioners at (1) Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre, England and (2) Seven Stars Kindergarten, Auckland, New Zealand; (3) Froebelian educator

SYMPOSIUM SET II: 12:50- 14:10

SYMPOSIUM II/A

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH WORK WITH FAMILIES

ROOM: Show Room, 1st Floor

Chair Nicola Wallis, **Fitzwilliam Museum/Centre for Research in Early Childhood, England**

Children's depictions of time with fathers through drawings: comparisons with fathers' narratives

Masada Al Harthi and Hala Hassan Sukkar, Emirates College for Advanced Education (ECAE), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

[Re]Imagining parent and teacher understanding of parent participation in an early childhood care and education (ECCE) setting

Ally Connelly, University of the West of Scotland, Scotland

Young children in the museum: exercising agency through cultural engagement

Nicola Wallis, Fitzwilliam Museum/Centre for Research in Early Childhood, England

SYMPOSIUM II/B

SELECTING APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGIES FOR EXPLORING ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: EXPERIENCES FROM THE BCU EARLY CHILDHOOD TEAM

ROOM: Tell Room, 1st Floor

Chair: Sinead Joyce, Birmingham City University, England

Thinking with posthuman theory to explore agency and voice in early childhood research

Zoe Lewis and Sinead Joyce, Birmingham City University, England

Methodologies eliciting the voices of stakeholders working in early childhood - experiences from two researchers

Vina Patel and Paola Pedrelli, Birmingham City University, England

Exploring digital technology affordances for creativity, storytelling and relationships with media

Amanda Bateman, Shannon Ludgate, and Jane O'Connor, Birmingham City University, England

SYMPOSIUM II/C

PROFESSIONALS' ROLES IN ENHANCING PRACTICE

ROOM: Smile/Think Room - 2nd Floor

Chair: Sarah Dixon-Jones, Inspiring Foundations/University of Sunderland, England

The relationship between phonological awareness and the ability to echo musical rhythmic patterns in Portuguese preschool children.

Mário Gouveia Moniz, CESEM/NOVA FCSH, Portugal

Social determinants that influence children's health, learning and development: the developing professionals' role in health promotion

Selena Hall, Helen Farmer and Sharifa Thacker, University of Wolverhampton, England

Collaborative learning with childminders through coastal school professional development; action research with a UK based nursery school federation

Kathryn Nichols (1), Vikki Wynn (1) and Emma Whelam-Tate (2); (1) University of Sunderland, (2) Northern Lights Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, England

SYMPOSIUM II/D

PRACTITIONER RESEARCH IN AN INTEGRATED CENTRE

ROOM: Explore Room, 2nd Floor

Chair: Felicity Dewsbery, Pen Green Research Centre, England

'Unmasking Covid'. - Exploring the realities of practice after Covid-19 – the impact according to practitioners.

Emma Hewitt and Colette Tait, Pen Green Research Centre, England

An exploration of relationships and interactions within an early years Crèche provision

Katherine Clark, Pen Green Research Centre, England

An exploration of 'supervision' to consider how it contains, supports and improves the 'emotional labour' and the 'wellbeing' of early childhood practitioners.

Felicity Dewsbery, Pen Green Research Centre, England

SYMPOSIUM SET III: 14:20 – 15:40

SYMPOSIUM III/A

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTITIONER RESEARCH AND CPD

ROOM: Show Room, 1st Floor

Chair: Vikki Wynn, University of Sunderland, England

Young minds big maths: a collaborative approach to creative maths with university mathematicians in a UK based nursery school federation.

Kathryn Nichols (1), (2), Sarah Dixon-Jones (1) and Rachel Oughton (2); (1) Inspiring Foundations, (2) Durham University, England

Embedding project work – empowering early childhood practitioners to be research active in a UK based nursery school federation.

Vikki Wynn (1) and Sarah Dixon-Jones (1), (2); (1) University of Sunderland, (2) Inspiring Foundations, England

Researchful practice early years teachers as researchers: voice, autonomy and professional identities

Frances Giampapa (1) and Claire Lee (2); (1) University of Bristol, (2) Oxford Brookes University, England

SYMPOSIUM III/B

RECONCEPTUALISING AND CHALLENGING CURRENT EARLY YEARS POLICY AND PEDAGOGY

ROOM: Tell Room, 1st Floor

Chair: Alistair Bryce-Clegg, ABC Does Ltd, UK

Shifting the gaze: exploring vitality, enchantment and more-than-human assemblages in Reception classrooms.

Alistair Bryce-Clegg, ABC Does Ltd, UK

Reconceptualising pedagogy and curriculum in the Early Years Foundation stage

Baljit Gill, University of Wolverhampton/Centre of Research in Early Childhood (CREC), England.

School readiness – viewing a shared understanding from the perspective of parents, practitioners and teachers.

Claire Woodsford and Natasha Harrison, Blackpool Better Start, England

SYMPOSIUM III/C

CONSIDERATIONS OF SAFETY AND RISK

ROOM: Smile Room, 2nd Floor

Chair: Kerry Holman, Canterbury Christ Church University, England

Capturing the ontology of young carers in the early years - threads of hope through lived experience

Carly Ellicott, University of Plymouth, England

'What does it mean to feel safe?' A collaborative project between undergraduate students and young children exploring perceptions of safety

Kerry Holman, Maria Lehane, Bethanie-Jayne Smith, Sarah Glasspool-Drabble and Kate Casey, Canterbury Christ Church University, England

Shifting a safeguarding culture: observational auditing, exploring expectations and coaching within Bright Horizons Nurseries.

Cathy Hart and Heather Smith, Bright Horizons

SYMPOSIUM III/D**PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

ROOM: Think Room, 2nd Floor

Chair: Alison Moore, **University College Cork, Republic of Ireland**

Facilitating reflection and dialogue across borders: establishing a community of practice (CoPs) to enhance early years placement experience in Ireland

Alison Moore (1), Catriona Rogers (2); (1) University College Cork, Republic of Ireland, (2) Stranmillis University College Belfast, Northern Ireland

Co-author(s): **Paula Carlin (2) and Aoife Lynch (1)**; (1) University College Cork, Republic of Ireland, (2) Stranmillis University College Belfast, Northern Ireland

“What does it mean to have an early years ethos for the Tik Tok generation?”. A Spaniard, a Greek and a psychologist tell their stories of care as higher education lecturers.

Maria Reraki, Annabel Yale and Alicia Blanco-Bayo, Edge Hill University, England

Questioning identities: being and becoming a lecturer. An exploration of how early years professionals from a range of practice backgrounds are authoring themselves as university lecturers.

Karen Williams, University of Wolverhampton, England

SYMPOSIUM III/E**WORKING WITH PARENTS**

ROOM: Explore Room, 2nd Floor

Chair: Debra Barton, **Ministry of Defence Early Years Specialist Lead/University of Worcester, England**

Exploring the effects of parental involvement in children’s physical activity sessions

Jane Dorrian, The Open University, England

Supporting families in military uniform: nurturing resilience in at-home parents during military deployments in early childhood settings.

Debra Barton, Ministry of Defence Early Years Specialist Lead/University of Worcester, England

Learning with parents about adults’ conversation with young children in their homes and communities through collaborative research.

Janet Morris, University of Greenwich, England

SYMPOSIUM SET I - 10:40 - 12:00

I/A CHILDREN AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS – Show Room, 1st Floor

CHAired BY Carmela Garcia, Miss Daisy's Chelsea Nursery Schools, England/University of Dundee, Scotland

Children as active participants and capable contributors in a world where adults hold the power
Carmela Garcia, Miss Daisy's Chelsea Nursery Schools, England/University of Dundee, Scotland

This study explores the concept of social sustainability, emphasising the significance of acknowledging the inherent rights of children to actively engage as respected individuals within varied communities (Johansson et al., 2023). My study intends to fill gaps in existing research and presents sociodrama as a tool to help young children develop their agency, knowledge and skills around social issues.

Sociodramatic play is used as a tool to break free from the individualistic lenses the child is seen through and shift to the importance of collective and mutual transformation (Prout, 2005; Corsaro, 2018).

This work fits under the new sociology of childhood, which emphasises the social and political nature of childhood (Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014), and which focuses on the social constructivism and cognitive development framework for early childhood (Piaget, 1932; Vygotsky, 1978).

This case study employed the principles of inductive logic. The following fieldwork generated the data:

- Video recordings and photographs
- Observations
- Artefacts

Participation was voluntary and consent was obtained from both, parents/guardians and participants (children). Personal information was anonymised and all the data gathered was safely stored.

This research highlights how children can develop prosocial behaviour through social learning, emphasising the importance of supporting them in gaining a deeper understanding and recognising their active role in our social world.

It is crucial for professionals not to ignore the inherent power adults hold and to recognise young children as capable and confident learners and contributors who are part of both, their preschool society and the wider social world.

Power dynamics, agency, children's rights, sociodramatic play, social sustainability

Challenging normative understandings of children's participation and sense of belonging in multilingual Early Years Education and Care.

Joanna Ainsworth, Education Coordinator, Think Equal / Research conducted as a Montessori Practitioner with the University of Exeter, England

Using non-verbal communication (NVC) and mapped positionings of centrality/periphery to unpack 'participation' in multilingual Early Years Education (ECE).

Research problematising the hegemony of spoken language seen as, 'the 'natural' human communication (Viruru, 2001:39) and challenging central positionings of 'participation' (Bernstein, 2018:835) highlight the legitimacy of myriad alternative ways of expression and participation.

A Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2016) sought directional flow from data to theory and a theoretical framework constructed after and around themes.

An ontological stance sees reality as pluralistic with findings offering an 'interpretive portrayal of the studied world' (Charmaz, 1995;2000). This single mixed methods case study uses Creswell and Plano

Clark's 'exploratory design' (2007) with 'target sociogram' sociometric survey findings and ethnographic fieldnotes informing focus group meetings and interviews. Thematic analysis was used in data analysis.

Ethical confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms. Children's consent was obtained, right to withdraw was reiterated throughout and children's wishes respected.

Findings showed children in the peripheries to be experts in the grammars of NVC. Sociometry was troublesome in its ability to inherit a no-man's land between an interpretive constructed reality (children's perspectives) and a positivistic, one-truth science as the fluidity of friendships are freeze-framed and quantified and positionings labelled (Child and Nind, 2013:1015). Mason's (2006:22) data meshing enabled ethnographic data to bestow quantitative data with 'rich and dialogic explanation'.

With an increasing subsection of emergent bilingual children in early years education (DfE, 2019), findings suggest redirection of our gaze to the peripheries to learn from the experts.

nonverbal communication, participation, periphery, emergent bilingualism, sociometry

Children's perspectives pre-setting transition in the Early Years Foundation Stage: implications for practice

Clair Sammons, Redcliffe Nursery School, England

How might knowledge of children's perspectives have implications for transition?

Einarsdóttir et al (2019) highlight the importance of a child's transition from pre-school to primary school and that by listening to children's perspectives, practitioners can develop supportive and effective pedagogies for transition.

Boyle et al (2018) identified four theoretical perspectives of transitions: developmental, ecological, socio-cultural, and critical. This enabled me to explore identified features of this transition stage and show how these coincide with the theoretical perspectives of Piaget (1969), Vygotsky (1978), Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Freire (1970).

Using a praxeological paradigm and a phenomenological methodology, preschool children's perceptions of their upcoming transition to school were gained via non face to face methods during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collection methods included: autoethnography, systematic literature review and documentary analysis, email interviews and drawing methods.

Ethical praxis is vital within research that seeks participation, such as a praxeological paradigm (Palaologou, 2014; Pascal and Bertram, 2012). There are three universal ethical issues I address within this study: consent and assent, rights, and power.

Initial findings indicate that preschool children have similar thoughts and concerns about starting primary school, however their individual responses highlight the importance of listening and consulting with children during this transition stage.

This study argues that preschool settings play a vital role in supporting children and advocating their voice during their transition to school. To do this effectively, practitioners need to create a pedagogical environment where open dialogues about starting school is encouraged.

transition, starting school, preschool children, children's perspectives, implications for practice

I/B PEDAGOGIES OF WELCOME, ADVOCACY AND IDENTITY – Tell Room, 1st Floor CHAired Donna Gaywood, University of Gloucestershire, England

**Pedagogy of welcome: ways to support refugee children in ECEC
Donna Gaywood, University of Gloucestershire, England**

This presentation shares a pedagogy of welcome which can be utilised by early childhood practitioners to enable refugee children to participate fully in early education. It was developed through a small-scale doctoral research project, which investigated the lived experience of four Syrian refugee children in ECEC.

The pedagogy builds on the work of Freire (1970), Natural Inclusion Theory (Rayner, 2017) and notions of hospitality (Gabi, 2021).

An intersectional theoretical lens was developed which included Social Identity Theory (Tajfel: 1979); Orientalism (Said: 1978); and Social Learning Theory (Vygotsky: 1978).

This qualitative research employed a hybrid praxeological and polyvocal methodology (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012; Tobin et al:2016). To elicit the children's experiences, original multi-modal methods were developed inspired by Theron et al. (2011) Clark and Moss (2011) Carr et al. (2002).

The invisibility of refugee children's experiences, taken-for-granted norms and negative conceptualisations all informed the ethics of the research. A dynamic, responsive approach was developed alongside critical analysis and deep reflection of self to ensure participant voices were amplified.

Despite inclusive practices, refugee children tend to remain marginalised in ECEC but positive pedagogy offers a protective factor for refugee children (Buchmuller et al., 2020). The essential elements of the pedagogy of welcome include: professional positionality, making visible the invisible, creating open dynamic spaces of welcome, and attention to wider concerns.

These findings offer early educators opportunity to reflect on self, examine praxis and consider more ethically sensitive ways to include refugee or other marginalised children through welcoming practices

refugee children, marginalisation, pedagogy of welcome, inclusion, ethical practices

Whose agency and voice: conceptions of power in pedagogical approaches Sharon Colilles, Bath Spa University, England

This study investigates how play-based pedagogy supports learners' ethnic identity within the curricula.

Barron (2014) used sociocultural and funds of knowledge theory to explore how children respond to their cultural and educational worlds. However, complexities between learner and professional agency in participatory experiences influencing identity formation is underexplored.

Bodies of knowledge from Vygotsky, 1978, Rogoff, 2003, Bradbury, 2014 and Corsaro, 2015 provide the theoretical lens of sociocultural theorising to problematise how ethnic identity is experienced and constructed in learner-practitioner interactions.

Qualitative collection processes used Bertram and Pascal's Praxeological principles to generate data. Phase one used semi-structured interviews with practitioners. Phase two accessed children's voices using participatory experiences associated with empowerment and development of self-efficacy (Freire, 1970).

Ethical considerations emerge when raising issues concerning ethnic grouping, identity, and pedagogical practice. Approaches utilised dialogic conversations to balance power dynamics, and support of pedagogical development arrangements. Engagement with participants followed institutional ethical frameworks.

Literature suggests the EYFS is premised on suppositions of valuing inclusivity, however it falls short of making explicit a pedagogical approach that supports practitioners in negotiating the complexity of power and identity. Findings contend parity between professional and learner agency is needed so that mechanisms are established for engaging with the perspectives of children with multiple identities and belongings, rather than practices relating to normalised groupings.

Identity development concepts can enable educators to recognise children's 'unique personal identity' and how in interaction processes children are active contributors in their perceptions of an ethnic/raced identity.

child's voice, pedagogy, power, identity

How can play provide affordances for the connectedness of newly arrived and host children in ECEC settings in England?

Alison Tobin, Birmingham City University/Centre for Research in Early Childhood, England

The aims of this paper explore how play and educators can support the connectedness of newly arrived and host children in English ECEC settings and how Foucault's concept of a heterotopia (1966) may support an understanding of this.

Previous research investigates the empowerment of migrant families from parents' and practitioners' viewpoints (Tobin, 2016), the challenges affecting identity and relationships (Bove and Sharmahd, 2020) and making meaning of migratory experiences (Kirova, 2010). However, this study builds upon these works to elicit the voice of the child.

The study is underpinned by the belief that childhood is socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1978), the theory of discourse and power (Foucault, 1977) and the concept of heterotopia (Foucault, 1966) that may support an understanding of how play enables childhood connectedness.

As such, the methodology is qualitative and interpretivist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), employing a multiple case study analysis (Yin, 2018) afforded by observations and semi structured interviews. The data analysis applies both thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) and diffractive analysis (Barad, 2007).

Ethical understanding and consideration are given to protect child participants in relation to advocacy, wellbeing, vulnerability and power relations, using the EECERA ethical code (Bertram et al., 2015)

Initial findings from the study suggest that play has an important role to enact connectedness, agency, voice and power within a pedagogy of advocacy for all children

The knowledge gained from this study will help educators support and advocate for newly arrived children, to provide opportunities for the children to connect and build lasting relationships and friendships.

ECEC, newly arrived, play, connectedness, heterotopia

I/C EXPLORING EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS IN ECEC – Smile/Think Room, 2nd Floor CHAired BY Carmel Ward, Early Childhood Ireland, Ireland

Emotions and children's human rights education in early childhood: insights from children in Rwanda

Carmel Ward, Early Childhood Ireland, Ireland

This paper draws from a PhD study undertaken in Rwanda which sought to illuminate children's, teachers', and parents' perceptions of children's human rights education (CHRE) in early childhood. Globally, there is a lacuna in research and practice guidance concerning CHRE in early childhood (UN, 2006; Quennerstedt, 2016). Contrastingly, there is extensive research on emotions in early childhood, yet emotions are infrequently explored in relation to children's human rights (Blaisdell et al., 2021), despite being political and significant to social justice pedagogies (Zembylas, 2003, Cliffe and Solvason, 2020).

The study combined postcolonial theory (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012) with working theories (Aotearoa/New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) to create a conceptual framework that could harness children's existing yet evolving perceptions and knowledges.

Postcolonialism sits within the interpretive paradigm and justifies using participatory methods. This predominantly qualitative, participatory study took place in one nursery school using responsive multi-modal methods with a group of ten 'research influencers' (aged three to six years). The data was analysed using thematic analysis through a postcolonial optic.

Postcolonial paradigmatic assumptions and a Children's Rights-Based Approach (Lundy and McEvoy, 2012) informed ethical considerations to disrupt inherent power privileges in this study.

Two ideas from the study's findings are discussed. Methodologically, emotions were integral to children's freedom of expression, agency in meaning-making, and exchanges of power in research encounters. Pedagogically, children's emotions were interwoven into their relational perceptions and theorisations about rights and CHRE.

These insights offer new directions for recognising emotions as a bridge between children's relational ontologies and human rights education in early childhood.

pedagogy for rights, children's human rights education, emotions, postcolonial theory, Rwanda

An exploration of two-year-olds experiences of the emotional environment in early years' settings offering funded places

Louise Hannan, Centre for Research in Early Childhood/Bridgwater & Taunton College, England

Project aims include documenting and interpreting how two-year-olds children experience that emotional environment and to develop early years practice so that it better supports children's emotional development

This project positions itself with the social psychology field, which understands that relationships shape our world, including how we understand and experience that world (Gruman, 2016).

Therefore, phenomena are understood through human interactions (Smith, 2014).

Elfer (2015) identifies 3 aspects that relate to the emotional work within nurseries:

- Attachment and relationships,
- Emotional Labour, meaning emotional stresses/celebrations of the job,
- Conscious and unconscious responses, including the interaction and ethos of the setting.

The methods of the project attempt to explore some of contributing factors to these areas and how they intertwine with other theoretical concepts to produce information for practice.

Phenomenology is defined as the study of human experience. It allows the study the of structures of phenomenon. Praxeology allows for direct transformation of practice from knowledge gained during the research journey. A complex methodology was used combining both these approaches.

Ethical permission was granted by the University of Wolverhampton. All areas of ethics were considered including protection from harm, confidentiality, debriefing and honesty and openness.

Permission was sought from all parties prior to commencement of the project.

Three main themes have been identified:

- Emotional environments are often not our primary focus
- Emotional environments are complex
- Emotional environments are interwoven.

The project presents a new theoretical model, combining previously discovered ideas and concepts and blending them so that each are considered next to each other.

emotional, emotions, daycare, relationships, attachment

There is something special between us: a case study where *cariño* is the loving relationship within assessment.

Alicia Blanco-Bayo, SEBDA, SRUK/CERU, SET, AMEI-WAECE

A single case study values spontaneous emotional exchanges amid Early Years (EY) policy-driven summative assessments in England (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2017; Bradbury, 2019) and helps untangle the interpretation of assessment, that integrates "*cariño*" during observations.

I explore "*cariño*", as an intense, affectionate endeavour that helps children flourish, defined as a spontaneous expression of love and the relational pedagogy (Bulat Silva, 2020) that impacts the development of emotional competence (Saarni, 1999).

The theoretical framework incorporates the CASEC model prioritising relational pedagogy as the vehicle that impacts relationships (Crownover and Jones, 2018). Aiming to address a gap in literature, it includes ""*cariño*"" within assessment that prioritises emotional competence (Bulat Silva, 2020; Denham et al., 2016).

Adopting a reflexive stance (Richards and Coombs, 2023), the methodology of a *sentidora* interpreted subjective aspects in practitioner-child interactions. An interpretative, constructivist paradigm guided the exploration of the participant's reality (Pilarska, 2021). Utilising case study research (Hadinata and Farlow Mendrofa, 2021), I derived meaning from emotional experiences, and addressed validity concerns through a mixed-method approach-interviews, focus groups and video-diaries (Adler, Salanterä & Zumstein-Shaha, 2019).

The participant's privacy and well-being were safeguarded through digital consent and anonymity measures (Hammersley & Traianou, 2007). Regular check-up conversations ensured support and manage sensitive discussions.

The presence of "*cariño*" in assessments notably impacts the development of empathy, shaping the practitioner's approach amid all the EY policy demands (Archer, 2017; Cameron and Moss, 2007). "*Cariño*" challenges the concept professional love (Page, 2018) during assessment. I propose the CASEC model, that prioritises "*cariño*" and accounts for emotional competence to develop impromptu.

assessment, relational pedagogy, cariño, emotional competence

I/D EXPLORING PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL WELLBEING – Explore Room, 2nd Floor

CHAired BY Karen Williams, University of Wolverhampton, England

Playful connections in the early childhood sector: reflections on professionalism and voice from a higher education classroom in England

Jenny Robson and Micky LeVoguer, University of East London, England

This study aims to explore the experiences of diverse actors within an early childhood education system (ECE), imbued with structural injustice in England, as they engaged in a networking event hosted in a university classroom in March 2023. Experiences here are those of professionalism and pedagogy underpinning the event.

Early childhood professionalism has the potential a '(political) consciousness and collective voice' (Arndt et al., 2018, p.68).

A dual conceptual framework guides the study firstly, the multiple constructs of professionalism in early childhood (e.g. Diamond and Bulfin, 2023 and Hordern, 2016) and secondly, notions of a playful pedagogy in Higher Education (HE) (Holflod, 2023) characterised by democratic principles and a commitment to social justice. This research is shaped by an interpretivist paradigm and critical qualitative approach that privileges the multiple voices.

Participants in this study are 15 people (students, lecturers and those working for professional associations, trade unions or grassroots organisations) who attended the networking event. Data was collected through online semi-structured interviews.

Fieldwork took account of participants concerns about confidentiality; this meant ensuring informed consent, privacy in data collection and pseudonymisation of data.

We found that dialogue in playful spaces shapes knowledge of professionalism foregrounding collective care of the profession thus disrupting the constructs that privilege compliance, self-responsibility, and care of others (Diamond and Bulfin, 2023).

Within the context of the HE classroom the creation of conditions for fluid forms of connection between social actors decentres notions of professionalism and the powerful neoliberal structures in the ECE and HE sectors.

early childhood education, higher education, professionalism, playful pedagogy

Professionalism and the informed voice: exploring student narratives

Karen Williams, Catherine White, Suzannah Warner and Chloe Southall, University of Wolverhampton, England

The aim of this research is to explore the notion of informed professional voice through the reflective accounts of a group of second year undergraduate ECS students.

The significance of placement experience embedded in degree offers (Campbell- Barr et al 2020) and the relationship to aspirations and employability (Richards and Lumsdon 2023) are widely discussed. By engaging with the narrative inquiry (Richards 2019) from students it is hoped to explore the impact of study on the development of informed professional voice and professional identity (Holland et al 1998).

Through reflection we seek to identify significant moments of rupture in student identities. Adopting Holland et al's (1998) figured world position on identity formation in a world of activity, we explore the implications of study and professional experience upon identities and voice.

This research was conducted within a qualitative interpretivist research paradigm (Birks 2011). Methodologically, narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly 2000) has been used to gather data. Analysis has adopted a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006).

In line with university protocol information sheets and consent forms were provided to all participants. Participants are co-presenters.

Considering the experiences provided on a BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies degree, students articulate the personal and professional implications of undertaking study upon their identities as professionals within the early years workforce.

These narratives expose moments of agency and voice and invite discussion on the place of graduate professionals in ECEC.

voice, knowledge, agency, professionalism, confidence

The Froebel partnership: agentic professional development within a cross-national community of practice.

Chris Pascal (1), Tony Bertram (1), Helen Lyndon (1), Sally Cave (2), Anne Denham (3), Tina Bruce (4) and practitioners (2) (3); (1) Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), England, (2) Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre, England, (3) Seven Stars Kindergarten, Auckland, New Zealand, (4) Froebelian educator

The Froebel Partnership has been working collaboratively for three years focusing on the development of Froebelian Principles within pedagogic practice in England and New Zealand. Whilst the annual focus has been on aspects such as outdoor provision, play, or the gifts and occupations, across all three years the development of a non-hierarchical community of practice has emerged supporting both professional development and practitioner well-being. This presentation's focus on professional development incorporates previous projects such as exploring how young children 'Engage with Nature' (Pascal et al, 2022) using Froebelian principles and ethics (Bruce et al, 2019). The overall research adopts a praxeological (Pascal and Bertram, 2012; Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012) and affirmative inquiry (Cooperrider, 2008) approach, drawing on Froebelian principles and practices (Bruce, 2022).

Using case study methodology practitioner researchers document practice and children's learning experiences using multi-model methods (Pascal et al 2021) and use a new approach to data and evidence analysis, Froebel Approach to Data Analysis (FADA) (Pascal et al 2022). Practitioner researchers have created a community of practice through which all participants are able to deeply reflect upon the power of the children's stories.

All participants have provided informed ethical consent. The affirmative inquiry reduces risks to participants and researchers address issues of power distribution through the development of the community practice.

The findings indicate that a sustained and agentic professional development provide support for broader pedagogic developments as well as individual practitioner well-being.

The study findings promote a distributed model of professional development in which practitioners have agency.

Froebel's principles, practitioner research, praxeology, well-being, professional development

SYMPOSIUM SET II - 12:50 - 14:10

II/A SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH WORK WITH FAMILIES – Show Room, 1st Floor

CHAired BY Nicola Wallis, Fitzwilliam Museum/Centre for Research in Early Childhood, England

Children's depictions of time with fathers through drawings: comparisons with fathers' narratives Masada Al Harthi (1), Hala Hassan Sukkar (1), Martina Dickson(1), Jessica Midraj (2), Melissa McMinn (3); (1) Emirates College for Advanced Education (ECAE), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, (2) Independent Educational Consultant, (3) Open Polytechnic New Zealand

This one-year study aims to explore young children's perceptions of the time spent with their fathers in the home and to triangulate these data gathered from their fathers. This study captures three key stakeholders' experiences in Abu Dhabi: working fathers, their young children, and human resources personnel.

Supportive workplaces of employee-fathers are correlated with increased father engagement and involvement in children's educational settings (Holmes et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2014), which is linked to children's academic, social, and emotional prowess (Baker et al., 2018; Jeynes, 2010). The conceptual framework of the study is grounded in the father involvement model (Lamb et al., 1985), consisting of three components: (a) engagement, (b) accessibility, and (c) responsibility. This study adopts an interpretive phenomenological paradigm (Munhall, 2013; Tuohy et al., 2013) with a mixed-methods research design. While qualitative data were gathered by interviewing working fathers (n=40), quantitative data were extracted from their children's drawings (n=35). Children's voices are well heard through drawings, a non-intrusive method of collecting data from young children (Farland-Smith, 2012).

Informed consent was gathered from the adult participants, and assent was then discussed and negotiated with the children before participating in the drawings.

Central to the presentation will be key findings about the impact of fathers' working lives on their involvement in their children's schooling, quality time with them, and how young children perceive these dynamics.

Findings signify how workplace policies and practices either facilitate or hinder fathers' engagement in children's early childhood education stage, and the implications on father-child relationships, children's emotional well-being, and overall development.

father involvement, child development, workplaces, father-child relationships

[Re]Imagining parent and teacher understanding of parent participation in an early childhood care and education (ECCE) setting

Ally Connelly, University of the West of Scotland, Scotland

This interpretive, qualitative research endeavours to understand how agency can be shifted for parents and teachers from involvement to active participation. The main research question is: How can a model for parental participation be developed in ECCE centres that activates social cohesion?

The importance of parental involvement in children's education, from the start, has been established by global research (Krijnen, Steensel, Meeuwisse, & Severiens, 2022). Despite this rhetoric, there is limited research in South African ECCE centres that explores how parents should participate democratically in early education. Creating these opportunities helps develop a socially cohesive and transformative environment (Bayat & Madyibi, 2022).

The theoretical frameworks of Pedagogy-in-Participation (Formosinho & Fromosinho), Communities of Practice (Wenger) and Humanising Pedagogy (Freire) support the shift to meaningful participation to embrace including parents in the ECCE setting to realise the possibilities of connecting with the community.

This presentation explores one dataset of ongoing research: semi-structured interviews (Mukherji & Albon, 2015). Interviews were conducted with 7 parents and 5 teachers in Lavender Hill, Cape Town. Their understandings of participation as connection and relationship were interpreted using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

After receiving information sheets all participants completed consent forms and agreed to be part of the research. Anonymity and confidentiality are maintained by using pseudonyms for the participants and the setting.

The findings revealed the importance parents and teachers place on participation in ECCE to create social cohesion.

This ongoing research aims to develop a model of parent participation through an ongoing, iterative, democratic process.

early childhood education, parent partnerships, communities of practice, democracy in ECCE, dialogics

Young children in the museum: exercising agency through cultural engagement
Nicola Wallis, Fitzwilliam Museum/Centre for Research in Early Childhood, England

My research foregrounds the civic role of art museums as nurturing spaces for young children. Previous work explored the caring affordances of museums for adults (Morse, 2020), while child-focused research has demonstrated the potential of museum experiences to support children's agency (Manyukhina et al., 2023) and cultural citizenship (Mai & Gibson, 2011).

My study is founded on an understanding of museums as powerful mediators of cultural experience (Bourdieu, 1979) and draws together socio-constructivist models of museum learning (Falk & Dierking, 2018) with post-humanist approaches recognising the role of materiality and embodiment (Macrae et al., 2018).

This is a qualitative practitioner research case study. Observed visits with 11 families were undertaken and documented through fieldnotes, photography, and children's art. Data was reviewed through reflexive thematic analysis, acknowledging the interpretive nature of both data collection and analysis.

Families were fully informed about the nature of the study and how their data would be used. Ongoing assent was negotiated with children throughout, and all were made aware they could take a break or withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms have replaced real names, and photographs were shared only where families gave explicit consent for this.

My findings demonstrate that young children engage deeply with museum collections and spaces. The museum environment affords particular opportunities for children to make choices, exercise agency, and find their voices through cultural engagement.

Understanding children's engagement with museums has implications for reimagining the role that children might play as active participants in cultural dialogue and public life more broadly.

museum learning, agency, cultural citizenship, cultural rights, public spaces

II/B SELECTING APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGIES FOR EXPLORING ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: EXPERIENCES FROM THE BCU EARLY CHILDHOOD TEAM – Tell Room, 1st Floor
CHAIR BY: Sinead Joyce, Birmingham City University, England

Thinking with posthuman theory to explore agency and voice in early childhood research
Zoe Lewis and Sinead Joyce, Birmingham City University, England

Our aim is to diffract the posthuman theoretical frameworks from two doctoral research projects to explore the potential of posthuman theory when rethinking voice and agency in early childhood research.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe voice as a 'collective assemblage of enunciation', 'a doing' (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017) produced through intra-action (Barad, 2007) from within more-than-human agentic assemblages.

Adopting a post-qualitative approach (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013), we bring the posthuman theoretical frameworks from the original two projects into conversation with each other, diffracting them with posthuman interpretations of voice.

Together, we take up Koro-Ljungberg's (2012) call for 'researchers of the world to create' in our thinking with theory. We diffract Zoe's 'deep hanging out' in creative encounters with Sinead's use of listening rooms with trainee practitioners.

Ethics and asymmetrical power relationships are entangled throughout our research encounters. After receiving institutional ethical approval for both projects, we continue in constant awareness of our response-ability (Haraway, 2016) to others and to each other.

Our findings show what is produced, and what comes to matter, when we think with voice and agency through posthuman theory. These matterings offer potential 'lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) where voice is not limited to language, or afforded to individuals, but is constituted collectively through fluid networks of more-than-human agents in intra-action.

Our diffractions demonstrate the potential of thinking and researching with posthuman concepts as method. There are practical implications for the ways in which we foster agency and voice as both practitioners and researchers.

posthuman, voice, diffraction, post-qualitative, assemblage

Methodologies eliciting the voices of stakeholders working in early childhood - experiences from two researchers

Vina Patel and Paola Pedrelli, Birmingham City University, England

This paper aims to share the methodologies used by two early childhoods researchers to capture the voices of students, leaders and practitioners working in early years. Both researchers have designed their research to capture authentic voices and their experiences. The value of phenomenology and case study methodologies will be explored.

Vina's research builds on placement challenges (Nutbrown, 2012; Campbell-Barr et al. 2020) and professional identity complexities (Lightfoot and Frost, 2015; Murray, 2013). Paola's research focuses on the complexity of leadership (Whalley, 2019; Aubrey, 2011).

Paola focused on leadership models and theories situated within organisational theory (Whitaker, 2019; Baltaci and Balci, 2017) Vina's research adopts The Theory of Practice Architecture (Kemmis, 2022).

Both studies adopt a qualitative paradigm and draw on interpretivism. Vina utilises a phenomenological case study methodology, using an online survey, focus groups, interviews, and cases studies. Paola focused on interviews and observations, using a social constructionist lens to develop her leader's portraits.

Anonymity, confidentiality, consent, right to withdraw and power relations were considered for both studies.

Vina found material-economic arrangements are a placement constraint. Paola's findings are leadership is not static, career narratives and continued professional development (CPD) are key. These research projects will be of interests to those supporting students, and leaders within the sector.

phenomenology, case study, professional identity, leadership, career narratives

Exploring digital technology affordances for creativity, storytelling and relationships with media

Amanda Bateman, Shannon Ludgate, and Jane O'Connor, Birmingham City University, England

Drawing on a video recorded episode of two children aged 5 years, we aim to reveal how the children interact with an iPad to collaboratively create a story, acting out their cultural knowledge of media storytelling.

With a sharp increase in children's access to and interest in digital technologies, the ways in which digital media can support children's holistic development is of primary importance (Houen & Danby, 2022).

An ethnomethodological framing (Goffman, 1981) was used to explore the everyday co-construction of interactions around digital technology.

Video data were collected, and transcribed and analysed using conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1973) and action theory (Engeström, 1999) methods.

Ethical approval was gained through the University of Waikato Ethics Committee where issues of assent, descent and anonymity were given close consideration due to participant video recordings.

The findings discussed here are threefold, exploring the affordances of the iPad for:

1. collaborative storytelling activities due to its portability, apps library and connectability to a big screen for sharing with larger groups
2. supporting creativity, including opportunities for negotiating impromptu storylines
3. providing insight into children's relationships with wider culture (O'Connor et al 2023)

Digital technologies support children's holistic development in the early years, where it is important to consider how technological skills can be promoted in creative and innovative ways in practice.

digital technology, creativity, storytelling, collaborative activity, activity theory

II/C PROFESSIONALS' ROLES IN ENHANCING PRACTICE – Smile/Think Room, 2nd Floor CHAired BY Sarah Dixon-Jones Inspiring Foundations/University of Sunderland, England

The relationship between phonological awareness and the ability to echo musical rhythmic patterns in Portuguese preschool children.

Mário Gouveia Moniz, CESEM/NOVA FCSH, Portugal

This study aims to investigate the influence of participation in music classes (MC) on phonological awareness (PA) development and its relationship with the ability to echo musical rhythmic patterns (EMRP) in Azorean preschool children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Research indicates that participation in MC promotes the development of PA (Vidal et al., 2020) and that rhythmic skills are related to language skills (Swaminathan & Schellenberg, 2020). The relationship between the ability to EMRP (Wolf, 2003) and PA needs further investigation.

The theoretical framework for this study draws on the OPERA Hypothesis (Patel, 2011), which proposes that music training positively affects language skills, and the Temporal Sampling Framework (Goswami, 2011), which suggests that rhythmic skills are related to speech processing.

In this longitudinal study, fifty-one 4- to 6-year-old children are randomly divided into two groups. Measures of PA using ConF.IRA test (Vidal, et al., 2020) and EMRP test (designed by the researcher) will be administered before and after 5-month music classes (experimental group) and dance classes (control group). Non-verbal intelligence will be monitored using WPPSI-II before intervention.

Ethical concerns include obtaining permission to undertake the research from the Government, collecting informed consent from children's parents, securing data storage, and guaranteeing anonymity. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time.

The research is ongoing, and data from the pre-intervention PA test, and non-verbal intelligence were already collected.

It is expected that a political debate will follow regarding the importance of music classes in preschool.

music classes, phonological awareness, rhythmic skills, preschool children

Social determinants that influence children's health, learning and development: the developing professionals' role in health promotion

Selena Hall, Helen Farmer and Sharifa Thacker, University of Wolverhampton, England

This research aims to investigate social determinants that influence children's health, learning and development and the undergraduate student's role in health promotion.

Students have an integral role and duty of care to support the health and wellbeing of children within their practice. Musgrave, (2017 P.3) states that "your understanding of health and wellbeing will be shaped by your experiences and professional role". This source is relied upon by students and contributes and shapes thinking and practice.

This research draws upon the role practitioners have in relation to a child's microsystem as per Bronfenbrenner's theory. The microsystem being the most influential layer of the theory includes the most immediate environment and relationships children have, our research prompts links to the two layers as suggested by McDowall and Clark, (2013).

Quantitative data contributed to an initial health needs analysis. The methodology was a combined paradigm as interpretivist research was then drawn upon to develop practice and the professional's role.

Anonymity will be adhered to as no settings will be disclosed. The use of pseudonyms will ensure confidentiality is adhered to.

Analysis of the prevalent social determinants that impact upon children's and families' health and wellbeing. The basis of discussion will be narratives taken from student's placement experiences. As developing practitioners this will contribute to well informed decisions that promote children's health and wellbeing, contributing to the better outcomes for children and families.

health, advocacy, promoting well-being, nurture, care, social determinants

Collaborative learning with childminders through coastal school professional development; action research with a UK based nursery school federation

Kathryn Nichols (1) and Vikki Wynn (1) and Emma Whelam-Tate (2); (1) University of Sunderland, (2) Northern Lights Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, England

The Nursery School Federation were approached to support a group of childminders in developing their approach to coastal school. The initial aim was to support the childminders in their professional development, however it evolved into a collaborative learning experience for all participants.

The Federation are part of the Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs (DfE, 2023) which aim to provide support childminders in developing their practice. This is with a view to have consistent high-quality practice, developed through effective evidence-based programmes.

Supporting childminders in building evidence informed practice is the overall aim (EEF, 2022), however it is evident that it also supports social learning opportunities among all practitioners involved.

A traditional action research model was undertaken (Lewin, 1946) to allow for a cyclical approach to practice. This would allow for ongoing reflexive responses to the observations in practice.

The EECERA ethical principles (2014) are adhered to throughout the study to ensure power imbalances are acknowledged and reduced at each stage of the cycles through reflection and discussion.

Initial findings suggest that the process has been not only effective in developing the childminders approach to coastal school experiences but has also been enlightening for the team providing the support. This has in turn led to reflections on practice within the Federation.

The findings suggest that the approach has the potential to not only support the development of practice by sharing knowledge but also for collaborative learning with increased reflection from those settings identified as a 'hub'.

practitioner-enquiry, collaboration, reflection, complexity, professional development

II/ D PRACTITIONER RESEARCH IN AN INTEGRATED CENTRE – Explore Room, 2nd Floor CHAired BY Felicity Dewsbery, Pen Green Research Centre, England

'Unmasking Covid'. - Exploring the realities of practice after Covid-19 – the impact according to practitioners.

Emma Hewitt and Colette Tait, Pen Green Research Centre, England

The aim of this research was to consider the impact of Covid-19 on practice in an early years centre, regarding the school cohort September 2023.

This research reflects findings from similar, large-scale studies regarding lower levels of children's attainment (particularly emotional wellbeing and communication), increased levels of SEND and subsequent practitioner pressure (Nelinger et al 2021; Linnavalli and Kalland 2021; Hardy et al 2022; Early Education and Childcare Coalition (EECC) 2023).

In developing our understanding of post-Covid-19 early years practice researchers drew upon literature regarding: key person (Elfer et al., 2012), pedagogy (Lawrence & Gallagher, 2017), emotional labour (Menzies-Lyth, 1959), and minor gesture (Manning, 2016).

Interpretivist, practitioner research was undertaken. Data was gathered through a parent survey and semi-structured interviews with five practitioners (McNiff 2015).

Contributions to the research were sought through voluntary, informed consent, including participants understanding their right to withdraw (BERA 2018). Anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to using pseudonyms (Arnold 2015).

Reflecting the wider early years landscape (EECC 2023) researchers found high levels of anxiety and missed opportunities during lockdown resulting in significant changes to early years practice.

Increased SEND, family complexity and an overall drop in attainment, alongside practitioner anxieties, resulting in higher practice demands have been crucifying in terms of emotional labour (Menzies-Lyth, 1959). Through practitioner stories we can see evidence of 'minor gestures' (Manning, 2016) demonstrating practitioners making a significant difference.

In a challenging early years climate this research suggests highlighting the importance of these 'minor gestures' (Manning 2016) may contribute to changing perceptions of post-covid-19 early years practice.

emotional labour, family worker, Covid recovery, early years workforce, minor gesture

An exploration of relationships and interactions within an early years Crèche provision Katherine Clark, Pen Green Research Centre, England

This research aimed to understand how relationships and interactions effect access to early childhood services, children's learning and parental support.

Research has shown that parent partnership positively impacts children's learning experiences (Whalley and Arnold, 2013) and that authentic relationships between parents and practitioners within Crèche provisions can improve children's learning and care (Benford, 2013).

To develop understanding of relationships and interactions a psychoanalytical lens was used. This guided research towards containment theory (Bion, 1977), systems theory (Whitaker 2019) and organisational dynamics (Roberts, 1994).

A interpretivist stance was taken, with practitioner research (Newman and Woodrow, 2015) and grounded theory methodology (Charmaz 2006). Qualitative data was collected through three reflective story telling video calls with parents who accessed the Crèche provision.

Participants were invited to take part by members of the Crèche team, dialogues were held to ensure trust, informed consent and right to withdraw were clearly understood. Detailed consent forms were completed, reinforcing the practical tenants of ethical processes. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to ensure participants are afforded anonymity. The ethical principles of Bertram et al (2015) were adhered to throughout.

The shared values and practice wisdom of practitioners meant the 'primary task' of the organization (Roberts, 1994) remained clear. This generated positive relationships and interactions that enabled parents to access additional support, build confidence and overcome challenges, while bringing about new opportunities.

The findings suggest joint working towards a primary task (Roberts, 1994) can balance external and internal organisational challenges.

practice wisdom, supporting families, creche, primary task (Roberts, 1994), organisational challenges

An exploration of 'supervision' to consider how it contains, supports and improves the 'emotional labour' and the 'wellbeing' of early childhood practitioners.

Felicity Dewsbery, Pen Green Research Centre, England

The research aims are to explore how 'supervision' can contain, support, and improve the 'emotional labour' and the 'well-being' of early childhood practitioners. The following sub questions have been developed; What is the act/process/experience of 'supervision' for early childhood practitioners? What unconscious and conscious processes happen within supervision? How does 'containment' enable the development of thinking within supervision? How does supervision support practitioners to develop themselves, enhance their well-being and improve their practice? Soni (2019) has undertaken research on the practice of supervision within the early years sector in the UK. Elfer (2014) states that within the early years sector there is a misunderstanding of the function of supervision and many use it to audit staff.

My model of supervision is relational, and based on the work of Shohet and Shohet (2020).

'Containment' is a fundamental component of supervision as containment enables 'thinking' (Douglas, 2007; p38) 'Emotional labour' is emphasised by Hochschild (1983). 'To be warm and loving toward a child who kicks, screams and insults you – a child whose problem is unlovability – requires emotion work' (p 52).

The research is located within an interpretivist paradigm. Autoethnography and phenomenology are the methodological frameworks and data is gathered using journaling, video diaries, collage, and in-depth interviews.

Research participants are colleagues, therefore Ellis (2007) 'relational ethics' is applied.

I believe the mechanism of supervision should support practitioners' development, stimulating reflectiveness to relieve pressures.

The aim is to identify a supervisory model to be shared across the early years.

supervision, wellbeing, emotional labour, agency, early years practitioners

SYMPOSIUM SET III - 14:20 - 15:40

**III/A THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTITIONERS RESEARCH AND CPD – Show Room, 1st Floor
CHAired BY Vikki Wynn, University of Sunderland, England**

Young minds big maths: a collaborative approach to creative maths with university mathematicians in a UK based nursery school federation.

Kathryn Nichols (1), (2) and Sarah Dixon-Jones (1); (1) Inspiring Foundations, (2) Durham University, England

The Federation approached mathematicians to support practitioners in developing creative maths further within the provision. The initial aim was to improve practitioner knowledge of real world maths, however it evolved into building confidence for all and raising awareness of concepts. The practitioners within the Federation had a sound understanding of maths within the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2023), however the aim of the collaboration was to develop a broader understanding and appreciation of mathematics and engage with children's curiosities. Existing frameworks (DfE, 2023) provide some guidance to develop mathematical pedagogy in early years settings, however the practitioners in the Federation required more around geometry along with support in extending this curiosity.

The approach undertaken was a collaborative study with the university and consisted of frequent discussions, following direct observations of children's enquiry which in turn supported the development of planning.

University ethical approval was sought by the academics prior to the study and was adhered to throughout, informing parents of the project and reviewing procedures as it developed.

A more teacher led approach to professional development leads to increased teacher confidence and mathematical ability for which ultimately the beneficiaries are the children and their mathematical learning experiences (Oughton et al, 2022).

The model has now been disseminated to a further ten settings with a view to continue sharing best practice nationally. This has also supported university academics in appreciating mathematical development in the early years and with a creative approach.

early years, geometry, CPD, mathematics, creativity

Embedding project work – empowering early childhood practitioners to be research active in a UK based nursery school federation.

Vikki Wynn (1) and Sarah Dixon-Jones (1), (2); (1) University of Sunderland, (2) Inspiring Foundations, England

The use of projects, particularly the notion of 'relaunch' has been successful in capturing the voice of the children and implementing the bespoke curriculum of the Federation effectively through the approach. The team wish to understand how the approach can be used to encourage more practitioner enquiry, specifically dissemination of the research.

The Federation is heavily influenced by Reggio Emilia and the use of project work across all settings. Being inspired by the approach includes dissemination of findings from each project to support ongoing professional development.

Within the Federation, the approach that has been developed ensures children are protagonists of their own learning. It is hoped that in empowering practitioners to have increased autonomy in the development of projects along with the dissemination of the findings will in turn increase engagement in research.

A participatory pedagogy is ongoing within a praxeological paradigm (Lyndon et al, 2019) through ongoing reflection, documentation and pedagogical mediation. Continuous reflection supports ethical practice throughout the study with an awareness of the nature of participatory research. Discussion with the wider team and dissemination of the approach assists in identifying any additional potential conflicts. Initial findings demonstrate a significant positive shift in practitioners' confidence when articulating their approach. This is in relation to both the implementation of the curriculum and also in how the child's voice or interest is evident in their projects. The team are eager to share practice and disseminate findings to others, developing and potentially widening communities of practice to continue developing project work.

practitioner-enquiry, projects, reflexivity, complexity, professional development

Researchful practice early years teachers as researchers: voice, autonomy and professional identities

Frances Giampapa (1) and Claire Lee (2); (1) University of Bristol, (2) Oxford Brookes University, England

The aim of our research is to understand the impact of Researchful Practice Toolkit for advancing researchful practice across diverse nursery settings. Previous research points to the many gains for schools developing a research literate workforce that can critically assess, engage in and develop research as part of their everyday practice (Thomas et al 2017). Our research is informed by literature on professional learning & identities, research-engaged practice (Brown, 2017; Baumfield & McGrane, 2001; Handscombe, 2019). Drawing on participatory action research models that place ECEs as reflective and research engaged change agents, we used semi-structured interviews, knowledge exchanges & data from the Researchful Practice Toolkit to understand ECEs experiences of using research and executing their own research projects. Great attention was paid to a relational ethics of care (Brydon-Miller et al., 2015) across the phases of the research. Together with the teachers we reflected on values of collegiality, sensitivity and benevolence & integrity; attention to detail & professionalism in order to interrogate matters relating to, for example, consent, anonymity, power & participant relationships. We worked together to ensure that these values were put into action to ensure reflexivity and ethical practices. Findings suggest the importance of ECEs driving their researchful practice by addressing educational challenges in practice. ECEs felt more confident & widened their understanding of research to inform their professional decision making. We show impact for supporting ECEs professional learning & development going beyond current research models; enabling them to confidently and agentively deal with directives and policy initiatives that impact their working lives.

researchful practice, early years teacher professional identities, early years professional learning and development, teacher researchers, professional development

**III/B RECONCEPTUALISING AND CHALLENGING CURRENT EARLY YEARS POLICY AND
PEDAGOGY – Tell Room, 1st Floor
CHAired BY Alistair Bryce-Clegg, ABC Does Ltd, UK**

Shifting the gaze: exploring vitality, enchantment and more-than-human assemblages in Reception classrooms.

Alistair Bryce-Clegg, ABC Does Ltd, UK

- What more comes into view when concepts from New Material Feminisms are used to observe classroom life?
- What disrupts children's self-initiated and directed classroom play?
- What kinds of learning related to playing takes place (sometimes outside of the teachers' awareness)?

The study aligns with prior research, using New Material Feminist concepts to explore entanglement and affective engagement. Influenced by existing research it challenges dualisms and reductionist policies.

Dynamic entanglements with matter in assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) are emphasised. The theoretical framework highlights objects emerging through intra-actions (Barad, 2007), impacting children's engagement and academic outcomes (Williamson, 2016).

Fenwick's (2012) interpretation of the social material paradigm provided a lens to explore classroom dynamics. Employing a post-qualitative research approach, the study departs from traditional qualitative methodologies, emphasising a dynamic and reflexive approach. Field notes document occurrences. Moments of 'vitality' (Stern 2010) and 'enchantment' (Bennett 2010) are identified in children's immersive learning experiences.

I adhered to GDPR, MMU, and BERA guidelines, obtained gatekeeper and parental permission for child involvement, sought Headteachers' approval, and secured permission from teachers involved. Ethics is approached as a dynamic process, maintaining ethical reflexivity.

The tension between the spontaneity of children's self-initiated play and structured expectations imposed by the educational system highlights the need for a re-evaluation of the current policy framework.

The system lacks consideration for the entanglement of human and non-human elements in classroom events. A new framework could challenge dualisms in this reductionist policy, discouraging the separation of human experience from the material conditions of learning.

more-than-human, vitality, enchantment, assemblage, play

Reconceptualising pedagogy and curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Baljit Gill, University of Wolverhampton/Centre of Research in Early Childhood (CREC), England

Drawing upon Barad's concept of 'entanglements' (2007), this study sets out to understand the relationships between humans and materials. It contributes to the emerging, new materialist discourse on innovative approaches to early childhood education, emphasising the transformative potential of materials.

Becoming a 'mutated modest witness' in early childhood research by Osgood, J. in Schulte, C. (2020) and Encounters with Materials in Early Childhood Education by Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2016), make links to a range of materials such as glitter, toy animals, clay and paint, emphasising the active nature of materials.

This research brings together constructivist action research (Burns, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978.) and new materialist perspectives (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2012; Haraway, 2016), emphasising the importance of both human and material.

The methods are based on the constructivist action research paradigm and incorporating new materialist perspectives; focus group, observation, questionnaire, emphasising attention on both human and material entities.

Individual and organisation written consent was ensured. Participants were free to choose whether they wished to take part or not and could withdraw at any time. Anonymity has been maintained. (Bera, 2018; EECERA Ethical Code, 2015; Code of Good Research Practice from the University of Wolverhampton, 2020-21).

Preliminary findings:

- The introduction of new concepts.
- Materials, previously overlooked as potential learning material, has broadened perspectives.

Implication for practice or policy - preliminary

- Understanding the wider connections that impact early years education leading to increased awareness with potential to influence curriculum design and practices positively.

entanglements, materials, pedagogy and curriculum, new materialism

School readiness – viewing a shared understanding from the perspective of parents, practitioners and teachers.

Claire Woodsford and Natasha Harrison, Blackpool Better Start, England

Does an approach that focuses on the role of the adult improve school readiness outcomes for children?

When children's readiness for school is judged through the use of the GLD, the drive to improve children's outcomes takes precedence over established approaches to Early Childhood Education (Kay, 2022). Clark (2023) highlights the importance of a community-based approach that focuses on the adult role in supporting children's school readiness.

As Pascal (2019) advocates, the use of a dialogic approach across the whole community promotes respectful knowledge exchange which then, in turn, leads to change.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used; questionnaires, surveys, weekly and mid-point feedback opportunities and focussed discussion during strategic group meetings.

Consent was sought covering aspects such as anonymity and right to withdraw. Pseudonyms are used in dissemination.

The findings illustrated the impact developing a shared, localised meaning and approach to school readiness has on a child. Smoother transitions for children at the start of school, quicker inductions, increased parental awareness and the development of practitioner confidence are evidenced.

Learning suggests further commitment to a joined-up approach is crucial to a shared understanding of school readiness. There is further need to fully embed a coaching model of pedagogy to provide positive learning opportunities for children. A more rigorous evaluation on the impact for the child, linking back to expected levels of development across the Early Years Foundation Stage areas is required.

shared understanding, community provision, school readiness, home learning environment, supporting families

III/C CONSIDERATIONS OF SAFETY AND RISK – Smile Room, 2nd Floor
CHAired BY Kerry Holman, Canterbury Christ Church University, England

Capturing the ontology of young carers in the early years - threads of hope through lived experience

Carly Ellicott, University of Plymouth, England

The primary aim acknowledged experiences of two families, providing a glimpse into lives of societies youngest carers. Seeking to address the gap within empirical research which thus far excludes young carers in early childhood.

A vast field of research (Bilsborrow, 1992; Craintree & Warner, 1999; Dearden & Becker, 2000; Becker, 2001; Joseph et al., 2012; Aldridge et al., 2003; Joseph et al, 2009:2012) laid the foundation of understanding experiences of those aged 7 years into adulthood. With estimates of 800,000 young carers between 5-17 years (The Children's Society, UK, 2021) this research offers invitation to broaden narratives, including early childhood.

Influenced by Stake (1995) and Merriam's (2009) social constructivist paradigm, through a lens of transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1981; Cerbone, 2014), case study provided a methodological palette for the researcher (Stake, 1995).

Case study incorporated documentary data (McNiff, 2017) informal interviews, and journaling. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) identified themes and emotional touchpoints within transcribed data.

Ethical consideration (EECERA, 2015) ensured methods of obtaining informed consent provided full disclosure of research aims and methodology. Member checking helped mitigate risk of misrepresentation (Birt et al., 2016).

Findings identified themes; missed opportunities, failure to recognise young carers in early childhood, risks of sibling violence and resilience and protective factors.

The early years workforce provides key infrastructure for young carers in early childhood. Findings from this research invites the sector to improve the way in which young carers are represented, creating threads of hope through lived experience.

young carers, mental health, outcomes, risk, voice

'What does it mean to feel safe?' A collaborative project between undergraduate students and young children exploring perceptions of safety

Kerry Holman, Maria Lehane, Bethanie-Jayne Smith, Sarah Glasspool-Drabble and Kate Casey, Canterbury Christ Church University, England

This study aims to create new knowledge through young children's voices about what it means to 'feel safe', adopting a participatory approach in order to inform a local charity's work with primary schools.

Children are experts in knowing and recording their own worlds (Berson et al., 2019) and when we collaborate with children, new social structures can emerge in which everyone's voice is heard (MacNaughton, Hughes and Smith, 2007).

The research is embedded within a child-centred approach and alludes to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory.

The study was conducted within a qualitative, interpretive paradigm. Undergraduate early childhood studies (ECS) students in their final year adopted the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) and collaborated with young children to explore 'what it means to feel safe' using a range of child-friendly, participatory methods including drawing, photovoice and videography.

The research project formed part of a formative assessment for students, thus institutional ethical approval was gained. Students undertaking the research with young children obtained parental consent, and assent from children was also sought. Children could stop the research whenever they wished, with decisions and voices respected by the students.

The data is still being analysed however preliminary findings suggest the co-construction of knowledge between students and children highlighted key areas of understanding. Emotional safety and physical safety feature frequently in a range of forms, with more analysis taking place to develop our understanding.

The findings are being used by a local organisation who work with refugees, to support their outreach work with primary schools to support age appropriate discussions around human safety.

participatory, collaborative research, co-construction, undergraduate degree, safety

Shifting a safeguarding culture: observational auditing, exploring expectations and coaching within Bright Horizons Nurseries.

Cathy Hart and Heather Smith, Bright Horizons UK

The aims of this research are: addressing potential cultural weaknesses embedded in practice; recognising misaligned safeguarding practices and identifying potential for risks to children due to unintentional inaction.

We use 'Safeguarding children: audit of staff knowledge' audits to identify knowledge of legal requirements, highlighting gaps to identify practitioner training needs (Nursing Children & Young People). NSPCC (2022) find a 'strengths-based approach' is effective in identifying areas for development and supportive peer review is key to change.

We consider Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) to ensure children's safety. When identifying solutions to address key issues, the audit promotes engagement, prioritises children, and embeds continuous improvement. Reflective practice discussions ensure children's wellbeing is prioritised.

This praxeological investigation (Pascal and Bertram, 2012) included 286 English settings over a 12-month period, interviewing 2,000+ practitioners. Employing environmental audits, assessing routine documents and records, and analysing face to face interviews we gathered quantitative and qualitative data.

Contributing adults could withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained, sharing audit outcomes only with relevant parties.

We evidence that auditors observed positive culture shifts over time. Staff and Designated Safeguarding Leads developed heightened awareness of roles and responsibilities, and greater knowledge of effective daily safeguarding practices.

Research is ongoing, remaining agile, adapting with changes to legislation, policy, and trends. Our approach focuses on embedment of practice. The culture shift is gradual but there is already evidence to indicate greater awareness of safeguarding practices across the nursery teams.

safeguarding children, culture, innovation, internal audit, behavioural observation

III/D PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – Think Room, 2nd Floor CHAired BY Alison Moore, University College Cork, Republic of Ireland

Facilitating reflection and dialogue across borders: establishing a community of practice (CoPs) to enhance early years placement experience in Ireland

Alison Moore (1), Catriona Rogers (2), Paula Carlin (2) and Aoife Lynch (1); (1) University College Cork, Republic of Ireland, (2) Stranmillis University College Belfast, Northern Ireland

The project aims to create CoPs between undergraduate Early Childhood Studies programmes in HEI institutions in the North and South of Ireland to consider: How might a Communities of Practice Model [CoPs] facilitate the creation of a shared vision, developing an evidence-based professional practice placement model, ensuring an enriched, engaged and positive experience for the students? Research exploring the fusion of theory and practice using a CoP model (Wenger, 1998; Doan, 2014) suggests that communication between students, placements and university placement staff is significant in the placement experience (Moore and Towler, 2022).

Our research funded by SCoTENS, advocates for cross-border collaboration focusing on relationships and respectful interactions. The research is positioned within a theoretical framework of 'situated learning' (Laver and Wenger, 1991).

We have applied a praxiological paradigm (Pascal and Bertram, 2012) built on mutual respect and understanding for each other's cultural context through a reflective lens (Jasper, 2013).

Ethical approval was granted by UCC and the EECERA Code of Ethics was applied (Bertram et al, 2015). Positionality and power were considered, assuring students, that participation in the research was voluntary, emphasising the right to withdraw.

Preliminary data generated from pre and post placement student questionnaires will provide the basis for discussion at CoP sessions between North and South and dissemination at BECERA.

This small-scale project addresses the dearth of research on placement experiences that reflect perspectives from across the two jurisdictions, influencing policy and practice to improve the provision of quality placement experience for students, placement providers and HEIs

early childhood studies, placement, higher education, cross-border collaborations, communities of practice

“What does it mean to have an early years ethos for the Tik Tok generation?”. A Spaniard, a Greek and a psychologist tell their stories of care as higher education lecturers.

Maria Reraki, Annabel Yale and Alicia Blanco-Bayo, Edge Hill University, England

To explore three unique and diverse experiences to start a 'dialogue' about our perspectives of care as lecturers in a non-teaching Early Years (EY) degree.

We delve into Marchant's (1999) description of education as a process where the educator engages in a loving relationship with the learners. Care is present in the emotional exchanges between lecturers and students and becomes the thread that binds us and sustains us as all; lecturers and students (Anderson *et al.*, 2020).

The theoretical framework builds on the notion of care as an intense relational process (Bulat Silva, 2020; Cameron & Moss, 2007) that challenges the value of emotional exchanges between lecturers and students (Gibbs, 2017) on an EY non-teaching degree.

Through a reflexive lens, we use case studies (Hadinata and Farlow Mendrofa, 2021) to examine our own reality as HE lecturers preparing EY practitioners guided by an interpretative paradigm (Denicolo, Long & Bradley-Cole, 2016).

Sensitive issues discussed will be carefully handled and phrased prudently so that vulnerabilities are considered and protected.

Based on our current planning and thinking, our dialogue will shed light on the concept of care and how this influences and has been influenced by current student populations living through social media.

To develop a framework that challenges the perception of care in HE as a non-emotional process and redefines what it means to have an EY ethos. By considering the influence social media has on the current HE generation (generation Z - Khlaif & Salha, 2021) we re-contextualise the notion of care in HE.

ethos, care, love, early years, higher education

Questioning identities: being and becoming a lecturer. An exploration of how early years professionals from a range of practice backgrounds are authoring themselves as university lecturers.

Karen Williams, University of Wolverhampton, England

My doctoral research explores the identities of University Lecturers in Early Childhood Studies from a range of early years professional practice backgrounds.

I explore possible sites of struggle, resistance and potential space for agency, adopting Holland et al.'s (1998) figured world position on identity formation in a world of activity.

Figured worlds, (Holland et al., 1998), supports examination of how identities may be shaped as these lecturers encounter and navigate their way through the systems and structures of their professional landscape. Occurring at a time of challenge and crisis within both the early years and Higher Education sectors mark this research as pertinent for discussion.

This research was conducted within a qualitative interpretivist research paradigm (Birks 2011).

Methodologically, narrative life history was utilised to gather data from a group of participants.

Analysis was conducted through theoretical thematic analysis (Holland et al., 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006).

Consent forms and an information sheet were provided to all participants. Pseudonyms have replaced the names of participants.

Findings draw attention to points of tension, challenge and opportunities for participants to re-imagine themselves, set against the backdrop of deficit discourses and perceived lack of professional recognition. Significance of dialogue and discursive spaces emerge as points of rupture in the familiar, and traditional plotlines shaping their identities.

In essence, what we tell each other matters. Recognising the importance of such spaces can, I suggest provide, openings for telling a different story; how we may come to reimagine ourselves and begin to exert agency from within.

identities, agency, discourse, imagination, figured worlds

III/E WORKING WITH PARENTS – Explore Room, 2nd Floor

CHAired BY Debra Barton, Ministry of Defence Early Years Specialist Lead/University of Worcester, England

Exploring the effects of parental involvement in children's physical activity sessions

Jane Dorrian, The Open University, England

This study aims to identify the impact that involvement with a physical literacy project in Wales has on the physical activity and wellbeing levels of parents.

Whitehead & Bailey (2010) introduced the concept of physical literacy and its potential to impact on health and quality of life. Khanom et al. (2020) identified factors that impact on Welsh families' ability to access physical activity with young children, including accessibility to safe spaces and the impact of deprivation on opportunities and attitudes.

The theoretical framework is the praxis between the four domains of physical literacy (Whitehead, 2010) and Rooks and Kilner's (2020) Competence Model and parental involvement in their child's physical activity.

An interpretivist mixed methods research paradigm (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) was used. 296 parent participants across Wales completed wellbeing and physical activity measurement tools at the start and end of the programme and semi-structured free-text evaluations on completion of the programme. 310 children were assessed using Leuven Involvement Scales. Statistical analysis was undertaken on quantitative data and qualitative data was analysed using systematic thematic analysis.

Consent forms and information sheets were provided to participants, personal details were collected in compliance with GDPR regulations with access restricted as required. Personal identifiers were anonymised by using participant numbers.

The findings showed that involvement in their child's physical activity session increased parents' wellbeing and physical activity levels and their awareness of physical literacy.

The findings suggest that physical activity programmes encourage parental participation and are a springboard for promoting lifelong physical literacy journey.

physical literacy, physical activity, wellbeing, Wales, parental participation

Supporting families in military uniform: nurturing resilience in at-home parents during military deployments in early childhood settings.

Debra Barton, Ministry of Defence Early Years Specialist Lead/University of Worcester, England

This presentation, a result of findings from an ongoing part-time PhD study, explores the impact of military deployments on at-home parents and their young child(ren).

During military deployments, families encounter challenges which are different from their civilian peers, with at-home parents assuming a pivotal role in building and maintaining resilience within the family unit (DeVoe et al., 2018, 2020; Walker et al., 2020).

There are several areas which protect the family against the stresses and challenges of military life including friends and family, and supportive childcare provision (Gorman and Fitzgerald, 2007; Paris et al., 2010), thereby suggesting that the ecological approach, such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (1979) could have a bearing on how the family is supported.

Using a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, at-home parents from naval families living in Plymouth, UK, were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The findings were analysed using an interpretive and social constructivist paradigm.

Consent forms and information sheets were provided to all participants, including their right to withdraw, and pseudonyms will be used in the final thesis and subsequent articles.

Acknowledging the distinct challenges military families encounter, this presentation emphasises the importance of understanding the social context in which military families live and how ECE providers can create supportive environments that help mitigate the impact of deployment on both the at-home parent and their young child(ren).

Practical strategies, ranging from empathetic approaches to evidence-based interventions, will be explored, offering ideas which providers could implement within their own early childhood settings.

military families, building resilience, support during military deployment, supportive early years providers, challenges for military families

Learning with parents about adults' conversation with young children in their homes and communities through collaborative research.

Janet Morris, University of Greenwich, England

The study aimed to explore adults' conversation with young children in their homes and communities through collaborative research with parents, including the nature and purposes of the conversations and the conditions in which they may thrive or be hindered.

Ethical approaches to parent partnership should build upon the knowledge and skills of families as well as the challenges they may face (Moll et al., 1992; Bertram and Pascal, 2014; Nutbrown, 2018). However, current focus on levels of children's language development may be associated with deficit perceptions (Cushing, 2022) in contrast to sociocultural research (Tizard and Hughes, 1984).

The research took a bioecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) seeking to identify structures and processes beyond adults' individual behaviours, beliefs, or attitudes.

The research was conducted within a constructivist paradigm. The qualitative, instrumental case study (Yin, 2014) used semi structured interviews to facilitate joint reflection on conversation logs and specific episodes of conversation, chosen by parents.

Parents were valued as active partners. I obtained informed, voluntary consent, providing full information in advance, and giving opportunity for questions, emphasising their free choice to participate, their right to withdraw and minimising impact on family life.

Sustained conversations required a 'coming together' of the conversational partners in a Third Space (Bhabba, 1994) enabled by a delicate, shifting ecosystem, vulnerable to influences associated with 'modern ways'.

Findings suggest the collaborative process provides insights into children's individual communicative practices and funds of knowledge-based interests (Hedges, 2022) with implications for parent partnership and the design of language-focussed educational experiences.

communication and language, conversation, parent partnership, collaborative research, bioecological

EECERA 2024 - Call for Papers



This year, the prestigious **EECERA Annual Conference** will be held between 3-6 September 2024 in Brighton, England.

The international reach of EECERA makes our Annual Conference an ideal forum for exploring the globally shared challenges of developing sustainable Early Childhood Education (ECE) systems and identifying the policy options available for system change. **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a collection of interlinked objectives designed to serve as a “shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future”. These **17 Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) are an urgent call to action for all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. Three pillars of sustainability – Social, Economic, and Environmental – are offered to shape our work on developing sustainable ECE systems. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic change – all while tackling climate change and working to protect and regenerate our oceans, forests and other fragile ecosystems. These global frameworks should inform our thinking and actions as we develop our sustainable ECE systems.

Key Questions

In each of these domains we need to ask:

- What transferable synergies, knowledge and insights might ECE researchers, practitioners and policy makers mutually share and what differs, comparatively?
- What are the contexts: cultural, economic, environmental or privilege, in which these ECE policy and practice decisions are made?
- Who makes the decisions and how are they informed? That is, who are these ‘cognoscenti’ and what influence do they have on policy and practice? Who is knowledgeable, and who is merely ‘in the know’?

These and many more ethical, political, environmental and economic questions form the background to an urgently needed and research-informed dialogue about system sustainability in ECE in which we will place children’s voice, power and rights centrally in our considerations of policy and practice.

We warmly invite you to join us to participate and contribute to what is acknowledged as the European early childhood research community's most important forum.

Call for papers is open until **29th February 2024**.

For further information regarding the conference please visit <https://2024.eeceraconference.org/about-eecera/> or email enquiries@eeceraconference.org.