

Playcentre  
Parents-as-Educators:  
Links between  
Background Experiences  
and Teaching Practice

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## **ABSTRACT**

Playcentres are unique Aotearoa/New Zealand sessional early childhood education services which are run as parent cooperatives, where the parents take on the role of educators in the centre. This study investigated the way parents-as-educators used their life experiences, skills and knowledges in their teaching practice. Case studies were completed for four parents-as-educators in one urban Playcentre during one 10 week school term, using observations of teaching practice and document analysis, a short questionnaire and individual interviews. Teaching practice was then described using a framework based on McWilliam, de Kruif and Zulli's (2002) four contexts of teaching. Results were analysed using Rogoff's (2003) personal, interpersonal and cultural planes of analysis and Reid and Stover's (2005) model of individual agency.

The parents-as-educators primarily drew on their parenting experiences to inform their teaching practice, and were selective in applying other prior skills and knowledges, based on their current interests and passions and on specific choices about their future life paths. The utilisation of their background in their teaching practice was also influenced by their individual agency. This depended on their changing sense of belonging within the centre, on the context of the sessions which included interactions between adults and responses from the children, and on their perception of, and alignment with, Playcentre philosophy.

Implications of the findings suggest that Playcentres should look for ways of empowering parents-as-educators to use their background skills and knowledges whilst respecting their choices, so that the children in the centres experience as rich a curriculum as possible. To do this Playcentre philosophy should be more openly debated. This is because the philosophy of parents and children learning together added to group cohesiveness and empowered the parents-as-educators, yet other philosophical tenets, such as child-centredness and the approach to teaching art, created tension and constrained the parents-as-educators from fully using their background in their teaching practice.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research study is centred on Playcentre, one of the major providers of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A distinguishing feature is that it is run as a parent cooperative with the parents taking the role of educators within the centre. Parent involvement in Playcentre is therefore not an optional extra, but a fundamental aspect of the philosophy. A few of the parents involved as educators have had prior early childhood or other teacher training, but most of them have not. However, all of them can use whatever diverse skills and knowledges they do already have as they learn how to act as an educator in an early childhood centre. They are supported in their new learning by other experienced members of the Playcentre and with formal training opportunities. What does the teaching practice of these parents look like in such a situation? Which of the skills and knowledges that they have do they choose to use, and why? There is very little research to answer these questions, as parents being the centre-based educators is an uncommon model in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and has not been investigated often. The specific aims of the study were therefore to produce a description of four parents-as-educators' practice in one Playcentre and to interpret this practice in the light of their life experiences, including educational, cultural and professional experiences, and their statements about teaching and learning.

Before proceeding it is important to clarify my use of the term 'parents-as-educators' in this thesis. As Playcentres are run as cooperatives where parents are also the management and the educators, I use the phrase 'parents-as-educators' in this thesis to describe their role in providing the curriculum. I do not use the phrase 'parent educators' because that implies that parents are *being* educated rather than the parents are *providing* the education. I also do not use the term 'teacher' for these parents, because within the Playcentre organization the term 'teacher' has specific connotations, and generally refers only to someone who has completed a teaching qualification from a teaching college or university.

## **1.1. THE AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING**

The ECE policy environment in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the time of the study was based on the 10 year strategic plan, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002). It had three goals: increasing participation in quality ECE services, improving quality of ECE services and promoting collaborative relationships. One of the policy initiatives was to raise the standard of qualifications held by early childhood educators, as research has shown that it is an important factor in raising quality in early childhood services (e.g., Podmore & Meade, 2000). For services labelled as teacher-led by the Ministry of Education, such as childcare centres and Kindergartens, this policy requires that by 2012 all teachers have a high-quality, coherent teaching qualification, for example a Diploma of Teaching (ECE). Playcentre, defined as a parent-led service, cannot meet this criterion as this is not compatible with its philosophy of supporting parents to educate their own children. The Ministry of Education recognised this by negotiating the qualifications for group supervision in a separate licensing agreement (2001). But although the Playcentre training contributes to quality outcomes for children (Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara, & Wylie, 2006) and is necessary to meet licensing requirements for funding, the skills and knowledges gained through this training are not necessarily the only ones that are relevant to early childhood. This study has taken more of a credit view of parents without prior early childhood training than the strategic plan does.

## **1.2. THE PLAYCENTRE SETTING**

### **1.2.1. Organizational Structure, Training and Licensing**

Playcentres are mostly chartered and licensed centres that are run as parent cooperatives. Each Playcentre is autonomous but is affiliated to a regional Playcentre Association, which is in turn affiliated to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF). The NZPF oversees the delivery of a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) accredited training programme called the Playcentre Diploma of Early Childhood and Adult Education, which is set at Level 6 of the NZQA framework. The Diploma is divided into six courses, varying in length



and complexity, ranging from the simple introductory Course 1 to the in-depth Course 6. The Ministry of Education negotiated a licensing agreement with the NZPF in 2001 that specified the levels of Playcentre training required for a session to be licensed, and therefore funded by the government (Ministry of Education, 2001). The minimum levels of training required in a session team are for one person to hold Course 3, one person to hold Course 2, and one person to hold Course 1. Therefore there is strong pressure in a Playcentre for parents to complete training, in order to meet licensing and funding requirements. Where centres are unable to meet these requirements, they will often employ a Playcentre-trained supervisor, or operate as a license-exempt playgroup which has a much lower level of funding.

### **1.2.2. Philosophy and practice**

When Playcentre began in 1941 it was founded on the ideals of progressive education as espoused by the New Education Fellowship (NEF). Burman (1994) defines the key terms of this child-centred approach as being “readiness, choice, needs, play and discovery” (p. 164), where “the process of learning was valued over the topic or content of what was learned, and the commitment to learning by doing rather than being told meant that the teacher's active role was defined as structuring the environment provided for the child” (p. 165). The new organization saw itself as having a distinctly different philosophy from the structured kindergartens of the time (May, 2001). As Playcentre evolved, so too did its philosophy (Densem & Chapman, 2000; Stover, 1998). Some core philosophical ideas are still very important to today's Playcentres, even though they tend to be interpreted differently in different Playcentres (Stover, 2001). As interpretation of philosophy provides the setting for parents-as-educators, it is necessary to see what “The Playcentre Way” (Densem & Chapman, 2000) actually entails.

There are some structural features that are generally accepted by most Playcentres, such as group size being kept to no larger than 30 children and mixed age sessions with children of ages 0 to 6 years (Densem & Chapman, 2000; Stover, 2001). These guidelines are sometimes extended, with sessions for just 4-year-olds being prevalent, but innovations that seek to separate children of a certain age are usually challenged from within the organization. An example of this is a

common criticism of the Supporting Parents Alongside Children's Education programme (SPACE), which was developed in the Hutt Association for first time parents with a young infant. Some people within Playcentre have criticised the programme for not fitting within the Playcentre philosophy of mixed age settings (S. Pattinson, Hutt Space Coordinator, personal communication, November 2006).

It is also widely accepted by Playcentres that the programme is play-based and child-initiated, which are two of the central tenets of progressive education (Burman, 1994). The importance of play is emphasised in the organization's name, and in key publications such as Somerset's books *Vital Play in Early Childhood* (1994) and *Work and Play in the Early Years* (1995) and Grey's (1958) manual *Children at Play*. The interpretation of what constitutes 'play' varies amongst different Playcentres and amongst their members, but it is generally accepted that play has elements of activity and of choice (Densem & Chapman, 2000; Stover, 2001). Densem and Chapman, whose book is widely taken to be an authoritative interpretation of Playcentre philosophy, give this definition: "play for all ages is activity – doing something that we want to do, when we want to do it" (p. 123). Interpretation of the term 'child-initiated' is not so clear, with many Playcentre members taking this to mean that the child should always initiate the activities that she or he wishes to take part in. Attitudes in this case can reflect the simple dualism that child-initiated is good and adult-initiated is bad. However, Densem and Chapman see it slightly differently, saying "a child-initiated programme really means that the child has the option of doing something or not. It does not mean that the adults have no say in the planning, presentation or involvement with the children" (p. 125). How the current centre members interpret child-initiated play in any given Playcentre will have a strong influence on their teaching practice.

Playcentre's philosophy on the issue of creativity and the teaching of art is another potential influence on parents-as-educators, as it is often seen within the organization as a point of difference between Playcentre and some other early childhood services, and is therefore held to be very important. The predominant philosophy is encapsulated by authors associated with Playcentre, such as Brownlee (1991) and McConnell (2000). Both writers strongly urge early childhood teachers to focus on providing experiences, resources and opportunities for art, but

not to provide models for children to copy. This view seems to have replaced the more cautious approach of Somerset (1994) who wrote:

but even stimulation and suitable materials may not mean that all children can be left with the medium and use it expressively after they have handled it for some time alone. They may need a suggestion or two or even a model demonstration before they catch on and begin to innovate for themselves. (p. 89)

The centre's interpretation of what art activities are 'allowable' and valued with Playcentre philosophy can have a big influence on what will be offered to the children, and what parents-as-educators feel comfortable to suggest.

However, there is a fundamental philosophy that is both written into the literature and enacted in practice: in the Playcentre group setting parents are involved with the education of their children. This core tenet is the focus of the research project described in this thesis.

### **1.3. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS**

This first chapter has placed Playcentre within the policy framework of Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 2000s, which is based on the strategic plan, *Ngā Huarahi Arataki/Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002). It has outlined the structure of Playcentre and its training programme, and summarised some of the key philosophical points such as mixed ages groups of children, a play-based and child-initiated programme, and the importance of encouraging creativity.

The next chapter reviews the literature on the influence of educator's backgrounds on their teaching, and also the literature around the debates on what skills, knowledges and relationships are appropriate in the early childhood setting. It then moves on to look at literature focussed on parents in the role of educators of their children, both internationally and in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with a particular emphasis on literature pertaining to Playcentre.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the study, and outlines the particular methods of data collection and analysis that were used. Chapter 4 then presents each of the case study parents, and describes and interprets their teaching practice in the light of their background experiences. In Chapter 5, the discussion draws the four case studies together to examine similarities and differences. This chapter uses Rogoff's (2003) planes of analysis to structure the discussion around personal, interpersonal and organizational influences. Concepts of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and individual agency within a group (Reid & Stover, 2005) are also used to interpret the practice of the four parents-as-educators. In the final chapter I summarise the findings, and discuss some of the implications of these findings as well as the limitations of the study and make some suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Being a parent is not the usual required background for teachers, nor is being the educator in the centre the usual form of parent involvement in early childhood services. In this chapter I review the literature and research relating to the influence of a teacher's background on their teaching, and the debates around the balance of professional and subject knowledge that contribute to good early childhood teaching. Both of these bodies of research are related to the situation of the parent-as-educator. I then look at the literature on parent involvement in early childhood settings, and in particular the research relating to parents in the role of teachers. Finally, out of a review of the literature on teaching practice, I develop a framework for use in this project.

#### **2.1. *THE BACKGROUND OF A TEACHER***

The literature on teachers' background focuses on a number of different areas, including their previous experiences, pre-service training and on-going professional development; their skills and knowledges and how they use them in practice; and their role in the classroom and the boundaries of that role. In this section I review the literature from these areas which seem particularly relevant when parents step into the role of teachers. Firstly I look at the research focusing on telling teachers' life stories, then I review the debates about the skills and knowledges that are deemed necessary for teachers. Lastly I examine the boundary between parent and teacher by looking at literature concerning an ethic of love.

##### **2.1.1. *Teacher life stories***

There is a tension in the literature between discovering the technical aspects of teaching that will guarantee quality teaching, and acknowledging that, as the teacher is the main instrument used for teaching, it is not possible to produce a foolproof technical teaching method. Instead, researchers have promoted a wider view of the process of teaching that takes into account the human and personal aspects of the teacher (Ayers, 1991; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Fish, 1998; Smyth, 1987; Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993). The life narrative method has been used

extensively, especially in the 1980's and early 1990's, to better understand teachers, their choices, motivations and their approach to teaching (Ayers, 1989; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Kelchtermans, 1993; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985; Warhurst, 1992). The life narratives method has been further extended to use as a professional development tool (Kelchtermans, 1993; McLean, 1993; Mepham, 2000; Sipe, 1999), because, as Ayers (1991) put it, "being aware of oneself as the instrument of one's teaching, and aware of the story that makes one's life sensible allows for greater change and growth as well as greater intentionality in teaching choices" (p. 61).

The idea that teaching is based on more than just technical process knowledge was well articulated by Fish and Coles (1998) in their iceberg model of professional practice in the caring professions, where *doing* is merely the tip of the iceberg, the visible part above the water. The water line is represented by *experience*, and beneath the water, in descending order, are *knowledge, feelings, expectations, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs* and *values* (p. 306). Many other studies are consistent with this model, for example the finding from one study that background experiences of cultural diversity influenced whether two American student teachers included multicultural perspectives in their teaching (Smith, 2000). Another example is a study of three early childhood teachers in an Australian centre where it was found that although all three generally aligned their philosophy with the centre's philosophy, their teaching practices differed. This was related to how deeply each individual teacher held the different philosophical beliefs (Rivalland, 2007).

These studies all researched trained or trainee teachers, who had chosen teaching as a profession. My study looked at the influence of background on people who, although they were acting in the role of teachers, had not chosen teaching as their profession. Rather, they came with a wide variety of previous work and other experiences, as is common for Playcentre members (Powell, Cullen, Adams, Duncan, & Marshall, 2005). This study, therefore, focused mostly on the influence of non-pedagogical knowledges and experiences on their teaching practice.

### **2.1.2. Teacher knowledges**

What is it that a teacher should know and how should they come to know it? Those are questions of much debate. Some have argued that the focus of teacher education, both pre-service and later professional development, should not be on acquiring knowledge (the teacher injection model of Connelly & Clandinin, 2000), but rather on constructing knowledge out of the teacher's own experience, with an emphasis on understanding the political and moral implications of the teaching profession (Beyer, 1987; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Freedman, 1987; Keesing-Styles, 2003; Smyth, 1987; Tom, 1987). Others have suggested that knowledge should be conceptualised not as something which can be possessed, but rather as something that is often tacit, and is embodied in a teacher's actions rather than thoughts (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Neyland, 2006; Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993). This is supported by research that showed that even when knowledge has been acquired it is not always used in practice, and that changing practice requires altering deeper held assumptions and beliefs (Borger & Tillema, 1993; Fish & Coles, 1998).

However, those who provide teacher education programmes must still make decisions about their curriculum, and in order to be seen as professionals, teachers must still set standards to monitor themselves against. The New Zealand Teachers' Council (n.d.) set out standards by specifying four dimensions for teaching: professional knowledge, professional practice, professional relationships, and professional leadership. In order for a teacher to be registered by the Teachers' Council, they must demonstrate satisfactory performance in each of these dimensions. Professional knowledge encompasses a range of areas, according to the Teachers' Council, which includes knowledge of learning theory, curriculum, subjects, learners and the Treaty of Waitangi.

Hedges (2002) discusses categories of teacher knowledge, and uses a slightly different four-category model in her thesis:

- Subject content knowledge
- Knowledge of pedagogy and philosophy
- Knowledge of learners
- Knowledge of context.

Hedges argues in her thesis and subsequent papers (2002, 2003a; Hedges & Cullen, 2005) that subject content knowledge in ECE is undervalued, although she found it was of critical importance for teachers to be able to actively extend children's thinking. Both she and Cullen believe that more emphasis should be placed on teachers having an adequate subject content knowledge in order to teach children effectively (Cullen, 1999, 2003; Hedges & Cullen, 2005). Although Hedges' focus was on science education, other researchers have echoed her concerns in a number of different subject areas, such as numeracy (Babbington, 2005), literacy (Booth, 2005; Phillips, McNaughton, & MacDonald, 2002), visual arts (Gunn, 2000) and music (Willberg, 2001). Cullen (1999) discussed the nervousness in the early childhood profession when an emphasis on subjects is introduced, generally because teachers are worried about the school curriculum being pushed into early childhood settings. Auckland College of Education addressed this issue by introducing a dual-curricular, subject-based approach to their ECE degree structure (Haynes, 1999). The learning modules were focused on the subject areas of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1992), the *what* of teaching; whereas the pedagogy of teaching these subjects was based on Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996), the *how* of teaching. The initial evaluation of the new degree programme suggested that the emphasis on subject content knowledge had resulted in greater depth of knowledge that still sat comfortably within the philosophies of holistic, play-based early childhood programmes.

Playcentre parents-as-educators are introduced to the *how* of teaching through being involved during sessions, through the Playcentre training programme and through mentoring by more experienced Playcentre members. The *what* of teaching is also taught through the Playcentre training, but as Playcentre parents are generally around 30 years or older, and often have tertiary qualifications (Powell et al., 2005), they tend to already have some in-depth subject content knowledge. Collectively, the knowledge amongst a team of parents-as-educators can cover a very wide range of subjects. If the view is taken that subject content knowledge is an important and significant part of teacher training, then it might be expected that parents-as-educators are well placed to contribute to quality teaching on session. A study that supports the idea that other knowledges besides pedagogical 'how-to'



knowledge are useful in early childhood was carried out by Palmer (2000). She compared the way that final-year ECE teacher trainees and qualified engineers perceived and planned for a hypothetical child with temperament characteristics of an engineer. The study was based on the premise that ECE teaching and engineering attract people of different temperament types, and that understanding a child with a similar temperament or characteristics is easier than understanding a child with a markedly different temperament. Palmer concluded that

an early childhood team might gain valuable commentary and pertinent planning ideas by consulting with adults who share the character attributes of a child. These adults need not be the child's parents, and need not have training in early childhood education. (p. 145)

This small study did not prove conclusively that it was the shared temperament of the adult engineers and the child that resulted in the useful contribution to programme planning. However it did indicate that even adults without ECE training could apply their different knowledges to benefit a child, given the right encouragement. Palmer's suggestion that these knowledges could help an ECE-trained team is relevant to the position of a Playcentre parent-as-educator, working as part of a team with various amounts of ECE training. My research links to and extends this study, by looking at how different knowledges affect the teaching practice of parents-as-educators.

### **2.1.3. Teacher relationships and boundaries**

The previous section focused on the debate around the range of knowledges that a teacher should have. But there is a growing body of literature, much of which is inspired by the work of feminist writer Noddings (1984), arguing that a good teacher is also a caring teacher. Noddings wrote at length about ethics from a caring perspective, rather than from a perspective that reduces moral decisions to universal principles and logic. Goldstein (1997, 2002; Goldstein & Lake, 2000) took this concept further and explored what it was like to apply an ethic of care to early childhood teaching. Goldstein argued that good teachers do, and should, love their students.

Dalli (2006) agreed that it is important to include love and care in the discourse of early childhood. She suggested that the academic discourse has focused on the knowledges and skills of a professional early childhood teacher, to the exclusion of caring. Yet caring is most definitely a part of the discourse of early childhood teachers themselves. Dalli gave examples of this from various research studies, including her own study of teachers' experiences with children starting at childcare. Cherrington (1999), in her investigation of early childhood teachers' responses to difficult ethical situations in their centres, also found that the teachers were strongly guided by a philosophy of caring. Caring is important to early childhood teachers.

But is it *love* or *care* that is part of the practice of a good early childhood teacher? Goldstein (1997) specifically defended her use of the concept of love rather than care, but it is perhaps notable that her later works use the word *care* (e.g. Goldstein, 2002). Love tends to be associated with parenting rather than teaching, and is not always seen as appropriate for a teacher to love their students. For a parent-as-educator, the distinction between love and care or between teacherly love and parental love is even more confused. Katz (1995) in her classic article on distinctions between mothering and teaching identified seven dimensions in which teacherly love and parental love differ: scope of functions, intensity of affect, attachment, rationality, spontaneity, partiality, and scope of responsibility. She argued that parents should aim for optimum attachment, whereas teachers should aim for optimum detachment. She referred to Anna Freud saying that teachers should not think of themselves as "mother-substitutes" (p. 170). Katz does acknowledge, however, that many early childhood teachers "reject the value of optimum detachment" (p. 171). This was clearly shown in this quote, from a different study, from an early childhood teacher: "I'm supposed to love her in the absence of her mother" (Dalli, 2006, p. 7). Both Goldstein (1997) and Freedman (1987) also had strong reservations that an early childhood teacher should aim for optimum detachment. Freedman (1987, p. 79) even said "it could well be argued, however, that schools would be unable to function if teachers took categories such as Lilian Katz's seriously." Certainly Brennan (2005) found that children responded well to one childcare teacher who "blur[red] the more traditional boundaries of the teacher-child relationship" (p. 117) when she took on a role more akin to an older sibling or parent than a teacher.

These discussions on caring and optimum detachment are focused on the relationship between teacher and child, but there is another professional relationship to consider, and that is between the teacher and the parent. Cherrington (1999) noted that the teachers' philosophy of care applied to the parents as well, but that teachers saw the need for an optimal distance between them and the parents. However, as Cherrington pointed out, what this optimal distance is will vary between different early childhood services, and the boundaries in any of the services are not well defined.

Parents-as-educators find themselves in such a situation, where boundaries between roles and expectations are blurred and ill-defined. They are parents, and as such they have a relationship of love between them and their children; and they are teachers, both of their own and others' children. The other children are often the children of their friends; the parents of the children they teach are their teaching colleagues. They take on the role of teacher without relinquishing the role of parent, and they use their experiences of each role to inform the other. This complex web of caring relationships can be difficult to negotiate, but at the same time, it can contribute to an intensity of experience for a parent-as-educator that can be very rewarding.

In summary, it has been acknowledged that teachers' past lives, and their beliefs and assumptions, make a large impact on their teaching practice, and good teachers will be aware of this and use this knowledge to improve their teaching (Ambrose, 1993; Ayers, 1989; Hawthorne, 1994; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Mephram, 2000; Warhurst, 1992). A good teacher is considered to be someone who has thorough pedagogical knowledge, but it has been argued that even early childhood teachers require comprehensive subject knowledge in order to extend children cognitively (Cullen, 1999; Garbett & Yourn, 2002; Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Rodger, 1995). A good teacher is also one who cares about the children being taught (Ayers, 1989; Cherrington, 1999; Dalli, 2006; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Noddings, 1984), and the traditional boundaries between parental and teacher roles in education are being questioned (Brennan, 2005; Freedman, 1987; Goldstein, 1997). The role of parent-as-educator in a group setting blurs the traditional

separation of parent and teacher and is not a common model, but there are some instances where this does occur, both in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally. Similarities and differences in these models will be reviewed in the next section.

## **2.2. PARENTS AS EDUCATORS**

*Parent involvement* means many different things in different educational contexts. In Playcentre it means that parents are the managers, the administrators, and the educators on session. Although different Playcentres employ different supervision models (from group supervision where every child has a parent stay on every session, to employed supervisors), it is a fundamental philosophy that there will always be some parents helping on each session and that every parent will take their turn helping (Densem & Chapman, 2000; Grey, 1975; Somerset, 1976; Stover, 1998). I now review the literature on models of parent involvement, focusing on those models in which parents take on the role of educators in group care settings, then look specifically at research about the parents-as-educators themselves.

### **2.2.1. Models of Parent Involvement**

Many different researchers have developed typologies to characterise the different forms of parent involvement in children's education (see David, 1993, for a review of research up to the early 1990s). David saw these typologies as being either composed of discrete categories or a staged, developmental process that parents work through as they become more involved. Most of these typologies were developed in schools, which is often a very different environment to early childhood centres. Two discrete-category typologies developed specifically within early childhood settings were those of Smith (1980) and Pugh (1989) from England. These two large scale research studies both took the view that parent involvement was important and desirable, reported on the then-current types of parental involvement in early childhood settings and suggested ways of increasing the quality of parental involvement.

For her study on parent involvement as part of the Oxford Preschool Research Study in the mid 1970s, Smith (1980) synthesised these categories of parent involvement from a review of the literature at that time:

1. Working with the children on 'educational activities'
2. Working in the group 'doing the chores'
3. Servicing the group but not actually working in the group alongside the children
4. 'Miscellaneous' which included settling children, visiting for special events or just dropping in
5. Involvement in management (p. 41)

Smith (1980) found that more than 50% of parents interviewed in the study were involved in servicing or support roles; almost 25% were involved in the centres either working with the children or doing the chores; and just 11% of parents were involved in the management of the centres. However, of the 25% of parents who participated at the centre, 80% were doing the chores and only 20% were actually working with the children. The parent-as-educator in a group setting, therefore, was not common in early childhood services in Oxfordshire in the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1970s.

The second discrete-category typology arose from a study that focussed on partnership between parents and professionals in early childhood centres in the UK during the early 1980s (Pugh, 1989; Pugh & De'Ath, 1989). During the three year study the project team visited 130 preschool centres in the UK, with 12 of these centres being studied in more depth. The project team developed a framework of parent involvement to help clarify their thinking, and for use in the 12 case studies. This parent involvement framework was:

1. Non-participation (either as an active decision not to, or because they felt unable, or were unable to participate)
2. Support
3. Participation (either as helpers, or learners)
4. Partnership (many different forms)
5. Control.

The intention of the framework was to reflect the range of parent involvement, not to suggest a hierarchical system or to imply a progression from one dimension to the next. Pugh (1989) placed the role of a parent-as-educator in a group setting within the “partnership” category. The study confirmed Smith’s (1980) finding that all the parents were interested in their children’s education, but that there were barriers for some to be involved in the ways that they would choose. One of the barriers to involvement found by both Smith and Pugh was the lack of parental confidence when dealing with professionals and professional knowledge. Smith reviewed studies on effective early intervention for children and concluded that it was the involvement of parents working alongside their children that made the most difference to children’s achievements, but that “parents’ confidence in their own abilities and their own worth is a crucial component of their competence” (p. 35).

These British studies highlighted that parents taking on the role of educators in a group setting was the exception rather than the norm, for a variety of reasons. A search of literature from other countries confirmed that the dominant model is of the professional teacher working with the children, and the ‘best’ parent involvement is seen as a partnership between the teacher, the child and the parents. However, there are exceptions: playgroups in Britain, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, cooperative preschools in North America, and the Playcentres in Aotearoa/New Zealand all encourage parents to take on the role of educators within the centre or classroom.

#### **2.2.1.1. *Playgroups in Britain***

Playgroups in Britain started around 1960 and grew rapidly. They are generally run independently of the State by community groups or individuals, and are affiliated to a Preschool Parents Association. They run 3 hour play sessions for 3- and 4-year-olds, and are usually staffed by paid playgroup leaders and assistants, supported by parents as volunteers on session. The majority of their funds come from parents who pay a fee per session, and fundraising (Crowe, 1973; Lloyd, Melhuish, Moss, & Owen, 1989; Moss, Brophy, & Statham, 1992; Moss & Penn, 1996).

Playgroups provided early childhood education for more children than any other service in Britain in the 1990’s (Moss & Penn, 1996). At that time, the state

provided nursery schools and nursery classes for 3- and 4-year-olds, and the reception classes at the primary schools catered for the older 4-years-olds. However, the provision of nursery education did not match demand, and there was a pattern of more playgroups operating where there was less state-run nursery education, and vice versa (Lloyd et al., 1989; Moss et al., 1992; Moss & Penn, 1996). This could mean that parents were involved in playgroups not because they wanted to be involved in a hands-on way with their children's education, but rather because there was no other choice. Perhaps this was a factor behind the finding that parent involvement in playgroups, whilst being held as a core principle by the Preschool Playgroups Association, was:

... considerable, but far from universal. A substantial minority of *mothers* do nothing, while another minority group is actively and regularly involved; most participate, but in most cases this means doing a turn on the rota once or twice a term and helping occasionally at a fund-raising event. Most *fathers* have no involvement, so that the term '*parent* involvement' is inappropriate to describe what actually happens. Mothers' involvement is more common among more socially and economically advantaged groups, though a substantial proportion of less advantaged mothers do participate in their children's playgroup. (Moss et al., 1992, p. 311)

#### **2.2.1.2. Cooperative Preschools in North America**

In North America the concept of a playgroup takes the form of cooperative preschools. According to the website of the Parent Cooperative Preschools International (PCPI) council:

A parent cooperative preschool is organized by a group of families with similar philosophies who hire a trained teacher to provide their children with a quality preschool experience. The preschool is administered and maintained by the parents on a non-profit, non-sectarian basis. The parents assist the professional teachers in the classroom on a rotating basis and participate in the educational program of all the children. Each family shares in the business operation of the school, thus making it truly a cooperative venture. (PCPI, n.d.)

Like the British playgroups, the cooperative preschool operates a number of sessions a week, employs someone to run the sessions with parents helping on a roster basis, and is supported by an umbrella organization. However, unlike Britain, this does not appear to be a major form of early childhood education in North America. PCPI says it represents more than 50,000 families (PCPI, n.d.), but this is a tiny minority of families considering the population of the USA and Canada. Another difference arises from the fact that many of the parents in British playgroups are minimally involved, but the expectation given by PCPI is that families who choose a cooperative preschool will be very involved. This is similar to the expectation in Playcentre, and probably relates to the fact that in both North America and in Aotearoa/New Zealand, there is a diversity of services to choose from. Moss et al. (1992) emphasised that many British families attended a playgroup because there was no other choice, and advocated that for services that depend on parental involvement to be successful,

certain conditions are likely to be necessary, including adequate financial and other support combined with a highly motivated parent group who have freely chosen this type of service. (p. 314)

There has been very little research conducted specifically in cooperative preschools. A search of the ERIC database reveals only eight in the last two decades, and half of these are historical analyses of the movement.

### **2.2.1.3. *Playgroups in Australia***

A playgroup in Australia is likely to be more informal than the British playgroup or the North American cooperative preschool. At an Australian playgroup, the caregivers or parents of the children stay for the session, which might meet only once a week for a couple of hours, and children of all ages from birth to school age can attend (Playgroup Australia, n.d.-b). Some playgroups are supported, which means that the Australian Government funds a Playgroup Co-ordinator to help establish a playgroup for a targeted group in the community, for example, teenage parents. The goal is for the playgroup to eventually run independently without a trained facilitator, as a mutual support group (Playgroup Australia, n.d.-a).



Playgroup Australia is an umbrella organization to which playgroups can affiliate, which provides support, advice and advocacy on a national level.

As is the case with the American cooperative preschools, there has been very little research conducted in Australian playgroups. A search of the Australian Education Index revealed only eight published research articles concerning playgroups in the last 20 years. The focus of research in the last decade has been on the way playgroups support families, particular those family groups that are seen as “at-risk”, for example, refugee families.

#### **2.2.1.4. *Playgroups in Aotearoa/New Zealand***

Since the Before Five reforms of the late 1980s (Lange, 1988), all early childhood services that meet the statutory licensing requirements have been funded by the government. Licence-exempt groups qualify for government funding, but at a much reduced amount. Playgroups are licence-exempt, so long as they operate as an informal, non-profit making group where the caregivers stay on session with the children and each daily session is not more than three hours long, much like an Australian playgroup. Another similarity is that pre-school children of any age are included. There is a wide range of playgroups, some acting as a general social focus for a group of parents, and some with a specific purpose such as the promotion of a particular language and culture. Some Playcentres operate as licence-exempt playgroups, and some playgroups are in the process of working towards becoming fully licensed. The presence of a trained playgroup leader is variable. Some playgroups do employ an early childhood trained supervisor, other playgroups employ a leader because of her or his cultural knowledge, and yet other playgroups run entirely on a cooperative basis. There is as yet no supporting umbrella organization as is present in Australia, Britain or North America (Mitchell et al., 2006; Simpson & Robinson, 2002), although the Ministry of Education has had a coordinating role.

#### **2.2.1.5. *Playcentres in Aotearoa/New Zealand***

Playcentres do have an umbrella organization to which every Playcentre is affiliated, and which provides support, guidance and advocacy. Most Playcentres

are licensed, with some employing a Playcentre-trained supervisor, and some running the session with teams of parents. The philosophy of Playcentre includes mixed ages of children on session, and parent involvement is a given (McDonald, 1982; Ministry of Education, 2001; Mitchell et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2005; Somerset, 1976). Playcentre is considered to be a “mainstream” or “traditional” early childhood service, having been present in Aotearoa/New Zealand since the 1940s, and being promoted by the government in the following decades as an acceptable form of early childhood education since it did not involve mothers leaving their children (May, 2001). However, in the new millennium the acceptability of diverse services such as childcare has grown, so Playcentre is now only one option of many, except in some rural areas.

There has been some research conducted specifically in Playcentre (Gibbons, 2004; Jordan, 1993; McDonald, 1982; Podmore, 1992; Powell et al., 2005; Te One et al., 2007; Wilton Playcentre members, Cubey & Mitchell, 2005), and many other research projects have been conducted in a range of early childhood services which have included Playcentre (Farquhar, 1993; Meade, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2006). Research focusing on parents-as-educators, however, has been minimal. McDonald’s (1982) early research study entitled *Working and learning: A participatory project on parent-helping in the New Zealand Playcentre* is relevant to this study. This was a collaborative project initiated by the New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF) with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), to investigate attitudes to parent-helping and parent education as it related to parent-helping. The research team developed a staged model of parent-helpers based on the analogy of a career: a parent hears about Playcentre, then the child starts at Playcentre, the parent helps for the first time, and finally the parent becomes an experienced parent-helper. This model was used to develop the research questions. The project resulted in a national survey being carried out in November 1976, where two people from every Playcentre in the country were interviewed by another Playcentre member to complete a questionnaire. McDonald’s research produced descriptions of supervision and parent-helping systems in Playcentres in the mid-1970’s, as well as profiles of parent-helpers and their attitudes and opinions towards parent-helping. Although many external contexts have changed since that time, many of the findings still ring true, for

example, the advice to “wear old clothes” (p. 50) and that parent-helping was seen as tiring but worthwhile.

It can be seen then, that even amongst service models that promote parents as educators in group settings, the case of Playcentre, as a mainstream early childhood service that relies on parents and Playcentre-trained supervisors to take responsibility for the education, is unique.

### **2.2.2. Parents-as-educators: Profiles and Teaching Practice**

Is there a particular type of person who takes on the role of a parent-as-educator? Although there is a large diversity of people who do take on this role, certain themes emerge. Honig (1979) described North American cooperative preschool parents as “usually middle-socioeconomic class” (p. 26); in Britain the most involved parents in playgroups were from white, middle class families (Lloyd et al., 1989; Moss et al., 1992); and in Australia the supported playgroups are targeted to non-white, non-middle class families (Playgroup Australia, n.d.-a), with the implication that the white, middle class families will be able to set up their own playgroups without support. In Aotearoa/New Zealand the researchers have avoided the term “middle class”. McDonald (1982) argued “it makes greater sense to say that parent-helpers are generally full-time housewives and mothers also doing a small amount of additional work either voluntary, paid, or contributing to a family enterprise from which income is obtained, rather than describing them as middle class” (p. 37). In the recent social capital research (Powell et al., 2005) the description of Playcentre parents was that they were likely to be Pākehā, 30-44 years of age, and married with a partner in full-time paid employment. The overall pattern, ranging over a number of decades and countries, is clear: those parents that take on the role of educator in a group setting tend to be from a Western European culture, and have the freedom (financial and otherwise) to be able to choose to be involved in a practical way in their children’s education.

Whether a mother works full-time or not has a large impact on how she will be involved in her children’s education (Lloyd et al., 1989; McDonald, 1982; Moss et al., 1992; Pugh, 1989). Pugh (1989) made the comment that

We met no parents who were not interested in their children's progress, though there were many factors that prevented them becoming as involved in the centre as the nursery workers might have liked. One of these was quite simply whether or not they were working. (p. 16)

In this regard it was noted that working class women were often obliged to be working full-time, and this limited their ability to be involved (Pugh, 1989).

Another factor suggested to explain whether or not parents become involved in educating young children in a group setting was that of parental confidence in their own abilities, especially when dealing with professionals (Karran, 1985; Pugh, 1989; Smith, 1980). This is shown in a positive way by examples of parents deliberately choosing to be the educators of their children not because they do not think that teachers and schools do a bad job of educating, but rather that they consider that they can do a good job themselves. These examples can be seen in homeschooling in the USA (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007), in the parent cooperative 'OC' school in Utah, USA (Rogoff, Turkkanis, & Bartlett, 2001) and in Playcentres (Powell et al., 2005). However, not all parents start with the confidence to be parents-as-educators. There are well documented examples of parents growing in confidence as they continued to be involved alongside more experienced educators (McDonald, 1982; Mitchell et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2005; Pugh, 1989; Rogoff et al., 2001), and this has been seen as one of the benefits of parents being involved in this way.

A further point about parents-as-educators is that they are overwhelmingly female (Lloyd et al., 1989; McDonald, 1982; Moss et al., 1992; Powell et al., 2005). This probably reflects the lack of men involved in early childhood in general (Farquhar, 2005), and also society's attitude to gender roles. As Moss et al. (1992) commented about the British situation, "If playgroups have low expectations of men caring for children and have assumed that women will do the work involved, including work in playgroups, then they reflect wider social and economic expectations" (p. 313). This gender split is still evident in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 2000s, as shown by the fact that 98% of responses from Playcentre members in the social capital survey were from women (Powell et al., 2005).

There is relatively little research globally concerning parents-as-educators, and a lot of this work documented which parents are involved, how much involvement they have, and classified their involvement (Honig, 1979; McDonald, 1982; Moss et al., 1992; Pugh, 1989; Smith, 1980). Some research has looked at parents' attitudes to "parent helping" (McDonald, 1982; Moss et al., 1992; Smith, 1980), and others at teachers' attitudes to "parent helping" (Moss et al., 1992; Powell, 1998; Rogoff et al., 2001; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). But as McDonald (1982) said of her research, "when it comes to what parent-helpers do in Playcentre, this report tells us only what parent-helpers think they do" (p. 95). She went on to recommend that the information be supplemented by observations of parent-helpers. My study takes up this challenge in a small way, by gathering observation data as well as asking for the participants' views on their teaching.

Little international research has been directed at understanding what parents-as-educators actually do when they work with children on session, and how they use the skills and knowledges they have. Some recent work in Aotearoa/New Zealand has included looking at parent-as-educators' practice. The Ministry of Education, recognizing that early childhood services that are provided by parents are a valuable contribution to the sector yet operate differently to teacher-led services, commissioned NZCER to carry out research into what constitutes quality in these services they termed parent-led (Mitchell et al., 2006). It involved data collection from a sample of 28 parent and whānau-led services from around the country, including 8 Playcentres. The data collection included group and individual discussions with parents and supervisors, parent and supervisor questionnaires, and two session observations where a rating scale was used to assess aspects of centre process quality. The rating scale had been used by NZCER in previous research and developed further for use in this project. The Playcentres were assessed on how well they met seven outcomes of children's learning and parental benefits, and the data were analysed to suggest factors that might contribute to meeting those outcomes. They found that the quality of children's learning in Playcentre was enhanced where some of the adults in the group were experienced and held higher qualifications, and where these adults focused on children during the session. They also found that in general, none of the services in the study were rated highly on providing cognitive challenge, especially through asking open-ended

questions, or using scaffolding and co-construction to extend children's thinking, and this was highlighted as an area for improvement.

Complementary findings arose in a NZPF collaborative study with the Massey University College of Education Research Team and the Children's Issues Centre (Powell et al., 2005). The purpose of the research was to investigate the impact of adult participation in Playcentre on social capital, which was researched through looking at the adults' personal lives, their educational aspirations, social networks and perceptions of community participation and citizenship. The first phase consisted of a survey sent to every Playcentre in the country, and the second phase consisted of qualitative case studies of four different Playcentres. Findings from the survey showed that participants felt that they learnt about extending children's learning, but there was a statistically significant difference (chi square  $p < .001$ ) between those who had been at Playcentre for more than 5 years and those who had been there less. In other words, those who had been at Playcentre longer had learnt more about extending children. Given the transient nature of Playcentre, with many parents involved only for a few years, it would suggest that many parents at Playcentre would not know much about extending children's learning – which is consistent with the NZCER study findings (Mitchell et al., 2006) where the parents were not rated highly on providing cognitive challenges.

The findings from these two studies concentrated on process quality, that is, the quality of the teaching process. Both studies concentrated on how the teaching is carried out, not on what is being taught. Both studies showed in a very clear way the benefits of training in ECE for the process quality, but did not specifically investigate the other attributes that the parents bring to the teaching, such as subject content knowledge. The social capital research (Powell et al., 2005) did ask parents, in both the survey and the case study phases, about the skills they brought with them to the Playcentre and how much they had been used. In the survey, 67% thought that they were used 'a lot' or 'quite a lot', but there was no detail on what those skills, knowledges and qualities were, or in what way they were used. In the four case studies the focus was on how the adult's participation in Playcentre had contributed to gaining skills, but some information was given on how the adults felt they contributed to the Playcentre. In two of the Playcentres there was tension

between allowing new parents to settle into the Playcentre without overwhelming them, and involving them by finding out about and utilising their prior skills and education. But in one of those centres, and in the other two centres, the parents who had been there longer felt that their talents were recognised, valued and utilised (although some parents chose not to disclose particular skills so as not to get asked to do particular jobs). In the case studies most of the comments regarding prior skills focused more on contributions to the management aspects of the Playcentre than to the educational programme, although there is not enough detail reported to analyse this more fully. It is this area that my study sought to investigate further, by trying to understand the role that previous training and experiences, not all of which are ECE related, contribute to the parents-as-educators' teaching practice in the centre.

### **2.3. DESCRIBING TEACHING PRACTICE**

In order to assess the contribution of parents-as-educators' background on their teaching practice, it is necessary to first describe that practice. In this section I develop a framework to describe teaching practice based on the four contexts of teaching proposed by McWilliam, de Kruif and Zulli (2002). The contexts are then expanded by including concepts and categories found in studies by Kontos (1999), Jingbo and Elicker (2005), and de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridely, and Wakely (2000).

The U.S. study by McWilliam, de Kruif and Zulli (2002) provided a useful overview for the description of teaching practice. Their study, carried out in a university child care centre, involved videotaping 11 teachers in 6 classrooms at least 8 times over 8 weeks. Each videotaped observation lasted for 20 minutes. The total number of children involved was 63, and the number of children in each classroom ranged from 7 to 16. Outside play was not videotaped, as initial observations had shown that there was very little teacher – child interaction at those times. Members of the research team then wrote narrative notes from the videotapes and these were used in discussions to reduce the data to themes. They concluded that the teaching in their study could be described by four contexts, each influencing each other, as outlined in Table 1.

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
Environmental	The environment within which the other contexts operate. It includes all the things that have an indirect impact on teaching behaviours, such as government regulations, centre philosophy, the teachers' backgrounds and the demographics of the children attending.
Planning	This context involves the choices and decisions that the teaching team and individual teachers make about the activities and routines the children may participate in. It includes the structuring of the session, the type and purpose of activities offered and the teachers' preparation.
Approach	A teacher's approach involves decisions about who to interact with and the general role taken in an interaction, such as observing, providing equipment, stopping or redirecting behaviours, introduction of children to the activity or responding to the children's requests.
Interaction	The interaction context describes how a teacher continues an interaction, both verbally and non-verbally, and includes specific techniques such as questioning, modelling, praising, prompting and silence.

**Table 1.** Four contexts of teaching from McWilliam, de Kruif & Zulli (2002).

These contexts allow a description of teaching practice that encompasses more than teacher-child dyad interactions, and offer a way of differentiating between parents-as-educators. A reservation of this study is that these contexts were based on observations of inside play only, and one might speculate that the conclusions might have been different if outside play had been included. This is an issue because at Playcentre there is unrestricted inside/outside play, and a lot of play during the session takes place outdoors. However, these general contexts do appear to be still relevant to outside play, as they are not specific to the type of activity being carried out.



Whilst the McWilliam et al. (2002) study provided an overall framework for my descriptive analysis, it provided little detail as to how to describe teaching practice within each context, so other studies were sought to provide this detail. A study which provided some guidance on describing the second context of “planning” and also the third context of “approach”, particularly with regards to the activity setting they chose to participate in and the general role taken in an interaction, is that of Kontos (1999). Her team studied teachers’ talk, roles, and activity settings during free play in 22 U.S. Head Start classrooms, most of which operated for half day sessions. Forty teachers took part in the study and class sizes ranged from 15 to 18 children, all of them 4-year-olds. As the focus of this study was on teacher talk, the procedure used was to audiotape each teacher for 15 minutes during free play time on two occasions, using a cordless microphone attached to their clothes. The transcripts were divided into one minute segments and coded three times according to pre-determined categories for talk, teacher role and activity setting. Analysis involved simple descriptive statistics as well as cluster analysis by role and by activity to check for patterns in the data.

Kontos’ results showed that the teachers changed their general role in a teaching interaction depending on the activity setting they were in, and that they used different types of language depending on the role they were taking and the activity setting. The cluster analysis described two preferred activity setting groups which the research team termed *generalists*, who divided their time relatively evenly between the four activity settings investigated (pretend play, constructive, manipulative/books, nonplay), and *art and craft (constructive) specialists*. Again, in this American study, outside play was not a part of the study, possibly because the structure of a Head Start programme is such that free play time does not include outside play. The analysis also revealed two preferred teaching role groups: *stage managers*, who focused mostly on getting and keeping the children involved in play, and *play facilitators*, who focused more on joining in and extending children’s play.

A further way of detailing the third context of *approach* was the power relationships in the interactions. This was examined in a qualitative study by Jingbo and Elicker (2005) who looked at teacher-child interactions in Chinese kindergartens. In these three kindergarten centres the children attended for 8 to 9 hours a day and ranged

in age from 3 to 6 years old. Twelve teachers in 6 classrooms were observed by a researcher over 3 days, for 4½ hours each morning and 3½ hours each afternoon. In each 5 minute interval, the observer spent 2 minutes observing and 3 minutes writing a narrative record. Informal interviews were carried out with teachers, children or parents, to add clarification or add contextual information. Categories describing the interaction events were developed inductively from the data, with separate categories depending on whether the interaction event was initiated by the teacher or the child. The data were also analysed for responses to initiations (accepted/rejected), for the emotional tone of the initiations and responses and for the power roles in each interaction. They found that 90% of interactions, whether initiated by adults or children, assumed an *inclination* role where the teacher was the dominant partner in the interaction. *Parallel* roles, where the children and teacher were relating as near-equals and shared the power in the interaction, occurred much less often. It could be expected that in a Playcentre setting this ratio would be different, as New Zealanders are known for their egalitarian sentiments and current early childhood policy documents advocate for a children's rights approach (Te One, 2004). It could also be expected that different parents-as-educators would vary in their adoption of inclination and parallel roles, that is, vary in their approach to sharing power in their interactions.

These categories were developed specifically for teacher-child interactions, and not teacher-teacher interactions, which were also looked at in my study as in Playcentre adults teach other adults as well as children. This limited the usefulness of some of the categories developed, but the overarching principle of analysing power relationships through the role taken in an interaction, and the initiation and acceptance or rejection of interactions was a useful way of detailing aspects of the *approach* context of teaching.

The fourth context of teaching identified by McWilliam et al. (2002) is the *interaction* context, which they define as being "the specific verbal and nonverbal behaviours a teacher uses once the interaction has begun" (p. 9). An earlier study that McWilliam and de Kruif were involved in addressed this *interaction* context (de Kruif et al., 2000). The study was designed to see if teachers could be categorised on the basis of their observed interaction behaviours, and investigated further the idea

that directiveness and responsiveness in interactions are characterised by two separate continua, rather than being at opposite end of a single continuum. The participants were 63 teachers working in 17 childcare centres in a single American state. Between 2 and 6 classrooms in each centre were involved, with children between 12 and 36 months of age. The class sizes ranged from 5 to 24 children, and 1 to 3 adults. Observers gathered data by completing rating scales during a morning spent in the classroom. The main instrument used to classify teachers was the Teaching Styles Rating Scale (TSRS) developed by McWilliam, Scarborough, Bagby and Sweeney (1998; cited in de Kruif et al., 2002) which rated seven interaction behaviours (as listed in Table 2).

TSRS VARIABLE	DEFINITION
Redirects	The teacher gets the children to do something different from what they are doing. Stops children (i.e. <i>Don't ... , stop...</i> ). Does not include natural classroom transitions.
Introduces	The teacher gives the child who is not engaged or who is new to an activity something to do.
Follows	The teacher elicits responses (verbal or behavioural) related to what children are already doing.
Informs	The teacher provides nonelaborative information, tells stories, sings.
Acknowledges	The teacher acknowledges children without elaborating on what they are doing and without helping them (includes imitation).
Praises	The teacher praises children enthusiastically. Conveys pleasure or admiration for the child, the child's behaviour, or the child's product.
Elaborates	The teacher provides information to expand on children's engagement, without eliciting behaviour.

**Table 2.** Definitions of variables on the Teaching Styles Rating Scale (TSRS), from de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridley, & Wakely, 2000.

Redirecting, introducing, following and informing were seen as directive behaviours, as the teacher is initiating the interaction and often is requiring a specific action from the child. Acknowledging, praising and elaborating were classified as responsive behaviours, as they were a direct response to the children without the requirement for action. Cluster analysis was carried out to see if there were patterns in the use of these different behaviours, and in particular to see if responsive and directive type behaviours were used in different combinations and were not simply opposite ends of a single continuum. The analysis identified four clusters, which they termed average, controlling, elaborative and non-elaborative teachers. They found that *average* teachers engaged in each of the interaction behaviours some of the time; *controlling* teachers engaged mostly in redirecting children, and little else; *elaborative* teachers rarely redirected children but often elaborated, followed, and praised the children; and *non-elaborative* teachers spent a lot more time than the average teachers in the non-elaborative interaction behaviours of introducing, informing, acknowledging and praising. These clusters gave a picture that did not define teachers as simply responsive or directive, but rather as using combinations of both types of interaction behaviours. My observation data were sufficient for me to make a comment on the use of these different styles of interaction behaviours, albeit not in a statistically rigorous way, as a way to elaborate on the *interaction* context of teaching (McWilliam et al., 2002) when describing parents-as-educators' teaching practice.

In summary, my study described the four parent-as-educators' teaching practice by referring to the four contexts of teaching defined by McWilliam et al. (2002). The results of the studies by de Kruif et al. (2000), Jingbo and Elicker (2005) and Kontos (1999) were used within each teaching context to further analyse and describe the teaching practice. Table 3 shows the interrelations of this framework, developed for this study.

CONTEXT	FACTORS INCLUDED IN DESCRIPTION
Environmental	General description of Playcentre; this is a common environment for all four case studies. Individual parent-as-educators' background.
Planning	Style of preparation; contribution to planning; general purpose of activities initiated by the individual parent-as-educator; preferred activity setting and identification with Kontos' (1999) cluster groupings (generalist/art and craft specialist).
Approach	Selection of who to interact with; initiations and rejections and power relationships in interactions (Jingbo & Elicker, 2005); general role taken (Kontos, 1999).
Interaction	Specific strategies used in interactions, especially as used by de Kruif et al. (2000).

**Table 3.** Teaching Practice Framework.

## **2.4. SUMMARY**

This chapter has reviewed the literature surrounding two major themes: that of the balance between professional and subject knowledges that are considered to be useful for a teacher, and the international and Aotearoa/New Zealand context of parents taking on the role of a teacher in a group setting. The research showed how important a teacher's background is to the way they teach, and that many different knowledges are required. There is a current debate on the relative importance of subject content knowledge in early childhood teaching. My study focused on the effect of background on the teaching practice of parents-as-educators, as many of them have backgrounds in diverse fields other than education and therefore have acquired a different profile of knowledges (including subject content knowledge) than can be gained through usual pre-service training.

This study therefore adds to the literature on parents-as-educators, which, as the second part of this literature review has shown, is sparse and not recent. The model of Playcentre parents-as-educators is unique, although it shares

commonalities with other models in different countries. My study moves beyond the high level studies of the 1980s that grouped parent involvement into categories, to gain a more detailed understanding of what individual parents-as-educators actually do while they are on session, and how they use the knowledges they have.

The final section of this chapter reviewed some of the literature on teaching practice that was used to develop a framework for describing teaching practice. The framework shown in Table 3 was then used to write the case studies as shown in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Chapter 3 now sets out the full methodology used to investigate the teaching practice of parents-as-educators in a Playcentre setting.

# CHAPTER THREE

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

This study focussed on the teaching practice of parents-as-educators in a Playcentre setting, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of their unique role. The two major aims, as introduced in Chapter 1, were to produce a description of four parents-as-educators' practice in one Playcentre, and to interpret this practice in the light of their life experiences, including educational, cultural and professional experiences, and their statements about teaching and learning.

Within these aims, the research questions were:

- What are the life experiences, including the educational, cultural and professional experiences of the parents-as-educators in this study?
- What are the teaching practices of these parents-as-educators?
- What planning do these parents-as-educators engage in?
- What stated aims guide these parents-as-educators' teaching and learning practice?
- How do these parents-as-educators justify their practice?

The methodology used was that of multiple case studies within one site, using interpretive, qualitative methods. Case studies are well suited to the interpretive approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000), with their in-depth studies of bounded systems. Multiple cases were chosen as a methodology to facilitate the research moving beyond description into interpretation by comparing themes that arise from the particular cases in a cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Stake (2006) argues that the individual cases in a multiple case study are bound together by being part of a group, a category or a phenomenon. He defines this group, category or phenomenon as a *quintain*, which is the object of interest in a multiple case study. In this study the quintain is the individual parent-as-educator. This is an important point, as it was not the Playcentre that was being studied

through looking at four parents-as-educators. That would have suggested that this project should have been a single case study with four embedded units. Rather I was seeking to understand better the parent-as-educator as a particular type of educator in the early childhood sector, and thus my object of interest, my quintain, was the parent-as-educator and not the Playcentre. This enabled me to present each person holistically, embedded in the environment of a Playcentre, which was important to me in order to respect their individual integrity as whole person.

### **3.2. SITE SELECTION**

Playcentres are run as parent cooperatives, so each centre is run by the parents currently involved in that centre. As such, each centre is run differently to other centres, albeit under the same umbrella philosophy of Playcentre. A single Playcentre was chosen for the research to enable the focus to be on contrasting the difference between the individual parents-as-educators rather than the difference between Playcentres. The centre chosen was an urban Playcentre from the local Association of which I was a member. It was a relatively large centre to enable more choice in the selection of people as participants in the case study, thereby improving the chance of finding people who met the selection criteria.

The centre (for which one of the participants chose the name “Radiator Springs” after the town in the children’s animated movie “Cars”) was located in an urban suburb of an average-sized New Zealand city. The centre was in a purpose built building with a large and well-designed outdoor area, and surrounded by a small industrial zone, a primary school and a public playground. The centre had been in existence for 53 years, and in this location for 17 years. The centre ran six 2½ hour sessions per week. One was a starter group session for first time parents with young children under 2½ years old, and this session was run by a paid Playcentre-trained supervisor. The other five sessions were general ones for families who had children between the age range of 0-5 years, and these sessions were supervised by teams of parents. It was generally expected that families from the starter group would move to the general sessions when their oldest child was 2½ years old. This research focused on the general sessions. At the time of the research there were 32 families enrolled in the general sessions with a total of 55 children ranging from young babies to almost 5-year-olds.



Every family on the main roll was expected to nominate a weekly session where they would be part of the supervision team. The children could attend up to three other sessions without their parent, as long as they were over the age of 2½ years. The older children (3- to 4- year-olds) therefore provided a core group of attendees, with the younger children and the adults varying from session to session.

### **3.3. CASE SELECTION**

Four cases were chosen as it is often suggested as a reasonable number in a small study to be able to balance manageability and depth of analysis (e.g., Cresswell, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). The selection was purposeful to try represent the diversity of experiences present in Playcentre (Stake, 1995). The selection criteria for parents were that they had no prior teacher training, were at different levels of Playcentre training, and if possible, had different cultural or gender backgrounds. However, given the predominance of Pākehā, middle class women in Playcentre in general (Powell et al., 2005), these last criteria were considered to be flexible.

The choice of parents was indeed constrained. I could only attend two sessions in a week, and so my case study adults were chosen from the supervision teams for those two sessions. I also excluded those adults who had just started at the Playcentre during the term that I was collecting data, and those adults who were leaving part way through the term. As there was only one man attending a session (and he was new to the centre that term), and the centre was predominately mono-cultural (New Zealand Pākehā), I was unable to get a culturally or gender diverse sample.

The final selection, therefore, was not so much a choice as simply inviting those few people who fitted the eligibility criteria to take part. The procedure for gaining consent is discussed later in this chapter in Section 3.7 on ethics. Only one parent who was invited declined to take part. The four women who agreed (pseudonyms are being used) were:

- Sally, Monday team, co-team leader, 4 years in Playcentre, just completed Course 3.
- Kim, Monday team, 2.5 years in Playcentre, had completed Course 1.
- Jane, Tuesday team, 2.5 years in Playcentre, had completed Course 1.
- Tracey, Tuesday team, 1.5 years in Playcentre, had completed Course 2, and started Course 3.

All were Pākehā, middle class women who were the main caregivers for their children. One had a part-time job and one helped in a family business; three of them were living with their partners and owned their own homes.

### **3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

A combination of data collection methods was used, as is accepted practice for case studies (e.g. Cresswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). These included written observations of case study adults' teaching practice, document analysis of programme planning, a short demographic questionnaire for case study adults, and semi-structured interviews with case study adults. Each of these data collection methods will now be discussed in turn.

#### **3.4.1. Observations of teaching practice**

This study took up the suggestion of MacDonald (1982) to use observations to get information on what the case study adults *actually* did on session to supplement their view on what they *thought* they did. The observations gave sufficient detail to investigate the effects of background trainings, knowledges and experiences on teaching practice, which was unlikely to have been achieved through interviews relying on the case study adults' recall of their practice. However, information from observations is relatively one-dimensional, as without knowing the background of the case study adults, or the reasons for their actions, some links would be missed. Therefore the observations were undertaken as a part of a suite of methods, as suggested by Adler and Adler (1994).

My role as an observer was as a peripheral member (Adler & Adler, 1994), in that I was acknowledged as a "Playcentre person" yet was not expected to be involved in

the supervising of sessions or management of the centre. Being someone who had a history of involvement with Playcentre helped to establish a rapport with centre members, as there was a level of assumed knowledge between us. I was not treated as an objective outsider to be ignored, and both the case study adults and other adults in the centre would come to talk with me, invite me to participate in group activities, and ask me questions about the research and also about other Playcentre matters. Some of these informal discussions with different people were very enlightening, and I made mental notes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) and wrote these discussions down as soon as possible after the event. These data were used to support the analysis, but in all except one case they were not used directly (the exception being the use of musical skills, as discussed in Section 5.2.1 on p. 105).

The four adults in my study were on two different session teams – Sally and Kim on Monday mornings, and Jane and Tracey on Tuesday mornings. It was planned to observe each person for four hours. This was to be spread over four different sessions during the term, in one-hour blocks, to counter the effect of choosing a single, non-typical week. The aim was to get an idea of the range of activities that they participated in, and a sense of how they preferred to interact with both children and adults. However, I found that observing a case study adult for only one hour during a session was restrictive. This was because of a variety of reasons, such as the effect of morning tea from about 10 am to 10.30 am (which yielded relatively little data for my purposes), and the effect of a case study adult spending most of the hour on a specific job (such as making a card) or with their tired toddler asleep in their arms. In order to achieve this aim of recording the range of activity they were involved in, I found it necessary to change the timing of the observations from rigid one-hour blocks to a more flexible system of multiple 15 to 20 minute blocks, alternating between the two case study adults at a session. In this way, observation data of approximately 4 hours for Kim, 4½ hours for Sally and 5 hours for Jane and Tracey were gathered over a total of 6 hours for Kim, 8½ hours for Sally, 12 hours for Jane and 13½ hours for Tracey of session time.

Recording observations consisted of writing field notes on what the case study adult was doing, with a particular focus on their interactions with children, with other adults, and any overt connections to planning of the programme. These notes were

typed up as full as possible before returning to the centre for the next session. My writing speed limited the recording of verbatim conversation, so generally only the adult's side of the conversation was recorded. Recording of conversation was also limited by the distance I chose to keep between me and the adult I was observing, so as to not interfere too much with their teaching and to allow them to feel more comfortable with being observed. This meant noise levels sometimes prevented me hearing the conversation properly. Where I deemed it an important conversation, I would then discuss afterwards with the case study adult what had actually been happening to confirm my interpretations.

### **3.4.2. Documents**

The programme planning system at the centre consisted of two parallel strands: session planning, and planning for individual children. At the whole centre planning meeting before the term started, overall themes for the term for all sessions and suggested trips were set and these were displayed on the wall during the term time. Individual session teams planned their sessions, in particular developing a roster for the jobs to be done on that session (the exact jobs varied depending on the team and their level of experience or their preferred way of working). At the end of each session, the team would sit down together and evaluate the session, discuss the specific observations that had been carried out that day, and plan in more detail for the following week's session, and sometimes for further in advance (for example, when planning a trip).

Additionally, at the whole centre planning meeting before the term started, each child was discussed and individual goals set. During the term, each child was observed formally a number of times. It was the responsibility of the team leader to decide on which children should be observed that day (approximately three per session), which style of observation was to be used (learning story, time sample etc.) and to assign someone to carry out that observation. The observations were then discussed at the end-of-session evaluation meeting and used to help plan for the following weeks. At the end of the term it was the responsibility of the child's parent to transfer these written observations to the child's portfolio, which also included photographs and samples of artwork.

In order to analyse the contributions that the case study adults made to the programme planning, photocopies were taken of those formal observations of children that were written by the case study adults, and of the session evaluation forms from the sessions I attended. I noted down the planning information on the walls, and discussed these with the team leaders. I also observed two session evaluations (one on a Monday, one on a Tuesday) to gain more information about the specific contributions made by each of the case study adults.

### **3.4.3. Questionnaire**

Each case study adult was asked to complete a short questionnaire (Appendix A) that was used as a basis for discussion at the interviews. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on qualifications, training and work experiences, interests and cultural background. The original questionnaire design was trialed by a colleague of mine and the feedback incorporated into the final design.

### **3.4.4. Interviews**

Interviews were chosen as a means of gathering the case study adults' perspectives on the observations, and on my initial interpretations of the observations. It gave a chance to find out about their philosophy of teaching by a direct method, as opposed to the indirect method of the observations (Gorard & Taylor, 2004). The interview schedule, which was used as a guide, is shown in Appendix B. The interviews were carried out during the two week school holiday break, three weeks after the observations were completed. Each interview was held at the case study adult's house, by their choice, and at a time suitable to them. The time taken for each interview varied between 45 and 60 minutes. The tapes were then transcribed by me, and the transcripts returned to the case study adults for checking and clarification.

### **3.5. ANALYSIS**

As discussed in the literature review, a framework was developed from the literature to describe teaching practice (shown in Table 1 on p. 26). The basis of the framework was the four contexts of teaching proposed by McWilliam, de Kruif and Zulli (2002). Additional descriptive detail was added by including the categories developed by de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridley and Wakely (2000), Jingbo and Elicker (2005) and Kontos (1999). Each of these studies contributed a different perspective to the analysis of the data, and enabled a detailed description to be built up.

This framework was used by constructing data tables for each case study that noted instances of factors included under each context. Additional tables were constructed to analyse power relationships within interactions according to Jingbo and Elicker's (2005) framework, and teaching interaction styles as suggested in de Kruif et al. (2000). Examples of these tables are shown in Appendix C.

Links between the teaching practice and the background of the case study adults were made by reading and re-reading all data sources, including the teaching practice tables. Each case was analysed separately, and the writing up of each was also used as an analysis tool to clarify thinking. As Bone comments, "writing is itself an iterative process of change and revision" (Bone, Cullen, & Loveridge, 2007, p. 4).

The findings from all four of the cases related to a number of different levels of focus. Rogoff's (2003) planes of analysis – personal, interpersonal, and cultural - provided a way of analysing these different foci without separating them and therefore losing valuable context information. An introduction to this theory is given in the introduction to Chapter 5. To analyse each of these planes in turn, the original data were returned to and read in conjunction with the written case studies. The idea of individual agency was a strong theme in the data, so the model developed by Reid and Stover (2005) was also incorporated into the analysis within the interpersonal and cultural planes. The model of individual agency within a group is discussed in Section 5.2 of Chapter 5.

### **3.6. RIGOUR**

Toma (2006) argues for an individualistic approach defining rigour in qualitative research and that the standards of rigour should be chosen to be consistent with the paradigms within which the research is undertaken as well as the end use of the research. He notes, for example, that since case studies are often done under contract, standards of rigour related to empowering the participants are likely to be less important than with some other types of qualitative research. In this view it is up to the researcher to select and justify the standards that are appropriate to the particular research project to ensure that the reader can trust the findings, i.e. that the study is trustworthy.

This current study uses a case study methodology within an interpretative paradigm to describe and interpret the effect of parents-as-educators' backgrounds on their teaching practice. It is concerned with improving understanding of the role of parents-as-educators, and with applying current theory to facilitate this understanding. This research is not evaluative, in that it does not seek to judge the quality of the teaching practice, only to describe and interpret it. Neither does the research seek to empower the parents-as-educators to make changes in their role or their practice. Therefore standards of rigour that relate to generalising the study to other situations, to making recommendations for improved practice, or to judging the study's effectiveness by the resulting emancipation of the participants, are not appropriate for this study. Rather I have chosen to use the standards of credibility, confirmability and dependability (Cohen et al., 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Toma, 2006).

According to Toma (2006), "credibility is established if participants agree with the constructions and interpretations of the researcher" (p. 413). For this study, credibility will therefore be established if the case study adults recognise themselves in the description that I write, and accept my interpretations as accurate. Further credibility will be established if other Playcentre parents-as-educators also relate to the findings. Presentations to Playcentre audiences have been planned as part of the reciprocal process of the research, but not as part of the data collection.

Related to credibility is the concept of confirmability, which addresses the issue of objectivity in qualitative research. When working in an interpretive paradigm where the researcher is the main instrument for generating data, absolute objectivity is not possible. Instead the results could be said to be confirmable if the influence of the researcher has been acknowledged, managed and reported (Toma, 2006).

Finally, dependability encompasses the idea of consistency within the process of the study. The research design must be cohesive, and adaptations to the design during the course of the study must be carefully recorded and justified. A qualitative, interpretive study is unlikely to be replicable, which is the required standard for positivist research, as the interpretations are constructed within a unique socio-cultural context. However, with sufficient reporting of the detail of the process of the study and the logic behind it, a degree of dependability can be achieved.

These concepts overlap to some extent, and certainly the strategies used to establish rigour across all these three standards are similar (Cohen et al., 2000; Maxwell, 2002; Toma, 2006). One important principle is the use of methodological strategies to aid trustworthiness. In this study the strategies I have used are the triangulation of data sources through multiple methods of data generation, and a connection to theory arising from the data to make the research process transparent and aid understanding of how conclusions were reached.

A second important principle is careful reporting of detail for the reader to decide on the trustworthiness of the research. I have tried to achieve this through:

- a detailed description of the setting and context of the research;
- a detailed description of the process of the research, including both the methods and the analysis;
- enough data to show that the conclusions are not based on only one or two anecdotes;
- a reflexive discussion of my influence as a researcher (see Section 3.8 in this chapter).



### **3.7. ETHICS**

Playcentre is a parent cooperative of a voluntary nature and relationships within the group of parents working together in a centre is of the utmost importance. Therefore the relational ethical framework outlined by Flinders (1992) was chosen for ethical guidance in this current study. In this framework respect for people is the overriding consideration. This respect can be shown in many ways throughout the process of the research, embedded in the different phases of preparation, fieldwork and reporting.

In the preparation phase, this research project followed Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics policy (Victoria University of Wellington, 2003), and was approved by the Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee. The New Zealand Playcentre Federation (NZPF) also has an ethics procedure which requires research projects with national implications to be approved by the NZPF. However, on consulting with the NZPF, they decided it was sufficient for me to gain consent at the local Association level. I consulted with the Executive of the local Association regarding my interest in carrying out a research project in Playcentre. They were supportive, and arranged for me to speak to an Association meeting which was attended by representatives of all the centres in that Association. The Association officially gave approval at the next meeting, after there had been time to consider the information.

Following my presentation to the Association meeting, representatives of two different centres approached me, identifying their centres as being potentially interested in being a part of the research. After choosing one of the centres, I spoke with the President and was invited to a centre meeting. The project was explained and the centre made the decision to take part in the research. Just before data collection was about to start, I attended a further centre meeting, where I explained the project again. This was necessary because there were a lot of new members at this time (Cullen, Hedges, & Bone, 2005). Information sheets and consent forms were handed out at that meeting (see Appendix D). The consent forms were handed back during the following weeks, and I specifically followed up those people who had not received or returned the forms, to ensure that every

member was contacted. No member withheld consent, although one member requested I obtain verbal consent from her child (which he gave). Consent was not sought directly from all the children as suggested by Cullen et al. (2005) as the focus of the research was on the adult parents-as-educators, but complying with this small request was part of negotiating consent and developing a reciprocal research relationship with the centre families.

During the fieldwork phase, the guiding principle in relational ethics, according to Flinders (1992), is extended beyond avoiding harm to avoiding imposition. Imposition can be seen in terms of imposing beliefs as well as physical intrusion. The basis for deciding what constitutes an imposition is the relationship that is established, based on respect and caring. To foster this respectful relationship I tried to respond to questions openly and honestly, and to give information as well as to receive it. I felt this acknowledged them as collaborators in the research. I also took opportunities to reciprocate their generosity by sharing information about other Playcentre matters, for example discussions regarding the Playcentre training. When difficult situations arose during fieldwork I wrote about them in my notes and subsequently discussed them with my supervisors.

When reporting using a utilitarian ethics framework, strict confidentiality is required to protect the participants (Flinders, 1992). However in this study strict confidentiality was not possible, as by telling the stories of these parents-as-educators in a holistic way it made it possible to identify these people (even though pseudonyms are used throughout). But in a relational ethics framework, the concept of confidentiality is modified to one of confirmation, where “we attribute to others the best possible motives consistent with our understanding of the relevant ‘facts’” (Flinders, 1992, p. 107). This required me to work to suspend judgement of their teaching practice and motives, and to focus on description and interpretation. It required me to continually question my own assumptions and to try to see the data from the case study adult’s perspective whilst at the same time bringing a researcher’s perspective. The written case studies and summaries of the research were given to the case study adults, so a guiding principle for me was “how will the case study adult feel when she reads this?”

### **3.8. MY POSITIONING AS RESEARCHER**

I had been involved in Playcentre for 12 years at the time of the study, and had been, among other things, vice-president of my own centre, the Education Convenor for the Playcentre Association for three years, a workshop facilitator, and an employed supervisor for another centre. My three children had all attended Playcentre up to school age. My long experience in Playcentre, my decision to use Playcentre as the major early childhood education for my children, and my continued involvement after my children had started school, marked me as a “Playcentre person”: someone who was seen to understand and espouse Playcentre philosophy, and who would advocate for that philosophy and the organization as a whole. In an organization where the philosophy is seen to be unique and central to practice, to be acknowledged as someone who follows the philosophy is the ultimate compliment and the requirement for credibility within the organization. This can be seen in other educational institutions with a strong and unique philosophy. An example is as the OC School in Utah, where it is seen as important to introduce new people to the ‘OC way’ (Rogoff et al., 2001).

My position as a known “Playcentre person” was both a strength and a potential limitation in this study. It meant that the Association, the centre members, and I, viewed me as accountable to Playcentre and trusted me to act in Playcentre’s best interests. This was made clear in many comments and actions, based on unspoken assumptions, from people at all levels of the organization. Being a researcher also made me accountable to the academic community in general, and as a student at Victoria University, I was accountable to the university and its systems as well. I dealt with these multiple accountabilities by following the university procedures, reporting the data as accurately as possible but attributing the best possible motives to the people who participated in the research.

Access to the centre was made easy by selecting a Playcentre from the Association of which I was a member. I already had relationships with the decision makers at the Association level, and was able to have informal as well as formal discussions with them. As my role in the Association was no longer that of a central decision maker, I had no official influence over the individual centres, so I was confident that

centres would not feel coerced into granting me access. My Association roles (both previous and current at the time of the research) meant that I was known to a few of the more experienced members of Radiator Springs centre, but not to most of them; and of those people, I had only worked closely with one of them. This provided an ideal balance of a centre that was familiar and comfortable to me and where I was not a complete stranger, yet at the same time there was sufficient distance of relationships that allowed me to take a role as an observer and researcher.

During the fieldwork the centre members expected me to know the basics of how a Playcentre operated, and would refer to Playcentre philosophy, training or regulations without explanation. Informal discussions were more in-depth because of this. But it did then require me to work at observing teaching practice with a researcher's perspective so that I did not miss important aspects because of my previous expectations of a Playcentre setting. In this respect, having research supervisors who did not have a Playcentre background was useful at the writing up stage, to challenge any descriptions that assumed the reader had an insider's knowledge of Playcentre.

### **3.9. SUMMARY**

This chapter has detailed the process for the design, data collection and analysis of this research project. The quintain of interest was the Playcentre parent-as-educator. This was investigated using multiple case studies, focussing on four parents-as-educators in one Playcentre. Data collection methods for each case study consisted of at least four hours of observations of teaching practice, spread over at least four sessions; document analysis; a short questionnaire about their background trainings, qualifications and experiences; and an individual interview. A description of teaching for each case study adult was based on the framework in Table 3 (p. 31) developed from studies by McWilliam, et al. (2002), de Kruif et al. (2000), Jingbo and Elicker (2005), and Kontos (1999), as detailed in the literature review. The descriptions of teaching practice was read in conjunction with the primary data sources to make connections between teaching practice and the parents-as-educators' backgrounds, and to interpret these connections. A cross-case analysis was based on Rogoff's (2003) three planes of analysis, where the

findings from all of the case studies were analysed by focussing on the personal, interpersonal and cultural planes in turn. An additional layer of analysis used the individual agency model of Reid and Stover (2005).

The Victoria University of Wellington and NZPF ethics policies were followed, and the relational ethics framework discussed in Flinders (1992) was used as a guide, particularly in fieldwork. Standards of rigour based on credibility, confirmability and dependability (Cohen et al., 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Toma, 2006) were adhered to. The next chapter will now present the four case studies.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## 4. CASE STUDIES

In this chapter each of the case studies are presented in turn. The aim in presenting the results in this way is to give the reader a sense of each case study adult as a whole person, and to provide the contexts for the cross-case discussion in the next chapter. Each case study gives background information about the person, describes their teaching practice, and then draws links between the background and the teaching practice with reference to relevant literature. The descriptions of teaching practice are structured using the framework developed in the literature review in Chapter 2, and outlined in Table 3 which has been reprinted from p. 31.

CONTEXT	FACTORS INCLUDED IN DESCRIPTION
Environmental	General description of Playcentre; this is a common environment for all four case studies. Individual parent-as-educators' background.
Planning	Style of preparation; contribution to planning; general purpose of activities initiated by the individual parent-as-educator; preferred activity setting and identification with Kontos' (1999) cluster groupings (generalist/art and craft specialist).
Approach	Selection of who to interact with; initiations and rejections and power relationships in interactions (Jingbo & Elicker, 2005); general role taken (Kontos, 1999).
Interaction	Specific strategies used in interactions, especially as used by de Kruif et al. (2000).

**Table 3.** Teaching Practice Framework.

Each case study concludes with a summarising table, which is colour coded to show the three planes of analysis suggested by Rogoff (2003). This analysis was used for the cross-case discussion in Chapter 5, and will be discussed further in the introduction to that chapter.

## **4.1. KIM**

### **4.1.1. Background: Kim**

Kim was a bubbly and enthusiastic person. She grew up on farms until she was at intermediate school, when she moved to a small city in the area. Her parents were always singing in various groups, and Kim grew to love singing as well. She learnt to play both piano and guitar, although the piano was her main instrument. During her school years she was involved in singing with Māori cultural groups, and as a young adult she was involved with church music, playing the piano for church services. In fact, she was relied upon so heavily in this musical role that after some years she decided she needed a complete break from performing. At the time of the study she had a keyboard at home, but she rarely played it.

Kim had had a wide variety of jobs and work experiences since she left school. She found in her early twenties when she was in London that she enjoyed sales work, and was told she was a one-in-a-million sales person. Her philosophy of sales was that “it’s all about relationships”, a philosophy that she also applied to early childhood education.

Kim’s son, Paul, was 3 years 9 months at the start of the study. Since Paul had been born, Kim had not been in paid employment except for a short spell as a cosmetics salesperson, which she had been quite successful at. She intended to go back into sales when eventually she returned to work, but she was pregnant with another child and was not looking for paid employment.

Kim had joined a Playcentre when Paul was a year old, and had changed to Radiator Springs Playcentre when she moved houses a couple of years later. She had completed Course 1 of the Playcentre training, but had not continued with the other courses as early childhood education was not a specific interest of hers, and studying itself did not appeal to her. Her job at Radiator Springs was that of Welfare Officer, which involved welcoming and farewelling members in appropriate and creative ways, and arranging support when members needed it, for example if someone had a new baby.

Apart from music, Kim also had a strong interest in cooking. She and her son Paul used to watch television cooking programmes together, and she was quite proud of the fact that at the age of two Paul could make his own scrambled eggs in the microwave, with a little bit of help. She said she enjoyed creative activities such as painting, knitting and photo albums, and participating in outdoor activities such as camping and tramping.

## **4.1.2. Teaching Practice: Kim**

### **4.1.2.1. Planning**

Kim appeared to plan for her role in sessions in a general, rather than a specific, way. She came to Playcentre knowing, for example, that she was rostered to set up the construction area, or to prepare food with the children, but she did not come knowing exactly what it was she would do. That decision was often made just before she did something, based on an idea she or the children had, on recent experience, or what was available at the time. In her words:

*I don't turn up at Playcentre really having a guide as what I'm going to do today at all. I just go with the flow. (Kim int, para 184)*

*(note: Kim int, para 184 = interview with Kim, paragraph 184).*

Kim contributed to the end of session evaluation discussions; for example, she suggested extending an interest amongst the older girls in shopping role play by introducing more of a literacy element to it, and was involved in the discussion on the need to have two adults at the face painting. However, the overall control of planning she left to the team leaders. She took the role of an autonomous team member and carried out her assigned jobs, but did not take on anything extra.

Her preference was to plan for, and set up, open-ended activities that encouraged the children's creativity. She was often found in the collage and the paint areas, but also saw and acknowledged creativity in construction, music and pretend play activities. When providing activities for the children, her stated emphasis was on the creative process, although she was also aware of a tension between letting the children play freely and active teaching:



*Just guiding them, really. But letting them be, be free. Having the freedom to learn their own way too, because, I mean, you've got to learn to read some way, but, ... if you just threw some letters at a kid, they wouldn't know what to do with them. (Kim int, para 184)*

When she joined in activities herself, she focused on producing a quality end product. Examples were in the construction area when she attempted to make things for the children to play with, at cooking when she controlled the process carefully to make sure the spaghetti bread baskets turned out reasonable, and while playing 'What's the time, Mr Wolf' she made sure the rules were followed. When reading a book, she put a lot of animation into it, as this excerpt shows:

*Kim, sitting on the couch, starts singing the book. It is a story about animals doing aerobics, and so she accompanies the singing with lots of upper body actions. The children watch her actions but do not join in. [A few minutes later.] She continues to sing the story, and dance her actions. The children are now joining in the dancing/actions (Kim obs, para 347).*

(note: Kim obs, para 347 = observation of Kim, paragraph 347).

Kim spent most of her time at constructive and art activities and would therefore probably fit with Kontos' (1999) cluster group of arts and craft specialists, although her emphasis on creativity also meant that she encouraged imaginative and pretend play.

#### **4.1.2.2. Approach**

On session, Kim's main focus was on interactions with older children. She would very occasionally take on the role of teaching adults, but did not see this as her function at Playcentre. She was, however, always happy to chat with the adults on a social basis. She did not often interact with toddlers, leaving them instead to their parents. The idea that toddlers are best cared for by their parents has been noted in other Playcentre settings as well (Gibbons, 2004).

The older children often approached Kim for help. They asked for such things as a sticking plaster, to be face painted and to have books read. Kim almost always responded positively to approaches from children, such as in this incident:

*Tristan (a 3 year old girl) comes into the kitchen and talks to Kim, who bends down to listen and then says, "okay, Tristan, let's go". They go off to the toilet together, and Kim helps Tristan. Then she stands in the doorway and talks to Tristan who is out of sight in a cubicle. (Kim obs, para 97)*

Both she and the children seemed comfortable in traditional teacher/child roles where the teacher is the dominant partner who holds the power, but in the context of a warm relationship (Jingbo & Elicker, 2005).

Kontos (1999) describes a stage manager's role as getting and keeping children involved, rather than extending them. Kim often took on this role. Sometimes she provided or set-up equipment and stepped back, although she continued to stay nearby and encourage the play verbally. At other times she became more involved, as when she painted children's faces, animatedly read books, and facilitated a cooking activity. In these examples she provided the activity for the children, and by her enthusiasm she attracted them to the activity and held their attention. But she did not take the play beyond what was expected by the children or look for ways to extend the children's thinking about the activity, for example, by asking open ended questions (Mitchell et al., 2006). Kontos found that teachers in her study used the stage manager role often when involved in constructive activities, and Kim illustrates this style of teaching in that she preferred both constructive activities and the stage manager role.

Music and literacy were incorporated into Kim's teaching. Her musicality was shown in the way she was a confident singer, singing along to the background music, singing a book instead of saying it, and singing action songs with the children. She did not, however, lead group instrumental sessions with the children, bring her keyboard to play for the children, or play the guitar that she knew was kept in the Playcentre office. Literacy was incorporated in the form of reading, and an emphasis on alphabet recognition in planned activities. Her knowledge of literacy

teaching appeared to come from her general knowledge and discussions with others at the centre.

One area Kim was particular about was that of children's behaviour. Values of sharing and caring were high on her priority list. The only times that she stopped and redirected children involved incidents concerned with these values, for example if she felt that they were not sharing properly or being nice to each other. Kim also said in her interview that the general behaviour of the children and the adult responses to the children's behaviour had influenced her choice to attend this particular Playcentre.

#### **4.1.2.3. Interactions**

De Kruif, McWilliam, Ridley & Wakley (2000) categorise teacher-child interactions as being directive when they tell or suggest to the children what to do, or when the teacher does something (e.g., reads a story) for the children to listen and watch. They categorise responsive interactions as those that generally do not require an action from the children, such as when the teacher praises them for something well done. Kim's interactions with children were both responsive, acknowledging verbally that she had noted what they were doing, and also directive in terms of suggesting things to continue their play or performing for them. She did not often stop or redirect children, nor did she give them a lot of extra information about what they were doing. Her interactions with children were predominately verbal and always enthusiastic; showing enthusiasm was a matter of principle for her. Kim was a very chatty person, and used a lot of external self-talk as she worked.

#### **4.1.3. Linking Background and Teaching: Kim**

Good sales techniques include being responsive, results-oriented and relationship-oriented (Reilly, 2006). These behaviours could be seen in Kim's emergent curriculum approach to planning, her largely responsive style of interactions, her enthusiastic, relational approach to activities and her emphasis on a quality end product. This does not necessarily mean that she approached early childhood education this way simply because of her sales training and experience. However it does seem likely that the behaviours that contributed to her being a good salesperson had become an integral part of her interactions with others, and she

therefore used them in her teaching practice. These findings support other studies that show that the way a person teaches reflects who they are (Ayers, 1989, 1991; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Kelchtermans, 1993; Mepham, 2000).

Her Christian value system also impacted on her teaching practice. Here again, Kim's teaching practice reflected who she was as a person (Ayers, 1989, 1991; Walsh, 2007). When talking about teaching, she stressed her belief in the importance of children learning about morals, the value of the family in teaching children, and her expectations of caring and sharing behaviour from the children. Her evaluation of the programme's success was based on the children's behaviours. Kim's active involvement in a church as a child and young adult is likely to have influenced her emphasis on these values, which appear to have been assimilated into her life at a deep level. This is consistent with Fish and Cole's (1998) iceberg model of professional practice, which places values as the deepest level of the iceberg that contributes to visible teaching practice, and therefore as something that is very resistant to change. It is interesting to note that although Kim also spent a lot of time in Māori cultural groups as a school child, she did not practise a bicultural approach to teaching; for example, no observed use of Te Reo Māori on session, and a stated rejection of a bicultural approach to teaching in favour of a multicultural approach. I would suggest that what she learnt during her time in the Māori cultural groups was the practical skills of the songs and movements, but unlike her involvement with the church, the learning did not influence her value system. Therefore, in later life, the influence of her Māori cultural experience on her teaching appeared minimal.

Her current focus on parenting appeared to greatly influence her teaching practice. Kim tended to interact with children of a similar age to her son (the older children at the Playcentre), and her emphasis on literacy appeared to arise from the value she placed on her own son's development of, and interest in, literacy. Her expectations of other children's behaviour were measured against her son, as suggested by this quote:

*And I just think morals, with regards to being brought up in a Christian family, but just knowing what's good and bad and knowing what's right and wrong, to instil that into your children and to other children if they don't get that at home necessarily, it's a good thing to give them, you know, an idea on sharing, and caring and all those things that are in the contract, that Playcentre contract.... Because that's what I expect of Paul all the time.* (Kim obs, para 438).

Some teaching strategies that she used at home, such as keeping a play area tidy to remain inviting, she also employed at the Playcentre. However, at times she came into conflict between her home practices and centre practices. Examples were her comment “*it's actually hard at Playcentre, because they don't like you to clean up*” (Kim int, para 374), and Kim's permissive attitude to gun play, which was different to others' attitudes in the centre. In these instances, Kim would modify her behaviour to conform to the Playcentre's expectations; but it was obvious by her comments that she did not modify her views on these subjects, again showing that deeper levels of the iceberg of teaching practice are harder to modify (Fish & Coles, 1998).

Playcentre appeared to be an appropriate choice for Kim as its philosophy of free and creative play matched her own philosophy of early childhood education, but its emphasis on parent involvement and on progressively taking on more responsibility within the centre did not seem to be as good a match for her. Continued training, empowering other parents and taking on responsible roles in the centre are all features of increased participation in the community of practice (Wenger, 1998) that is formed by the Playcentre (Gibbons, 2004; Powell et al., 2005). Kim, however, seemed to hold herself on the periphery of this community of practice. She was not interested in continuing with the Playcentre training, as, by her own admission, she disliked studying and was not intending to continue in education when she left Playcentre. Therefore Kim's teaching practice was informed mostly by her general knowledge and her parenting experiences, with some pedagogical learning coming from the other centre members. She was a relatively experienced Playcentre member, having been involved for over two years, but while she was always happy to chat with the other adults, she did not see it as her role to teach them anything.

Kim resisted becoming more involved. For example, with her musical background, she could easily have volunteered to lead music activities in the centre. But because she had been heavily relied upon in this role in the past she chose not to reveal her musical talent to the others in the centre, for fear of being expected to lead music activities more often than she wanted to. She appeared to value the freedom to choose the activities that she wanted to do (such as cooking) at the time she wanted to do them. This freedom can be limited when one is responsible for running specific aspects of the session.

Although Kim spent the first decade of her life on farms, her knowledge of farming was not referred to in any way that I noted. The centre was an urban one, and farming was not a part of the everyday experience of the children or the adults at the centre. Therefore farming knowledge would not have helped connect Kim with the children she was trying to teach, or to the adults at the centre. That point of connection can be a powerful tool in developing relationships and therefore in teaching effectiveness (Walsh, 2007). This knowledge of farming can therefore seem irrelevant to the current situation. It could be debated, however, whether this background of Kim's could usefully have been used to extend the children's general knowledge.

She also listed outdoor activities as among her interests. This was not obvious in the way Kim taught, in the ideas she suggested, the activities she planned or participated in, or the conversations she had with children. This can partially be attributed to the number of wet days during the observation period with limited outdoor activities being available, and to Kim being pregnant and tired. It might also be that the sort of activities Kim liked, such as going for walks, are difficult to arrange in an early childhood centre without a lot of planning. Since Kim tended to avoid detailed planning, preferring the spontaneous approach, this would not have been the type of activity that would appeal to her. Another possible reason is that perhaps these activities were of a more personal nature; something to do for herself and together with her child. With this view, this interest was not necessarily something she wanted to share within the Playcentre, especially in the child-centred early childhood environment where activities must be suitable for participation by very young children.

In summary, Kim's teaching practice seemed to echo the behaviours of a good salesperson: enthusiastic and responsive interactions, flexible and emergent planning, and a focus on relationships. Her knowledge base for early childhood education came from her experience as a parent, and from participation in the community of practice formed by the Playcentre. Her philosophy was grounded in Christian values, and in a love of creativity which was something that matched Playcentre philosophy very well. She was selective about the skills she brought to Playcentre, choosing not to reveal the extent of her musical abilities but participating willingly in cooking activities often. This summary is shown in Table 4.

#### 4.1.4. Summary Table: Kim

Aspect of Background	Examples of Teaching Practice	Interpretation
Sales work experience and training.	Emphasis on enthusiasm as a way of motivating children. Focus on the importance of relationships. Flexible and responsive planning approach. Importance of quality end product.	Behaviours relevant to good sales technique have been assimilated into her general behaviours and teaching practices.
Involvement with Christian church.	Emphasis on good behaviour for all children.	Christian values deeply assimilated into her cultural practices.
<i>Participation in Māori cultural clubs during school years.</i>	<i>Te Reo Māori not used on session. Preference for multicultural approach.</i>	<i>The learning related more to the Māori waiata than the tikanga. Māori values not assimilated into her own value system.</i>
Parent of one boy (3 years 9 months); pregnant.	Played with older children. Incorporated literacy. Tidied up.	Teaching focused on the age group and interests of her child. Used strategies she found useful with her own child, <b>when not in conflict with centre practices.</b>
<i>Only short term vocational training courses since left school.</i>	<i>Not involved in ongoing Playcentre training. Pedagogical knowledge drawn from general knowledge and centre practices.</i>	<i>Confident in own ability to contribute within Playcentre, and parenting, without formal training. A dislike of studying, and not interested in early childhood education as a career.</i>
Interest in cooking.	Helped with cooking activities even when not rostered on.	Current interest of hers.



Music – singing and piano.	Spontaneous singing seen often, action songs sometimes used when taking the end of session group time. No use of instruments or planned music sessions.	A confident singer. Singing required no preparation, to play the piano she would have to bring her keyboard. She no longer regularly played piano, so this was not a current interest. Prior history of being heavily relied on for her piano playing, so wanted to avoid this happening.
<i>First ten years spent on farms.</i>	<i>No activities or conversations linked to farming.</i>	<i>Has not lived on a farm for a number of years, so is not current focus. Centre culture is urban, so farming knowledge might appear irrelevant.</i>
<i>Outdoor activities e.g., camping, tramping.</i>	<i>No activities or conversations linked to such outdoor activities.</i>	<i>Winter term limited outside activities. Pregnant and tired also limited being active. A personal activity enjoyed outside of the ECE setting. Difficult to arrange in ECE setting.</i>
Interest in creative activities.	Became the face painting expert. Allowing children to be “creative” was a philosophical and practical focus.	A match between Kim’s philosophy on creativity and that of Playcentre’s, creating a comfortable space for Kim

**Table 4.** Links between Kim’s background and teaching practice, and possible interpretations. Colours represent factors linked to Rogoff’s (2003) planes of analysis: green for the personal plane, orange for the interpersonal plane, and purple for the cultural/organizational plane. Italics are used where a link has *not* been made.

## **4.2. SALLY**

### **4.2.1. Background: Sally**

Sally was an experienced Playcentre member, having been at the Playcentre for close to five years. She was the co-team leader of the session, along with Beth, who had been a friend of hers before they joined Playcentre. Sally had been a Playcentre child herself, with her mother having been involved in a small rural Playcentre. Sally began school at a small bilingual primary school. When her family moved to a large city she attended a primary school with predominately Pākehā children. This she found to be a big culture shock. Near the end of her secondary schooling she went on a one year exchange to Sweden. The choice of Sweden was influenced by the fact that her mother's grandparents come from different parts of Scandinavia. Upon her return to New Zealand, Sally studied Physical Geography and Swedish at University, and gained an MA in Hydrology.

After gaining some work experience at call centres in New Zealand, Sally travelled overseas to the United Kingdom. There she worked as a barmaid and a chef, and met a South African chef who eventually became her husband. When she came back to New Zealand she worked at an administrative job while taking some planning and accounting papers with a view to getting a council job using her geography degree. However, instead she started a family and did not pursue a geography career path further. At the time of the study, she and her husband owned a café, and Sally helped with its administration.

Sally had started at Radiator Springs Playcentre when her oldest son, Johnny, was just over 1 year old. Near the beginning of this study she completed Course 3 of the Playcentre Diploma, at which time Johnny was aged 4 years 11 months and her younger son, Peter, was just 1 year old. During the term I was observing, Johnny was farewelled to school. Before Peter was born, Sally had been the President of the centre, but at the time of the study she was the Equipment Officer whose job it was to buy new equipment.

Sally's interests included photography and scrapbooking, which were reflected in the artistic nature of her children's profile books.

## **4.2.2. Teaching Practice: Sally**

### **4.2.2.1. Planning**

Sally had a flair for organization and, as an experienced and knowledgeable member of the centre, was pivotal to the running of the session. She continually discussed aspects of the session and centre with the other adults, as well as answering their questions on where things were or explaining the systems of the Playcentre. It was Sally who answered the phone if it rang, Sally who organized the daily observation schedule, Sally who organized the session trip. She was available to talk to adults at any time, even if it meant interrupting a teaching event with children. For example, when she was sitting talking to a child who was eating prior to the group morning tea, Sally was interrupted eight times: six times by adults and two times by her younger son.

Despite this emphasis on organizing, Sally's planning was not rigid. When she wrote up an observation or a session evaluation, the planning ideas were not detailed or sometimes absent. However, she did plan in advance what she would do when she was rostered onto an activity. For example, she came prepared to make bread when it was her turn to cook with the children. Beyond that, she planned for free play – setting out activities and letting the children choose.

Sally would probably be classified by Kontos (1999) as a generalist, as she was not found predominately in one particular activity setting. She played in the construction area; with paint, clay and with playdough; she read stories; she played outdoor games; and she dug in the sandpit. She preferred open ended activities, especially in art:

*I like to set up equipment that they can do what they like with, rather than "we don't make that." (Sally int, para 359)*

She often introduced literacy elements into the play, as in this incident in the sandpit:

*Jason has the hose, and Tristan wants a turn, so Sally says “Tristan wants a turn on the hose, Jason. What did we do when you wanted a turn? The ABC song. We’ll do that and then it’s Tristan’s turn.” She sings the ABC song, then Jason compliantly hands over the hose to Tristan. (Sally obs, para 242)*

She also introduced science concepts, such as discussing the wetas in the book she was reading, or connecting sandpit exploration with recent events:

*Johnny takes the hose and pours water onto the edge of the channel. Sally comes over and says “Johnny, your hose is making new channels and then it’s going to make a landslide, just like the one on the news recently.” And as the edge of the channel crumbles away, “There it goes. That’s just how a landslide happens.” (Sally obs, para 234)*

#### **4.2.2.2. Approach**

Sally came to Playcentre not just so that her children could play, but also so she could play with her children. Therefore when she was not rostered onto a specific job or activity, or caregiving for her toddler, she joined in the play involving her own children, usually her oldest boy. This meant that when not caregiving for Peter, she predominately played with the older boys at the centre, and in the areas that her boys enjoyed (sand, construction, running games, books and playdough).

The different relationships that Sally had with her own and other children in the centre were seen in the different patterns of initiating and accepting interactions (Jingbo & Elicker, 2005). Sally’s children were much more likely to approach her than the other children were, and were more likely to follow her suggestions. But Sally’s interactions with both her own and other children were similar in the way they followed the traditional demarcation between teacher and child (or parent and child), with the adult as the dominant partner in the interaction. Power relationships in interactions with adults were fairly evenly divided: either Sally would assume or be put into a position of knowledgeability or authority (as the experienced team leader), or she would position herself as a peer to talk about social issues or discuss the session with her co-team leader. The two team leaders worked closely together to lead the session.

Sally was conscious of her position as a role model for the other adults, both in terms of being responsible for the session and the centre with its equipment, and in modelling appropriate interactions and “doing things with the children” (Sally int, para 273). However, she was aware that her pedagogical leadership was not as strong as maybe it should have been, which she attributed to a lack of energy due to disrupted sleep because of her sons’ needs.

Her pivotal role in the session meant that Sally was often not involved with the children, or was interrupted by other adults. When she was involved with the children, she preferred the role of stage manager (Kontos, 1999), as a matter of philosophy:

*I like to think that children get to a place where they sort it out for themselves. I like them to be doing what they think they need to be doing, in a way that they think they need to be doing it, but not in such a way that they’re going to trash anyone else. (Sally int, para 180)*

In this role of stage manager she provided equipment and demonstrated the process, then stood back and monitored the activity. For example, she showed children how to roll a bun but did not engage in conversations about breadmaking, and she showed Peter how to use a dropper with food colouring then stood back to let him experiment on his own. However when she joined in play in the sandpit her role changed substantially to what Kontos (1999) terms a playmate or play enhancer, actively incorporating scientific language and concepts, and cooperating in imaginative play.

A prominent role that Sally took upon herself was that of photographer. She often took photographs of the children’s play and always had her own digital camera with her that she would offer for use if the Playcentre camera could not be found. Sally did not use this as an explicit teaching opportunity, and the children generally ignored her when she took photos. The photos were mostly used for the children’s portfolios although occasionally a wall display of photos would be made.

#### **4.2.2.3. Interactions**

Consistent with Sally's preferred role of stage manager, she used a lot of directive strategies to extend interactions rather than responsive ones. She reinforced rules, asked questions to elicit statements of facts, and provided suitable (often science related) information pertaining to the activity she was involved in. Although she used a lot of redirection in her interactions (telling children to stop what they were doing, or trying to get them to do something else), she could not be classified as a controlling teacher as identified in de Kruif et al. (2000) as she also used a lot of the other strategies, such as informing and following on from their current activities.

#### **4.2.3. Linking Background and Teaching: Sally**

Sally was highly educated, with several qualifications gained since leaving school. This predisposition to lifelong learning likely influenced her decision to participate in the Playcentre training, even though her background and interests did not lie in education but instead in science, cooking and administration. She said she felt that she had strengths in financial management and accounting, and might pursue this direction in the future. Certainly her organizational flair had an outlet in the Playcentre setting.

Her occupational training in cooking was evident in her competence when preparing food with the children, something she said did not worry her (unlike others, for example Jane). However, when not rostered on, she did not help with cooking at all. She said in her interview, "I can cook, I have to cook, but...", and made a face that indicated she did not necessarily want to cook all the time (Sally obs, para 664). In contrast, Sally had no occupational training in photography, but a keen interest. She voluntarily took photos often and used the skills learned through her scrapbooking hobby to produce beautiful profile books for her children. In these two situations, cooking and photography, there is a distinct difference in the voluntary utilisation of skills. The difference here appears to be the passion and interest in the activity and pleasure personally gained from it, rather than mere competence. Just because Sally could do something did not mean she would voluntarily or regularly do it on session.

It is interesting to note, however, that although Sally took photographs often, for her it was an adult-centred activity. She took photos for her own pleasure, for the centre documentation and for other parents. Sally did not use photography as a learning experience for the children. They were the subject of the photos, but were not involved in the process of producing them. It is likely that the children would still be learning about photography from observing Sally, as an apprentice would (Rogoff, 1990), but Sally did not make any attempt to structure the activity to include the children.

Sally's training as a scientist was evident in the technical terms she used during the extended play episode in the sandpit, and in the science discussion she had once while reading books to children. She had a stated preference for being in the sandpit (although only one play episode was observed during the study) which she attributed to her being a trained hydrologist. However, she did not have an overall science orientation; relatively little science teaching was noted, and none was the result of a planned learning experience. Of her prior occupational experiences organization and administration were her prime orientations at the Playcentre. Yet her most in-depth knowledge centred around science in general and hydrology in particular. Why was this subject knowledge not used more in her teaching? According to Sally, she had "evolved away" from a science career, and this knowledge did not seem relevant in an early childhood setting. She said of her degree:

*That sort of background is so far removed from dealing with children.*

*You know, it's... it doesn't seem relevant. (Sally int, para 654).*

As outlined in the Section 2.1.2 of the literature review, there are some authors in Aotearoa/New Zealand currently arguing that early childhood teachers should have more in-depth subject knowledge and that children benefit from more depth in subject teaching (e.g. De Kock, 2005; Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Willberg, 2001). Yet the parent-as-educator here has some in-depth knowledge but does not use it to its full potential because of a lack of perceived relevance. This is indicative of the

discourse of appropriate knowledge for early childhood, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

What Sally did see as relevant was her experience of being a parent. This had a large influence on her approach to teaching. It influenced who she played with, where and when. It also determined her expectations of other children's behaviour, as shown in this quote which echoes that of Kim's:

*The fact that you have your own children determines how you deal with other people's children, and also determines what you expect from other people's children. Because I have my children I expect them to behave in this manner, then I expect that other people's children will learn to do that as well. (Sally int, para 608)*

Although the basis of Sally's teaching practice was drawn from her own parenting experience, she had also participated in the Playcentre training and therefore knew about current theories of learning and teaching. This was shown in her reference to schema when a boy was throwing things in the sandpit and in her use of a variety of formal observation methods. However her teaching practice emphasised setting up the environment and letting the children explore with minimal interference. This is a philosophy consistent with traditional Playcentre philosophy with its roots in progressive education philosophies (Densem & Chapman, 2000; Hill, Reid, & Stover, 1998; May, 1997). The progressivist view of education was child-centred and activity-based, viewing the child as having needs that must be met, and as someone who could not be rushed into learning something before they were ready to learn it (Burman, 1994). In this model "the commitment to learning by doing rather than being told meant that the teacher's active role was defined as structuring the environment provided for the child (Burman, 1994, p. 165). This is the philosophy that Sally's mother would have been exposed to when she was a Playcentre parent-as-educator some years ago. Sally's mother lived nearby and had a large influence on Sally's parenting style both in terms of past role modelling and in the advice and role modelling she provided for Sally's own children in the present time. So the fact that Sally's educational philosophy matched that of Playcentre's was probably no coincidence.



The early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) is based on sociocultural theories such as those of Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner and Bruner, and a view of the child as “a competent and confident learner” (p.9) who learns through relationships with people, places and things. In one way Playcentre, with its emphasis on family involvement and parents playing and learning alongside children, has always promoted these approaches. But in another view, for many years Playcentre practice was based on progressivist theories which highlighted an individualistic, developmental approach (Burman, 1994; Densem & Chapman, 2000; Hill et al., 1998). Cullen (2003) suggested that 10 years after the introduction of the draft of *Te Whāriki* the practice in many centres had not markedly changed and continued to be based on developmental, rather than sociocultural, theories; and she noted that recent doctoral research in Aotearoa/New Zealand indicated that teaching practice was very resistant to change. Sally reflected this to some extent. It is interesting to speculate that the resistance to change in this situation was a result of Sally’s mother’s indirect influence. Traditional, developmentally-based Playcentre philosophy had become Sally’s philosophy, and therefore she was very comfortable in the Playcentre environment. Morris (1992), in her study of sisters, found that a large number of the women said they “heard their mother’s voice” when dealing with child rearing situations (although they didn’t always do as they were told!). In Sally’s case, I would suggest that hearing her mother’s voice resulted in resisting a change to a more sociocultural teaching approach.

Sally’s teaching practice seemed therefore to be based on traditional Playcentre and developmental philosophies, developed from both her own upbringing and her own parenting experiences. This resulted in her advocating free and uninterrupted play for the children with a focus on developing an independent child. She enjoyed playing near her own children at the centre and this tended to influence the activity settings in which she could be found. Sally was selective about her background skills and knowledges that she used in her teaching, using those skills (such as photography) that she was passionate about, and limiting the use of those knowledges (such as tertiary level science) that did not seem relevant in the early childhood setting. However, she also spent a lot of time in management activities,

rather than directly teaching. Her pivotal role in the centre seemed to focus on dealing with administration matters and guiding other adults.

A summary of these links between Sally’s background and her teaching is given in Table 5.

#### 4.2.4. Summary Table: Sally

Aspect of Background	Feature of Teaching Practice	Interpretation
High level of tertiary education	Playcentre training to Course 3, therefore a person of responsibility in a supervision team.	Training done because of habit of life-long learning and responsibility to the centre, but not because of specific interest in early childhood education.
Organizational flair.	Team leader, and pivotal to the organization of the session.	Organization is a strength. Sense of responsibility to the centre.
Cooking experience.	Confidence with cooking on session, but avoids it.	A skill she can do, but not a passion.
Photography interest.	Continually takes photographs for portfolios and Playcentre records. Doesn't actively teach photography.	A passion of hers.  Done for documentation purposes, not as an activity.
Parent of two boys (1 year and almost 5 years).	Plays in areas that her boys enjoy. Plays with older children, playmates of her older boy. Expectations of other children based on her own children.	Parenting is the focus of her life at present.

Science degree.	Science teaching, <i>but only on some occasions.</i>	Lack of perceived relevance. Active teaching does not fit with philosophy of letting children discover on their own.
Mother was involved in Playcentre.	Strong Playcentre philosophy: let children do it for themselves, open ended activities, emphasis on creativity.	Her parenting and education role model (her mother) strongly upheld Playcentre philosophy.

**Table 5.** Links between Sally’s background and teaching practice, and possible interpretations. Colours represent factors linked to Rogoff’s (2003) planes of analysis: green for the personal plane, orange for the interpersonal plane, and purple for the cultural/organizational plane. Italics are used where a link has *not* been made.

### **4.3. JANE**

#### **4.3.1. Background: Jane**

Jane grew up in Anglo-saxon, middle-class Christchurch until she was about 11 when the family moved to Auckland. This was a huge culture shock for her, as she moved from an Intermediate school in Christchurch that had one Māori child in the school, to an Intermediate school in Auckland where the roll was 98% Polynesian. In time she feels she adjusted, but her family say she was very quiet in her first year in Auckland.

She left school at the end of the fifth form with no formal qualifications and started working. She had jobs in shops, bars and cafes, and as a gardener, before using her skills as a sewing machinist (learnt from her mother and from experience) to get a job in the film industry as a contractor in the costume department. This was a job she enjoyed and was good at, even though the hours could be very long when there was work on. Then she and her partner bought a house and started their family. Jane had no intention of going back to the film industry while she had young children because of the long hours spent working. The future did not appear to be laid out for Jane but she seemed to be enjoying the present, which revolved around her children, and her interests of painting, movies and gardening.

Her two children were Alan, who had his fourth birthday during the course of the study, and Karel, who had just turned two. Jane had been at Radiator Springs Playcentre for about two years and had completed Course 1 of the Playcentre training. She had been on the Friday supervision team for several terms, but had swapped in the last two terms to be on the Tuesday team so that she could benefit from the team leader Katie's experience. Jane's job in the centre was that of Housekeeper, which involved buying in consumables such as flour.

## **4.3.2. Teaching Practice: Jane**

### **4.3.2.1. Planning**

Jane worked within the planning structures of others. She listened at the planning and evaluation meetings, and occasionally contributed; but generally she followed the plan laid down. She used to contribute ideas for, and carry out, craft activities when she was on the Friday session, but on this Tuesday session her craft ideas hadn't been successful and she had stopped trying them. Jane supported the ideas that were planned for any session by putting them into action, even to the extent of taking her turn doing those things she didn't enjoy such as cooking with a large group of children, or taking the end of session activity. She was not assigned to do observations very often. When she did write up an observation, her follow-on planning consisted of providing craft activities or suggesting an emphasis on developing relationships.

According to Kontos (1999) Jane would be a generalist, as she moved around a lot of different activity settings. Given her interest in art and craft, it seems surprising she did not spend more time involved in these types of activities at Playcentre. Jane spent most of her time outside, possibly because that was where her boys usually played, or possibly because outside there was more room to spread out and therefore was less crowded. She actively looked for places where there were no other adults, often finding children at activities on their own or in small groups:

*So I do a lot of cruising round on session. And if I see a spot that needs to be filled, for example, nobody's manning the carpentry table or something, then I'll just, I will sit down and Karel usually plonks himself on me and just stays there for a while. I don't like flitting too much, but there is a sort of degree of just moving. (Jane int, para 271)*

When Jane did settle at an activity, she would stay there for quite a while – at least 15 minutes, sometimes 30 minutes. Chaos could erupt somewhere else, but Jane would leave those people closest to the disruption to deal with it. If she was involved with a child, she would stay there while the child still wanted her help. In her words:

*I don't want to flit around, that's not helping anybody. That just leads to more [chaos]. It seems like sometimes there's butterflies, just everybody's flitting around, you know, and ... I just see it as tiring.* (Jane int, para 281)

#### **4.3.2.2. Approach**

During a session, Jane's younger son, Karel, would often follow her around and want cuddles. This she provided, often while sitting down at the edge of an ongoing activity and watching what was going on. Her attention would generally not be on him, however, but on other children's play or on the conversation of the adults nearby. This meant that she was available to other people even when she was attending to the emotional needs of her own child.

Jane interacted with children of a range of ages, mainly because she went to areas where there were few people and then interacted with whoever was there, rather than always being at one activity or with one group of children. She played with boys more often than girls but this may be because there were more boys than girls at the centre, or it may also be because her own children were boys. However, she would sometimes deliberately target girls to play with, such as Rosa, the girl who liked painting, or Charmaine at the carpentry:

*So, coming from a woman's point of view I was totally impressed that Charmaine was fascinated, and, you know, really wanted to saw through THREE pieces of wood, so I really wanted to encourage the girl to achieve her goal.* (Jane int, para 299)

Jane's interactions with children were initiated by her on more occasions than by the children, but the responses in both directions were positive. When interacting with children she took on roles that involved sharing power (such as being a playmate) almost as often as she took the role of teacher/child with the teacher as a dominant partner (Jingbo & Elicker, 2005). With adults, she generally took roles where power was shared between them, but sometimes put herself in a subordinate role such as asking for directions, being a teacher's helper, or following the lead of

the other adult. Only very occasionally she took the dominant role in adult-adult interactions, most notably to look after or emotionally support someone.

The approach to teaching that Jane took varied with the context she found herself in, and so would not really fit with either of Kontos' (1999) cluster groups of either stage managers or play facilitators. When she supported Charmaine at the carpentry, her main role was to hold the wood and encourage her to keep going; that is, a stage manager type approach. In contrast, when her sons invited her to play hide and seek, she joined in as a playmate, continuing the game by her involvement in it. On another occasion, Jane and another adult took a group of children out to the nearby playground, and then she was focused on the role of a safety monitor, working closely with the other adult to ensure all children were accounted for and able to enjoy the playground. But at the end of session when Karel was tired, she would often find a place to sit and watch what was going on whilst cuddling him, so she would become an observer. These roles were taken on in relatively equal measures, with the exception of safety monitor, which was taken up rarely.

Jane continually watched what was going on around her and participated in side conversations with other adults, especially when taking a stage manager approach to an activity. However, when she was acting in a playmate role she became much more focused on the activity being undertaken.

When not involved with children, Jane often helped the other adults. She almost always helped set up the morning tea tables, she fetched things for other adults, or held a baby for someone while they talked with a large group of children. Jane chose the background jobs, where she provided practical help but was not the centre of attention, and where she followed the lead of the other adults.

#### **4.3.2.3. Interactions**

In her interactions with children, Jane focused on helping the children achieve their own goals. For example, she helped a child to catch a cardboard fish with a magnet, to write a message in a card, and to saw through a piece of wood at the carpentry table. This help was generally practical rather than verbal; so she physically guided the rod, she wrote the words that were dictated, and she held the

wood to steady it as it was being sawed. She did not engage in problem solving discussion, give explanations or suggest new ideas. Rather, she followed the children's lead, without an agenda of her own and without elaborating.

### **4.3.3. Linking Background and Teaching: Jane**

Parenting was the priority that shaped Jane's teaching on session. The emotional needs of her boys determined the session team she chose to be on and influenced her choice of activities to focus on or participate in. She was always available to cuddle Karel when he wanted it, and this often resulted in limited mobility for her so that her teaching interactions were from a stationary point. Limited mobility, however, often suited her preference for small groups and one-on-one interactions. It also meant that she was available for those children who had similar preferences. Connections based around a commonality are important in teaching as they allow relationships to be formed (Walsh, 2007).

Jane's knowledge base for teaching came mostly from general knowledge, her own parenting experiences and from observing the experienced parents at the Playcentre. Although she had a dislike of formal study she was an active learner, shown in the way that she changed to the Tuesday supervision team to work with the experienced Katie and in the way she gathered information from other parents when she suspected Karel had chicken pox. This type of learning was congruent with her practical, non-verbal approach to most situations.

Creativity in the form of art and crafts was a passion of Jane's, seen in her deliberate choice of job as a sewing machinist in the film industry, in her painting hobby, and in her stated belief in art as an expression. However, this creative side of her was rarely seen on session. As Jane said,

*I felt like you weren't seeing the full side of me, because of this whole arty, creative thing that we've talked about, that hasn't really been achieved or anything on Tuesday session. I kind of felt like there was a slice of pie that you weren't seeing. (Jane int, para 534 )*



Jane gave two reasons for her lack of involvement in creative activities during the time that I was observing. One was that the craft activities she had previously tried on the Tuesday session had not been successful, even though similar activities had been popular with the children on the Friday session she had worked at previously. This lack of success had discouraged her from setting up these types of activities. Given that the core group of children on the two sessions were the same, she wasn't sure as to why her activities didn't attract children, but thought that possibly Katie's philosophy of unstructured art activities might affect the vibe of the session. In other words, she saw the culture of the session, influenced strongly by the dominant and experienced team leader, as affecting the activities that would or would not work. Jane saw Katie's philosophy of teaching art as the Playcentre philosophy, and her own philosophy was different:

*My philosophy might not be the proper Playcentre philosophy. I sometimes believe that children need a bit of help when they start at the art work, and that sometimes they might need an example to follow, to give them an idea to build on. I don't always think it's a good idea just to put equipment and things out and let them try and figure it out. I believe that, you know, if you wanted children to play a constructive ball game, you'd show them some rules. You wouldn't expect them to come up with the idea of rugby themselves. That isn't the philosophy of our team leader at the time, and so it's a hard thing to get happening sometimes on Tuesday session. (Jane int, para 191)*

Jane's philosophy echoes the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia preschools, where the development of art skills is viewed as too important to be left to chance, so specialist art teachers and art studios are used to teach specific skills and techniques to support children's creative endeavours (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1993). This is an example where creativity and explicit teaching of art are not mutually exclusive, which contradicts the dominant Playcentre discourse.

The other reason Jane gave was that her focus of the moment was on her older son's emotional and psychological dealings with his friends. She felt that he needed a lot of support and she was focussed on learning how to provide that

support. Teaching art and craft on session was therefore of secondary importance to her, possibly one that she might come back to later.

I would suggest that there might have been an additional reason for her not using her art passion much in her teaching practice. She stated in her interview that she did not need Playcentre to be creative and that she met her own, and her children's, needs for creative expression at home. So any of the creative activities she did at Playcentre would be done for the children rather than done 'for real' as a creative activity carried out because she wanted to express herself. It is interesting to note that in some cultures children are not separated from adults and given play tasks to do, but are instead involved in the community as legitimate peripheral observers (Rogoff, 1990) who observe the adults involved in authentic tasks. As the children get older, the adults help them to attempt these authentic and culturally valued tasks, structuring their help so that the children gradually take more responsibility for the completed task. But ECE in Aotearoa/New Zealand separates the children to give them a space and time that is specifically their own, where adult activities are peripheral (Brennan, 2007). Perhaps this arrangement does not make the best use of the adults' skills. Alati (2005), writing from the United States, recommends that teachers use their passions and interests to enhance the curriculum in early childhood centres. Jane illustrated this in one teaching incident where she was helping a group of older boys, who did not usually do art, to draw and make cards. During this time she continually talked with the boys rather than other adults and did not spend a lot of time looking around at the rest of the children. The teaching seemed engaged and effortless, which was relatively unusual for her. However, aside from this one observation, the rest of the time Jane appeared to deliberately put on hold her creative passions. Possibly this is because at Playcentre she is expected not to model, but to gently encourage the children whilst taking no part in the artistry herself.

Music was another area where Jane appeared to set aside her own interests. She had a love of rock music, but this was not evident in her teaching on session. During the study she never put on music to listen to, joined in a dancing activity (except on the fringes), or initiated the use of instruments. The culture of the centre promoted specific children's music as the (only) appropriate music to be played for

children. Although Jane did not agree with that view, she never challenged the culture of the centre on that issue, but instead avoided being involved in music. This related to her dislike of conflict and her strategy of avoidance rather than confrontation. It also may be related to her membership of the community of practice (Wenger, 1998) that operated in this centre. She still felt like a new person in the centre and found working in a cooperative venture with a lot of other people quite challenging. But Jane acknowledged that she was starting to be transformed by being a part of the centre, being pulled in “like the Mafia” (Jane int, para 507), and that in a few years time she might view her participation in Playcentre differently. She held herself on the periphery of the community and resisted “indoctrination” (Jane int, para 507). She definitely resisted being told what to think, but this took the form of conforming to the group culture whilst at Playcentre and following her own course outside of it. Jane was able to keep a wide perspective on the importance of Playcentre to her and her family, saying:

*Jane: If you've got an unhappy home life, then that's what you're going to remember as a small child. You're not going to remember the fun you had at Playcentre, you're going to remember...*

*Suzanne: It's not going to compensate.*

*Jane: No.*

*Suzanne: You're going to remember the home life part.*

*Jane: Yeah. So I think that's what really is important to children, is a happy home life.*

(Jane int, para 523)

A significant feature arising from Jane's case study, therefore, was the way her parenting priorities and behavioural preferences defined her teaching practice. Her peripheral membership in the community of practice resulted in her both conforming to and resisting the dominant philosophies and ideologies, especially with regard to art and craft activities and to the type of music appropriate to the setting. These issues are listed in Table 6.

#### 4.3.4. Summary Table: JANE

Aspect of Background	Feature of Teaching Practice	Interpretation
Parent of two boys (2 years and 4 years).	Available for cuddles with younger boy, sometimes limits mobility. Focuses on older boy's dealings with friends.	Responsive to her children's emotional needs.
Behaviour preferences	Avoids teaching large groups. Actively seeks individuals to work with.	Allows her to connect with those children who also dislike large groups.
No formal qualifications but a lot of work experience.	Not involved in ongoing Playcentre training. Pedagogical knowledge picked up by mentoring.	Preferred learning style – informal, individualistic and practical.
<i>Art and craft interest, creative background (such as sewing in the film industry).</i>	<i>Only one teaching event seen during observations. Had tried some activities previously, but they had "fizzed" on this session, so had stopped trying them.</i>	<i>Current focus was on her older boy's emotional issues. Prefers product oriented craft activities with overt help from adult, which is counter to her view of Playcentre philosophy and the philosophy of the current (dominant) team leader, so she avoided conflict by avoiding these types of activities. Child-centred art activities do not allow her to express her own artistry in an authentic situation.</i>

<p><i>Rock Music interest.</i></p>	<p><i>Not seen (no putting on music, dancing or instrumental use).</i></p>	<p><i>The culture of the session is to use “child” music and she preferred adult music. She avoided conflict; and still felt new to the centre, so did not challenge this.</i></p> <p><i>She preferred not to actively lead large group activities such as instrumental sessions.</i></p>
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**Table 6.** Links between Jane’s background and teaching practice, and possible interpretations. Colours represent factors linked to Rogoff’s (2003) planes of analysis: **green for the personal plane**, **orange for the interpersonal plane**, and **purple for the cultural/organizational plane**. Italics are used where a link has *not* been made.

## **4.4. TRACEY**

### **4.4.1. Background: Tracey**

Tracey grew up in the local area surrounded by lots of children. Her mother was a crèche worker and Tracey spent two years at the crèche while her mother was working there. Her maternal grandparents, who lived nearby, were teachers and Tracey had spent a lot of time with them on weekends and holidays. Among her other interests, she learnt ballet as a child and participated in many performances during her school years.

On leaving school she completed a diploma in Hotel and Tourism. After a few years she tired of the shift work that the hotel industry demanded and she moved into retail work, travelled overseas for a while, and eventually got a job in New Zealand doing administration work. When Tracey married, she felt ready for a change of career and gained a Diploma of Beauty Therapy. She found a salon to work in that matched her philosophy of using products based on natural substances such as plant extracts and essential oils, rather than “a whole lot of chemicals” (Tracey int, para 40), and continued working there part time when she had her family. Tracey was creative and enjoyed renovating houses. She and her husband deliberately bought an old villa and at the time of the study were still in the process of renovation.

The main culture Tracey had been brought up with was Aotearoa/New Zealand European (Pākehā), but was also exposed to Scottish culture through her grandparents and had visited her Scottish relatives when she had been travelling. Since she had been married, she had had contact with Indian culture through her husband’s sister-in-law, with whom they had frequent contact. She liked involvement in family celebrations that were based around the Indian/Hindu traditions.

At the time of the study Tracey had two boys: Joseph, aged 3 years 9 months, and Mark, aged 2 years. She had been at Radiator Springs Playcentre for 18 months and had been designated a co-team leader of the Tuesday session for a term. For

the term following my data collection she asked to be the sole team leader, to gain more experience. Tracey had finished Course 2 of the Playcentre Diploma, and had started on Course 3. Her job at the centre was making sure the centre's photographic films were developed and the photos distributed appropriately. Her job from the next Annual General Meeting was going to be Information Officer, an important job within the centre which involved answering enquiries from potential new members, and inducting new members.

#### **4.4.2. Teaching Practice: Tracey**

##### **4.4.2.1. Planning**

Tracey was an organized person so she planned a structure for what she was going to do, but not in such a way that it restricted her from responding to the situations she found herself in. An example of this was the day that the climbing boxes and ladders were put into the sandpit. This had been decided the week before at the team end-of-session planning, when they were looking for ideas to interest and extend some of the boys who were interested in climbing. Tracey had suggested putting the climbing things in the sandpit because she had seen it before. On the day it was set up Tracey made sure that she was available to support play in that area, and responded when the play developed:

*Tracey tells me about the intense fantasy play, how the children had decided that the ladder was the rickety bridge from the original Shrek movie, how they all knew the movie well and could relate to it, and how they took on roles from the movie. Mostly the boys were the dragon and the girls were Princess Fiona, except the boy in the green top was Shrek for a brief time, and Joseph was Princess Fiona briefly. And Tracey became the donkey.*

(Tracey obs, para 411)

So although it was important to Tracey to follow her planning idea through, she was flexible enough to enter into the new direction the play took and used it to extend the children's play.

When Tracey set up an activity she preferred activities that would result in the children producing something they could take home. An example of this was when she designed the popcorn making activity so that every child had a named bag of popcorn to take home. It was a stated philosophy of hers:

*I quite like the kids having something to take home ... something to take home and show: "Look Dad, look what I made today."* (Tracey int, para 315)

She also felt that children could be overwhelmed by having too many activities to choose from and wanted to offer fewer activities on a Tuesday session but encourage the children to explore them in more depth. This was the sort of change she wanted to make when she became the team leader the following term.

Most of Tracey's time was spent at physically active activities. She danced, she ran and rolled down hills, she pushed swings, and she was often near the climbing equipment. But she also was involved in art and craft activities, in quieter play in the sandpit, fantasy play, science and cooking. This variety of activity settings placed her as a generalist in terms of Kontos' (1999) cluster groupings.

#### **4.4.2.2. Approach**

Tracey stated firmly "I'm there for the kids, not the adults" (Tracey int, para 231). This was confirmed by the observation data, as Tracey spent the majority of her time interacting with children. When she did interact with adults, it was not often for a social chat, but more likely to be joining in the play that was happening alongside the children. Tracey played a lot with the older boys, with a few notable exceptions: such as when she played with Erica, the daughter of her friend (2 yr 6 mth), or the two times she specifically played with babies.

Her relationship with her toddler, Mark, was interesting and highlighted the differences between interactions as a teacher and interactions as a parent. Tracey would generally accept interactions initiated by children, with the exception being that she ignored half of Mark's attention seeking negative behaviours, although she always accepted his invitations to play. Mark would accept interactions initiated by Tracey that involved playing, comforting or caring, but he would sometimes reject directive or disciplining comments. This was notable because no other children



rejected Tracey's directions or disciplining (except her older son, once), although they sometimes declined her invitations to play. When Tracey initiated play situations she generally used approaches that shared power in the interactions. She often took the role of a playmate, entering the play instead of managing it, and this might have resulted in children being more prepared to accept her initiations.

Tracey was patient and responsive to the emotional cues that children gave, supporting them when they were unsure. An example involved her friend's child, Erica, who Tracey knew was fond of music:

*Noticing Erica retreating to the couches, but watching the music set up, Tracey says to her "Erica, are you going to come and do some dancing with me?" She picks her up and moves over to the back of the now big group waiting for the music to start. (Tracey obs, para 343)*

#### **4.4.2.3. Interactions**

In her interactions with children, Tracey would often use elaborative strategies, giving explanations and information about her directions or the observed phenomenon that was the focus of their shared attention. Examples were scattered throughout the observations:

*[Mark has gone over to the tree and put his arms around it. Tracey comes over.] She picks up Mark and holds him near the tree, saying: "A big tree. What's happened to the tree? The leaves are gone 'cos it's winter. Then in summer, no spring, they'll come back." (Tracey obs, para 14)*

*She talks to Johnny about being careful on the boxes because the parachute is hiding the ends of the boxes, and moves away a little. (Tracey obs, para 153)*

*One boy is throwing something at the fence and Tracey says "We don't throw things at the fence" and gives the reason, which is about the houses that are behind the fence. (Tracey obs, para 166)*

*She takes the popcorn machine away, saying “so that no-one gets burned”, and brings it back to the table empty. (Tracey obs, para 278)*

Providing explanations was an explicit philosophy of hers, relating to both childrearing and teaching:

*I've just always explained, yeah. With Joseph and Mark, I've always explained things, and whether maybe my parents did that, I don't know. But it seems logical, you know, like when we say to Joseph or Mark “No”, we'll tell them why, rather than just saying “No” and they'll at least know why. (Tracey int, para 334)*

#### **4.4.3. Linking Background and Teaching: Tracey**

Tracey spent a lot of time interacting with the children, entering into play and trying to extend their play with new ideas and responsive interactions. Although she had an administration background and held an administration job at the centre, she did not get distracted during session with administration tasks. Her focus was on being actively involved with the children, showing the commitment to teaching that Goldstein (1997) discusses as being a characteristic of professional teachers: “commitment to the students and to the subject matter being taught should be a fundamental part of a teacher's responsibility” (p. 19). Yet Tracey had no teacher training beyond Playcentre training. What she did have was an upbringing that was strongly influenced by teachers: both her mother and her maternal grandparents were teachers. It is possible that a lot of her commitment to teaching arose from a value system that she acquired from her parents and grandparents.

A recent cultural influence on Tracey that was not evident in her teaching practice was that of Indian culture, through her sister-in-law. This was a significant feature of her extended family setting, although it was not something that Tracey appeared to have assimilated into her own life. There was no indication in her teaching practice of Indian or Hindu values or cultural objects. However, at the time of the study, the centre was not focussed on introducing different cultures to the children and there would not have been much opportunity for Tracey to show her knowledge

of the Indian culture during the usual Playcentre sessions. It would take a concerted effort on her part to introduce this knowledge, unless it was such an integral part of who she was that everything was viewed from the perspective of that culture. This is because value systems and philosophies that have developed over the years are not as easy to choose to ignore as skills such as administration (Fish & Coles, 1998). Growing up surrounded by teachers in the home may have influenced the type of teacher Tracey has become; one that is committed to being involved with the children. But the exposure to the culture of her Indian sister-in-law has not affected her teaching, despite Tracey highlighting its significance in her extended family. The exposure to this other culture appeared to have not been intimate enough, prolonged enough, or at a formative stage in Tracey's life to have yet made a significant impact on the way she taught.

The relationships between Tracey as a parent-as-educator and the children at the Playcentre were complex. Tracey was prepared to relinquish power in interactions with children and her general approach was that of a play facilitator or playmate rather than a stage manager or safety monitor (Kontos, 1999). However, the children generally complied when she did assert her authority and requested things of them. In contrast to this teacher-child relationship, the relationships with her own children had both more familiarity and more conflict. This is the intimate yet public relationship of parents and their children that Goldstein (1997) discussed. Goldstein illustrated this with a story about Connor (who had learning difficulties) and his mother who was in the classroom helping him with writing. When he became frustrated he hit out at his mother, which surprised everyone as this was not the behaviour expected in the classroom. But rather than react to this, Connor's mother just sighed and helped someone else. Here the special relationship between Connor and his mother resulted in different reactions than might have occurred between a different teacher and child. In this current study, Tracey and Mark showed evidence that their parent-child relationship also resulted in different reactions to a teacher-child relationship.

The multiple types of relationships between children and adults were accepted without fuss or comment in the Playcentre, by children and adults alike. Further, Tracey's relationship with Erica seemed to reside on the boundary between a

parent/child and teacher/child relationship. Erica's mother was a close friend of Tracey's, but was not on the same supervision team as Tracey so therefore Erica was left on the Tuesday session without her parent. This was new for Erica at the time of the study. Tracey often took on an emotionally supportive role for Erica, more than she did with any other child other than her own sons. She would notice and respond to Erica before she got upset and started crying. In effect, Tracey took on a surrogate parent role with this child who she already knew well because of Tracey's relationship with Erica's mother.

Tracey's experience as a parent came through in her teaching in many other ways as well. For example, her parenting philosophy of giving explanations for her instructions was evident in her teaching on session. She played in the areas that her boys liked to play in, although it could be that her boys enjoyed those areas because Tracey enjoyed them and had always encouraged them. She also used her knowledge of her sons' interests to extend the play of other boys on session, for example when she entered into fantasy play based on space travel:

*The boys have got round Velcro bats with tennis balls stuck to them, and Tracey is helping them sit down again on the tyre swing. Then she says: "Everyone in the space rocket? Everyone has their space shield? Right, let's go!" (Tracey obs, para 174)*

In contrast, Tracey's work experience and training as a beauty therapist was not evident. A beauty therapist might perhaps gravitate towards the dress-up area, or where the girls are playing, or spend time discussing make-up or beauty treatments with adults. None of these things were observed. Tracey described herself as liking to focus 100% on the life stage she was at, and her current stage was focussed on raising her young children. Her work as a beauty therapist belonged to a prior stage and did not have as much importance in her life at the time of the study. The data were therefore also consistent with the idea that her current focus had the most influence on her teaching.

Her background in dance, however, did show up in her teaching even though it was not a current focus. Although it had been many years since she had been involved in dancing lessons and dance recitals, she still took every opportunity to dance,

unselfconsciously, on session. This confidence in performing also took the form of acting silly for the children, to make them laugh:

*Tracey is playing a game with the boys on the swing, where she stands with her back to them and then turns around quickly with a roar and a crouch, to which the boys react with loud laughter. She repeats this over and over, and one time bends down to look at them through her legs. The boys love this performance from her. (Tracey obs, para 170)*

There is obviously a difference in Tracey's use of her dancing skills and her beauty therapy skills her teaching practice. One explanation of this difference is the perceived relevance of the skills and knowledges in the early childhood setting. Dancing is an accepted and approved feature of our early childhood education, and was a part of Tracey's own childhood education. Therefore dance can be seen as entirely relevant at a Playcentre. However, Tracey said she did not see her work as a beauty therapist in any way relevant to her work at Playcentre. Beauty therapy, to her, was about relaxation, quiet and serenity; whereas Playcentre was high energy, loud, active and interactive. The two worlds, for her, could not combine. The promotion of gender specific activities connected with beauty therapy would also be likely to meet with disapproval in Playcentre because of the culture of limiting stereotyping of gender roles. Therefore beauty therapy would be viewed as a less acceptable skill to use on session than dancing.

Another strong interest of Tracey's was in the practical work of renovating houses and I did find it surprising not to see this more strongly in her teaching practice. She would involve her own children at home when she was working:

*We're happy for them [to help], and we've got photos of Joseph cutting things with his little spatula, or putting concrete on the bricks and stuff. (Tracey int, para 102).*

She admitted this anomaly when she talked about how she did not like to do carpentry at Playcentre, and rationalised this by referring to the lack of resources at the carpentry:

*I actually don't like the carpentry table, but that's more because there's no resources on it. I love building, you know handywork stuff, like painting and nailing and stuff, but it's probably, yeah, it's that we don't have very good resources on it. (Tracey int, para 391)*

Although she attributed it to a lack of resources on the carpentry table, if this was the only inhibiting factor then Tracey was the sort of person who would have ensured resources were supplied. An alternative reason for her reluctance to be involved in carpentry at Playcentre is the child-centred context and resources, and Playcentre's emphasis on process rather than the end product. Tracey's interest in building was in a real life context, that of renovating houses, where the end product was always the aim of the activity. The carpentry table at the Playcentre does not have this authentic aim, and I would suggest that this is the reason that it failed to capture Tracey's interest and therefore her involvement.

In summary, Tracey showed herself to be an active and involved educator on session. She used parenting strategies that she had found effective, formed complex relationships with the children, and had been influenced in her philosophy of teaching by the teachers that were her role models as a child (her mother and grandparents). She was not, however, as strongly influenced by the cultural influences of her sister-in-law, even though Tracey had a lot of current contact with that family. Tracey's work experience in administration and beauty therapy did not impact on her teaching, mostly by her own choice. Although she undertook administration tasks in the centre, she kept them separate from her teaching on session; and beauty therapy she saw as being not relevant to the Playcentre setting. In contrast, she often showed her passion for dancing, and for physical movement, both of which are seen to be relevant to the discourse of early childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Her passion for house renovations did not find an outlet in her teaching on session, which she attributed to a lack of resources on the carpentry table, but might be indicative of the lack of an authentic end product for carpentry at the Playcentre. Table 7 below lists these issues.

#### 4.4.4. Summary Table: TRACEY

Aspect of Background	Feature of Teaching Practice	Interpretation
<p>Mother and grandparents were teachers</p>	<p>Active teaching on session – tries to extend play, to develop understanding and scaffold the children to do things for themselves. Focuses on children, and on education rather than administration or adult relationships.</p>	<p>Although she has never been trained as a teacher herself, her role models have all been teachers and this seems to have influenced her approach.</p>
<p><i>Sister-in-law shares Indian culture with their family.</i></p>	<p><i>Not seen on session at all.</i></p>	<p><i>Has not become assimilated into her life.</i> <i>Centre culture does not provide much opportunity to use this knowledge.</i></p>
<p>Parent of two boys, (2 years and 3 years 9 months).</p>	<p>Plays a lot with groups of older boys, generally has her toddler nearby. Complex relationships resulting from being a parent on session, or a surrogate parent. Uses her parenting philosophy of giving explanations in her teaching. Uses her knowledge of her sons' interests to extend play.</p>	<p>Parenting is a current focus, and gives her confidence and skills to use in teaching. Being a parent and being an educator on session are inseparable, and makes for complex relationships.</p>

<i>Beauty Therapy</i>	<i>Not seen on session, e.g., does not gravitate to girls and dress-ups, does not converse with adults about beauty treatments.</i>	<i>Not a current focus of her life. She possibly had a passion for helping people rather than a passion for Beauty Therapy itself. Lack of perceived relevance of beauty therapy to teaching.</i>
Learnt ballet as a child	Confident to dance on session, and perform for the children in general.	A long term passion of hers. Accepted relevance to early childhood teaching.
<i>Interest in House Renovations</i>	<i>Not seen on session.</i>	<i>Lack of resources on carpentry table. Lack of an authentic context for carpentry at Playcentre.</i>

**Table 7.** Links between Tracey’s background and teaching practice, and possible interpretations. Colours represent factors linked to Rogoff’s (2003) planes of analysis: green for the personal plane, orange for the interpersonal plane, and purple for the cultural/organizational plane. Italics are used where a link has *not* been made.



#### **4.5. CONCLUSION OF CASE STUDIES**

Prior to undertaking this research discussions with other Playcentre members produced anecdotal evidence that there were many people who incorporated their prior training into their teaching, for example by turning everything they did into a science experiment or always introducing maths concepts into their teaching. I expected to find more systematic evidence of this phenomenon in this research. However, the results of the case studies showed that prior training was not as big an influence on their teaching as were their current interests, and especially their parenting experiences. The overall lack of connections that were made between the parents-as-educators' background and their teaching practice was also unexpected. There was a wide range of background experiences that, for various reasons, were not utilised in their teaching practice. The next chapter explores these results by using Rogoff's (2003) three planes of analysis to look for the similarities and differences across all four case studies.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. CROSS CASE DISCUSSION

In this multiple case study the quintain (Stake, 2006), or the object of interest, is the individual parent-as-educator; and the question being asked is how their teaching practice can be interpreted in the light of their life experiences. The previous chapter explored this question with regard to four specific cases of parents-as-educators. In this chapter I extend the analysis to look for commonalities between the four cases, and to examine the differences. To guide this analysis I use the framework developed by Rogoff (2003). Her work focuses on analysing the processes of human cultural activity. Rogoff rejects the positivist approach of separating and isolating different components for study and argues instead that concurrent information is required about the individual, the relationships between individuals, and the cultural-institutional tools being used to understand the developmental processes occurring. Her view is that to isolate any of these aspects is to lose vital information which is not re-gained when the components of study are put back together. Rather Rogoff advocates using planes of analysis where one of these aspects (individual/interpersonal/cultural) is the focus of analysis and the other aspects are kept in mind as general background information. This is similar to levels of analysis used by Wenger (1998) albeit in a less explicit way, when he explores learning as it relates to individuals, communities of practice and organizations. A single plane of analysis can be used to explore one aspect of a situation in depth, or, by focusing on each plane of analysis in turn, a holistic picture can be built up.

Some recent studies have used this approach, such as Gibbons (2004) in her study of children's learning during the morning tea routine in two different Playcentres. Fler and Robbins (2004) also used the three planes of analysis in observing and assessing children. This was in an Australian study to develop an assessment process for early childhood that was more consistent with sociocultural theory than the established practices. The current study follows these by also using the three planes of analysis to build a holistic picture.

The rest of this chapter focuses on each of these planes of analysis in turn. Using the personal plane, I look at how the individuals' life stories affected their teaching, and discuss the choices they made in regard to which aspects of their background they incorporated in their practice. I then focus on the interpersonal plane of analysis to examine how their teaching practice was mediated by the community of practice that the Playcentre formed, and how their individual agency within the community affected their teaching. Finally, I discuss how alignment with Playcentre philosophy both constrained and empowered the parents' sense of agency as educators and members of the Playcentre.

## **5.1. PERSONAL PLANE**

### **5.1.1. Current Interests and Concerns**

Learning and development are not the exclusive domain of children. Erikson is one well known scholar whose stage theory of development covered the entire lifespan (Bird & Drewery, 2000). Likewise, the concepts of development as transformation of participation (Rogoff, 1990, 2003) and identity as a continually negotiated learning trajectory (Wenger, 1998) are not limited to a particular age group. The effect of this continuing development throughout adulthood was evident in this study, as the parents-as-educators focused on their current interests and concerns, and made choices about their past and future lives. This sense of living in the present whilst being embedded in a time line is captured by Ayers (1991), who describes "the present reality as a moment in an unfinished story" (pp. 46-47). In this section I look at the effect of the parents-as-educators' present realities on their teaching practice.

#### **5.1.1.4. Parenting**

A strong current focus for all of these women was parenting. All the case study adults had chosen to be parents at this time in their lives, and all had been parents for less than five years. All of them were parenting as their main occupation, with any paid employment being of a part time nature. In this, they fitted the profile of Playcentre parents-as-educators identified in previous studies (McDonald, 1982; Powell et al., 2005). They were at Playcentre because they wanted to be involved

with their children, and despite some difficulties, they were enjoying this period of their lives:

*Even though some parents work part time, or might be a couple of days a week and that, you're still there for your children, and you're enjoying that time, and you want to make the most, or I want to make the most of it. 'Cos it's not a long time. For me it's a privilege to be able to be involved in stuff, and to get to do fun things. (Tracey int, para 548)*

*Jane is still at the playdough table, talking to others cleaning up around. She says "this is the best life I've ever had... much better than working." (Jane obs, para 260)*

Their teaching practice was influenced by their current pre-occupation with parenting, but in different ways for different parents. For some parents-as-educators this meant focusing on playing in the areas where their children were, and possibly making a choice to play in a different area to what they might otherwise have chosen. For example, Sally preferred to be in the sandpit, but when her child was an infant she spent much more of her time indoors so she could be near him. Others were less concerned with playing with their own children on session, but considerations for their children still influenced their decision making. Jane showed this by swapping her supervision team day so that she could learn from an experienced team leader regarding dealing with older boys' behaviour.

One thing that all four parents-as-educators did was to draw on their knowledge of their own children's development and behaviour and their own successful parenting strategies to inform their teaching practice on session. Sally and Kim stated this explicitly:

*The fact that you have your own children determines how you deal with other people's children, and also determines what you expect from other people's children. Because I have my children I expect them to behave in this manner, then I expect that other people's children will learn to do that as well. (Sally int, para 608)*

*Kim: You find when you're at home with the child what works and what doesn't. ...*

*Suzanne: So that's an example of your parenting skills that you are bringing to the session.*

*Kim: Yeah, I think so. Definitely.*

(Kim int, para 373)

This indicates that the parents-as-educators came to Playcentre already having some child development knowledge and with some strategies that had proven to be effective. However, their own children provided a limited knowledge base when dealing with a lot of different children on session, so this could have provided a problem for quality teaching unless this knowledge base was extended. Training and support, which builds on parents' existing knowledge, has been identified as a key element in successful parent-led programmes (De'Ath & Pugh, 1985; Mitchell et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2005). There is the opportunity to do this in Playcentre by both informal and formal methods (Mephram, 2000). Informal training is through participating in supervising on session and learning from those who are more experienced. The formal training is offered through the courses of the Playcentre Diploma.

Two of the case study adults (Kim and Jane) had a dislike of studying and had opted not to do the Playcentre training beyond the minimum requirement Course 1. Kim was extending her knowledge simply by participating in sessions, but Jane was actively seeking to extend her knowledge by learning from others. Sally and Tracey both had a history of continued education and they had taken up the challenge of Playcentre training. Their reasons for doing the formal training, however, were focussed on the centre's needs rather than their own needs as a parent. It appeared that for all of the case study adults, support for parenting came from informal interactions and participation more than the formal education offered. This finding is consistent with the findings of other recent studies, which have demonstrated the effectiveness of the informal support offered through early childhood centres, and the active role of the parents in accessing that support (Duncan, Bowden, & Smith, 2006; Thesing Winks, 2006). It is also consistent with

the study by Loveridge (2002) who found that people gain parenting skills and knowledge by experience and by testing out expert knowledge against their own backgrounds and the “advice and practices of trusted others” (p. 29). So for these four parents-as-educators, the process of participation as educators in Playcentre sessions could be seen to be important in the process of developing as parents. This suggests that they had a personal agenda motivating their teaching practice that went beyond a focus on educating children.

The fact of being a parent had an effect on relationships between adults and children at the Playcentre. The parent-child relationship is generally more intimate, and at times more public, than the professional teacher-child relationship, as discussed in Tracey’s case study. Yet this is not to say that the parent-child relationship is an inappropriate one for an early childhood centre. As discussed in the literature review, an ethic of care which is associated with the parent-child relationship is seen as important in ECE something to be encouraged. Moreover, children may respond well to relationships that are authentic in their range of interactions, rather than where reactions are always carefully controlled and slightly detached. Brennan (2005) noted in her study that children responded well to a particular teacher who often used teasing and a more informal familiarity with the children than other teachers, and discussed the children’s desire to be a part of adults’ real lives and authentic contexts. Jane had a similar idea when she said:

*I think it’s really important for the children to see adults behaving as adults, instead of always putting on the happy, looking-after-the-child face and maybe always talking at the child’s level. I think it’s really good for the children to see the grown ups interacting at an adult level, maybe not with dirty humour, but adult humour, you know, like grown up laughing, and grown up jokes, and grown up interaction and stuff. (Jane int, para 464)*

With parents-as-educators, there is the potential for children to experience relationships in an education setting that moves beyond the detached teacher, both directly with their own parent, and indirectly by observing other parent-child relationships. A blurring of parent/teacher boundaries also occurs when a relationship of friendship exists between the adults which results in joint activities

outside of Playcentre. Tracey demonstrated this in the way she interacted with Erica, the daughter of her friend, as discussed on Tracey's case study. Their relationship was more intimate than others in the Playcentre because of the friendship between the adults, yet it was not the same as the parent-child relationship Tracey had with her own children. The children at the Playcentre therefore experience a range of subtly different adult-child relationships beyond the traditional teacher-child one.

Yet in this study, the role of educator was definitely seen as something separate from and different to parenting. Tracey described the role of safety and behaviour monitor (Kontos, 1999) on session as "that supervisor/parent side of it...", but obviously saw that as only part of what she did at Playcentre. When Sally discussed her upcoming move to a starter group, with first time parents, she felt that it was currently operating more like a playgroup than a Playcentre (showing her strong alignment to Playcentre philosophy, which will be discussed later in this chapter). In her opinion the difference lay in the responsibility that the parents took for the running of the session. A playgroup, to her, was where someone set everything up for the children and the parents just had to bring their children along, and be parents rather than educators. Jane summed up the work at Playcentre by saying:

*You're there in the moment. Trying to parent your own children, help them through whatever stuff we're going through, and try and play with the other children and try to fulfil what you planned for the week before and try to keep the other mothers happy. It's very hard work at Playcentre, it's not the easy option.* (Jane int, para 448)

A parent-as-educator lives with this complexity of the relationship between 'being a parent' and 'being an educator' at Playcentre. A concept that I have found useful for understanding this relationship is that of a duality:

A duality is a single conceptual unit that is formed by two inseparable and mutually constitutive elements whose inherent tension and complementarity give the concept richness and dynamism. (Wenger, 1998, p. 66)

The parent-as-educator can be seen as a duality in terms of Wenger's definition. Being a parent and being an educator are both parts of who this person is, and the interaction between these parts fundamentally constitutes the parent-as-educator. The two parts are not opposite of each other: an educator is not defined as 'not a parent, nor is a parent 'not an educator'. The two parts transform each other: the teaching practice of the parent-as-educator is influenced by being a parent, and the experience of teaching in a Playcentre affects the development of parenting skills. Yet the parts do not transform *into* each other, as becoming a more experienced parent does not make them less of an educator or vice versa. There is tension involved between the two parts, but this tension can give rise to a richness that can be beneficial for children and adults alike.

#### **5.1.1.5. *Passions and Skills***

The focus on parenting at Playcentre, as discussed in the previous section, is an example of the passions influencing the parents-as-educators' teaching practice. They were all passionate about their role as parents and it was this part of their life that they focussed on whilst at Playcentre. They did not show as much passion for their working lives, whether previous or current, as they did for their parenting. This is not to say that they were not or had never been passionate about their paid employment but rather their current focus and passion, while at Playcentre sessions, was on the children. This passion for what they were doing is part of the triangle of teacherly love that Goldstein (1997) promoted as part of good teaching, along with intimacy and commitment. Indeed, she says that passion for teaching is similar to the passion a parent feels for their child. In this instance, it was similar to the point of being intertwined.

Apart from parenting, the parents-as-educators in this study had a lot of other skills and knowledges gained over their life times, but they did not necessarily use all of them. There was a strong sense of differentiating between things one could do, and things one wanted to do. I had many interesting conversations at the Playcentre with various adults who explained about their part-time work. The majority of them were doing jobs that they were skilled at doing, but not necessarily the job that they wanted to be doing. The purpose of their part-time work was



mostly financial, to allow them to do the things they were more passionate about. A similar differentiation between 'can do' and 'want to do' was seen in what the parents-as-educators chose to do when they were not rostered onto a job during the sessions. For example, one of the rostered jobs was preparing some food with the children. All the case study adults could cook - Sally even had previous experience as a chef – but only Kim expressed an interest in cooking. All of the case study adults prepared food with the children at some point during the observations, but only Kim helped out with cooking when she was not rostered on. Sally's view on cooking was that she could cook, she had to cook, but she saw it more as a chore than something she wanted to do. In contrast, Sally used the camera every session, and when she was not part of the supervision team she spent most of her time taking photos; whereas Kim only picked up a camera once, and then needed to have instruction on how it operated. Sally had a strong interest in photography, so when she was at Playcentre and free to choose what to do with her time there, she chose to use this skill that she was passionate about.

These parent-as-educators were selective about using the subject knowledge that they had. I concluded that, again, it was the passion for the subject, or part of the subject, that made the difference as to whether they used their subject knowledge. Sally was a scientist, specialising in hydrology. She felt she had moved away from science, and that it did not seem relevant in a Playcentre setting. Yet she still had a love of (that is, a passion for) sand and water. So while Sally used some science knowledge in her teaching, it was minimal; but she spoke of spending a lot of her time at Playcentre playing in the sandpit. Kim had music knowledge, which she deliberately chose not to use on session; but she had a passion for singing, and therefore would often introduce singing in her teaching.

Whilst it appears that the children are not receiving the benefit of the full range of skills and knowledges that the parents-as-educators could have brought to their teaching, there are benefits associated with teaching based on one's passions. Mepham (2000) identified the positive influence of personal interests on the professional development of teachers, and Alati (2005) argues that the passions of the teachers, as well as those of the children, should be used to guide the curriculum. The effect of this approach can be inspired teaching, and maintenance

of inspiration in teaching. The children have a role model of what it means to be passionate about something, with the possibility of generating subjects for joint attention and therefore, further learning. As Brennan (2005) argued, children just want to be a part of adult's lives, so if something is of interest to the adult there is a good chance the children will be interested too.

#### **5.1.1.6. Choices and Freedom**

When the parents-as-educators were selecting their passions from amongst the skills and knowledges that they had, it was sometimes an unconscious choice and sometimes a conscious one. There were some things specifically that these parents-as-educators chose to use or ignore. The fact that they were coming into a new community of practice (Wenger, 1998) meant that they could choose what to reveal about themselves and what to leave in their past. Jane delved into this area, saying:

*I think there's that side of things that you might leave some aspects of your personality. And I think you do that throughout your life anyway. Everybody's got closets, and you've got skeletons in the closet, and as you move through life and you move into a new area of life, you might just leave some things quiet. (Jane int, para 409)*

Kim had a very specific example of not revealing information about her past. She could play the piano and the guitar, but chose not to at Playcentre for fear that she would be expected to contribute more than she wanted to. She talked about her stubbornness when being asked to do things by other people, implying that she liked the freedom to be able to choose what to do. Tracey, who had a background in administration and support, had been contributing to the management of the Playcentre using those skills, but at the time of the study was making a conscious choice to take on more of a leadership role instead. She had not kept information about herself hidden, but was still making a conscious choice to develop a different set of skills. These examples support the idea of life-long development discussed in the introduction to this section, positioning these parents-as-educators as active participants in their personal growth through conscious choices to move in different directions.

### **5.1.2. Who You Are Influences Your Teaching**

Kelchtermans (1993) stated that “teachers’ professional behaviour and its development can only be understood properly when situated in the broader context of their career and personal life history” (p. 198). Mepham (2000), in writing about the teachers in her study, put it a little more succinctly: “the person they are is the teacher they are” (p. 135). However there are many different facets of people’s lives that contribute to personal development. In this study the data showed that some of the experiences and communities that the parents-as-educators had participated in had more effect on their teaching practice than others. I concluded that those experiences that had changed the person through the assimilation of new beliefs, values and assumptions were the ones that had the most influence. This conclusion is consistent with the iceberg model of teaching practice proposed by Fish & Coles (1998). The data showed that the experiences that affected the parents-as-educators at this deep level influenced everything they did, mostly without them being aware of it.

In contrast, experiences that affected the case study adults only by allowing them to gain new knowledge were not generally evident in their teaching even though they talked about them as an influence. This can be seen with Sally, where she named Scandinavian culture as an influence on account of her mother’s ancestry and her year long visit there in her teen years, and South African culture on account of her husband’s background. Neither the languages (Sally can speak some Swedish) nor the practices of those cultures were observed on session, or reference made to them at all. These cultures had been an influence on her life in that she had knowledge of them, but she had not assimilated their values or beliefs and made them evident in her teaching. However, the values of Sally’s mother, a Playcentre parent-as-educator herself, were evident in Sally’s practice. Sally said that Playcentre was “the way I was brought up” (Sally int, para 196), and as an adult, she echoed the Playcentre philosophy of free play in her own philosophy of teaching.

Similarly, Tracey stated that her life now was influenced by the Indian culture of her sister-in-law, and Jane by the Polish culture of her parents-in-law, yet these influences did not affect the teaching practice of either of them. Again, these were

cultures that the parents-as-educators had knowledge of, but had not assimilated into their own lives at the level of beliefs. In contrast, Tracey grew up in a family where her mother and grandparents were teachers, and this might have influenced her beliefs in the importance of education and her confidence to be actively involved. She certainly engaged with Playcentre fully, completing Course 3, offering to be a team leader, and spending a large proportion of her time on session actively teaching children, effectively acting more like a qualified teacher than many other parents-as-educators around her.

Kim also showed the influence of experiences that had affected her beliefs versus experiences that had not. She was brought up as an active Christian and in her young adulthood continued to play an active part in a church. This influence was seen in her teaching practice with her emphasis on values of sharing and caring, and she often talked about appropriate behaviour when articulating her philosophy of teaching or child-rearing. Her Christian values were an important part of who she was. Another group she participated in as a teenager was the Māori culture group at school, and she saw this as an important learning experience for her. However, although she learnt a lot of kapa haka, this experience did not lead her to embrace the concept of biculturalism as an adult or to use Te Reo on session. She learnt some practices of the Māori people (the songs and dances), but did not assimilate the values or beliefs that would help her align herself with Playcentre's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Kim's case study also reminds us that the context of the situation must be taken into account. Kim said she grew up on farms, and this experience in her formative years might be expected to be visible in the type of person Kim was. Indeed, she stated that she had a great love of outdoors and was always taking Paul out for walks or to the beach. Yet this was not seen at Playcentre, and possible reasons for this were discussed in her case study in Section 4.1.3. These reasons suggest that there were mitigating factors in the Playcentre context that might have inhibited the expression of her love of outdoors. It is also possible that the farming experiences were not assimilated deeply into her attitudes or values, possibly because by the age of 11 years she was living in an urban area. This example

shows the complexity of life stories and the importance of the context within which a teacher operates.

### **5.1.3. Summary of the Personal Plane**

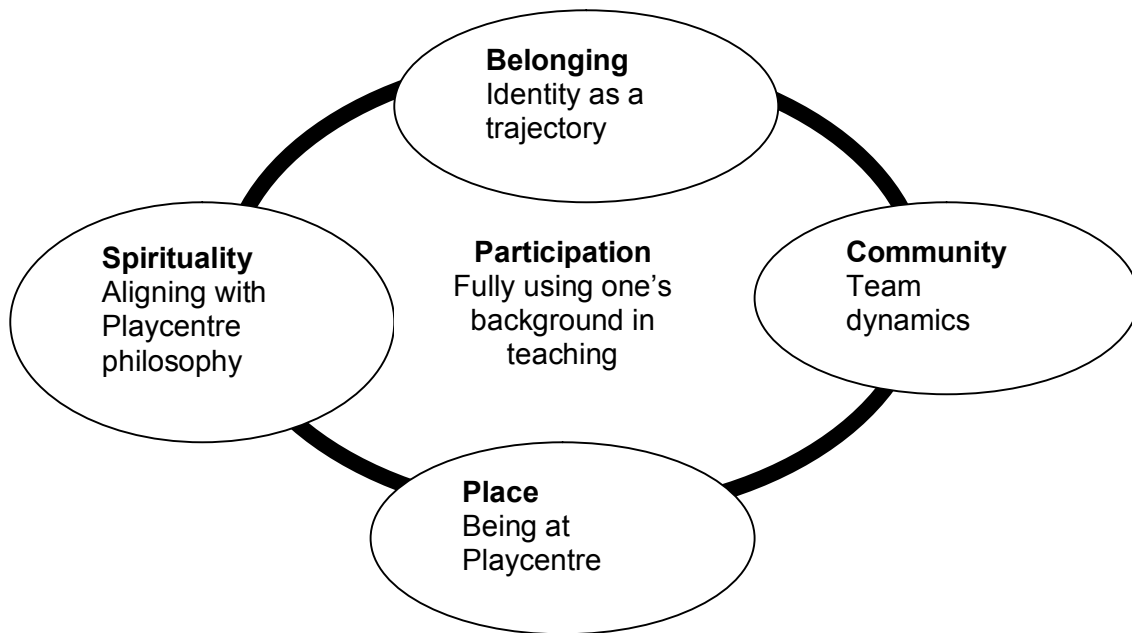
The teaching practice of these parents-as-educators was influenced strongly by their present reality which can be thought of as “a moment in an unfinished story” (Ayers, 1991, pp. 46-47). Their past life stories had contributed to the person they had become; and their active choices were contributing to the person they were becoming. Their current passions informed many of the choices they made when selecting which skills and knowledges from their backgrounds they would use in their teaching, whether this was a conscious choice or not. Parenting was a large component of their present reality, the focus of much of their passionate energy, and therefore had a large influence on the way they taught. In this respect the parent-as-educator can be thought of as a duality, where the two aspects of being a parent and being an educator interact to produce the teaching practice observed. However, the parent-as-educator is also participating in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) that mediates their personal teaching practice. The effect of the interpersonal relationships within the Playcentre on the individual parent-as-educator is discussed in the next section.

## **5.2. INTERPERSONAL PLANE**

There was potential for the parents-as-educators’ background to enrich their teaching practice with their wealth of background skills and knowledges, but the data showed that this did not always happen. The skills and knowledges of the parents-as-educators were filtered through their current passions and actively selected to construct their ongoing life stories. However, the degree to which they were free to make such choices with Playcentre, or to participate in the way that they would prefer, was constrained and empowered by their sense of individual agency within the group.

According to Bandura (2002), agency is the ability “to influence intentionally one’s functioning and life circumstances” (p. 270). He distinguishes between three types of agency: personal, proxy and collective agency. Bandura’s definition of personal

agency is that it is “exercised individually, [where] people bring their influence to bear directly on themselves and their environment in managing their lives” (p. 270). According to this definition, if a parent-as-educator feels a sense of individual or personal agency within the Playcentre, they will feel that they have control over their own actions and decisions. Reid and Stover (2005) developed a model for reflecting on how individual agency in a group is realised, and the influences on it. I have used this model, adapted to suit this study as shown in Figure 1, to analyse the way that interpersonal and cultural influences at the Playcentre constrained and empowered the parents-as-educators to use their background skills and knowledges in their teaching practice.



**Figure 1.** Model of individual agency with Playcentre, adapted from Reid & Stover (2005).

The elements of participation, belonging, and community are grounded in interpersonal relationships, and will each be discussed in turn in this section. The elements of the separate and physical place at Playcentre, and spirituality as it relates to this study, are linked to the Playcentre organization and philosophy as a

whole. They will therefore be discussed in the next section on cultural and organizational influences.

### **5.2.1. Participation: Using Background in Teaching**

A strong sense of individual agency within a group, according to Reid and Stover (2005), is indicated by full participation. Full participation for a parent-as-educator would occur when they felt empowered to use those skills and knowledges that they are willing to share. There is the potential for children to encounter a very rich curriculum if all those knowledges and skills are actually used. However, the data in the current study showed that participation was variable. An example of this concerned the music curriculum experienced by the children at Radiator Springs centre. Three parents-as-educators (at least) were competent and confident in playing musical instruments, but only one of them deliberately demonstrated this for the children. This was Marcia (not a case study adult), who was new at the centre that term, but was an experienced Playcentre member from when she had previously attended with her older children. She announced one day that the centre ought to get a guitar, whereupon Sally showed her where the centre guitar was kept. Having discovered this, Marcia got the guitar out every session thereafter, playing it for the children. In contrast, Kim, who could also play the guitar (not as well as Marcia, she claimed), did know the guitar was there. However, as discussed previously, she chose not to reveal the extent of her musical skills nor was her current interest in music, and therefore she did not play the guitar on session. Another non-case study adult, Sarah, revealed that she had an extensive musical background (she used to play in a band and could play several instruments to a high standard) and that she also had known the guitar was there. But Sarah was new to the centre and to Playcentre in general, having only been a member for a few weeks, and she said she hadn't been sure if it was appropriate to just get the guitar out and play. She was still watching and learning from those around her what was acceptable and what was not.

These three musical people could have provided a wealth of live instrumental experiences for the children, but for a variety of reasons the children experienced a limited version of what might have been possible. How much richer the curriculum

would have been for the children had this potential been realised! In her study of music at a childcare centre, Willberg (2001) concluded that limited knowledge of, and confidence in, music influenced the curriculum the teachers offered to the children. This example shows that while musical skills might be a useful for providing a rich musical curriculum, they are not in themselves sufficient, and using them is influenced by the context in which the educators find themselves. The next section begins to discuss some interpretations of why this potential was underutilised, with a focus on interpersonal relationships.

### **5.2.2. Belonging: Identity as a Trajectory**

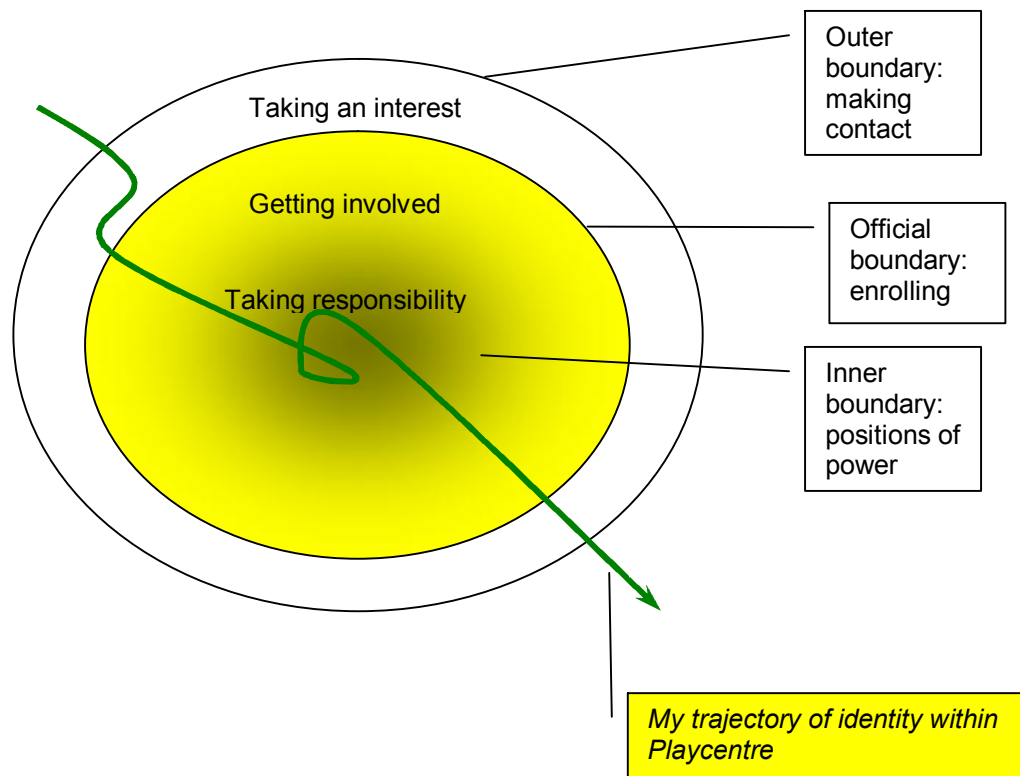
According to Reid and Stover (2005), a sense of belonging to a group is essential to having individual agency within that group and a pre-requisite for full participation. The data in my study strongly support this idea. In the music example discussed above, a sense of newness and of not yet knowing the rules prevented Sarah from using her musical abilities to their fullest extent. In contrast Marcia, although also new, was comfortable in belonging to a Playcentre and understood Playcentre culture from her previous experience, so was not as inhibited. Kim chose not to reveal her abilities based on prior experience with other groups, but it could also indicate a lack of commitment to the Playcentre group. It later became obvious that she was considering leaving the centre, and this may have prompted her to not volunteer information about herself that might have given her a greater role in this centre than she currently held or wanted. Kim's identity in the centre was on what Wenger (1998) might term an outbound trajectory, where her future participation was going to diminish rather than grow.

Wenger's (1998) idea of an identity trajectory applied to the identity that a person negotiated within a community of practice. He argued that an identity was not an endpoint but was continually constructed and therefore changing. A member's participation in the community of practice is affected by this trajectory, which includes both the past history of forming an identity within the group and the projected future identity. Both Sarah and Marcia were new, but their participation with respect to using their musical abilities was different, because Marcia already had an identity as a Playcentre member, whereas Sarah did not. For Kim, both her



past identity as an involved member in a different community of practice (her church group) and her future identity as an ex-member of Playcentre probably combined to limit her current participation in music at the centre.

Figure 2 depicts visually the idea of identity trajectories within Playcentre. The model combines ideas of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and of dispositions (Carr, Podmore, & May, 1998). The dispositions linked by Carr et al. to the *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) strands of “Belonging” (taking an interest), “Well-being” (becoming involved), and “Contribution” (taking responsibility) characterise the changing ways the adults constructed their identity in Playcentre.

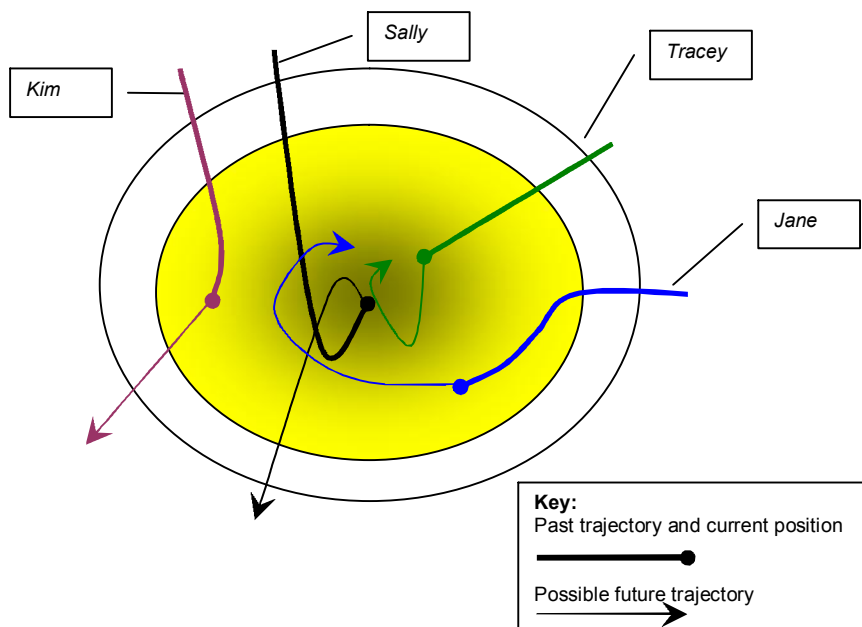


**Figure 2.** A model of identity trajectory within Playcentre.

I have illustrated the use of the model with my own experience of membership within a Playcentre. This trajectory indicates how I first joined the starter group at Playcentre but as I was not able to enrol in the general sessions for a while, because of the number of children at the centre, I was kept on the periphery of the community of practice. I had an identity as an outsider, but one who was intending to become part of the group. When I was formally admitted to the general sessions of the Playcentre I quickly became involved and soon took on positions of

responsibility. For some time I was part of the core group of people running the centre, taking on different roles, and my identity became that of an established member. Gradually I withdrew from being actively involved in major decision making and forward planning for the centre as my youngest child approached school age, and my identity was then of someone on an outbound trajectory soon to leave the centre. This trajectory was not pre-determined but was negotiated as time went on. As I progressed along this trajectory my individual agency (Reid & Stover, 2005) within the group changed as well. Initially as an outsider I was subject to the decisions of others which I could not control. Later as an established member I was able to influence what happened around me and was confident that I could do what I felt was best for me. When I was on an outbound trajectory my agency was lessened, both because I had less wish to influence things and because as someone who would soon not be part of the centre my opinion was not sought as much.

The trajectories of the case study adults can be depicted on this model, to help understand their individual agency within the centre with its influence on their participation in terms of utilizing their backgrounds in teaching. Figure 3 shows the four trajectories of the case study adults.



**Figure 3:** A model of identity trajectory of the case study adults within Playcentre.

Kim's trajectory shows her taking an interest in Playcentre and getting involved by enrolling her child and taking her place on a team. However, Kim appeared to hold herself near the periphery of the centre and avoided getting involved to the point of taking responsibility for what happened in the centre. Her role at the centre, that of Welfare Officer, was a people-oriented role but not one that carried a lot of responsibility for running the centre. She had completed the Course 1 training as that was compulsory, but was not interested in doing more courses, even though the centre needed people to complete the higher qualifications in order to remain licensed. Kim was very child focussed and saw her role in the centre as educating children, and perhaps supporting adults in her job as Welfare Officer, but certainly not in educating or being a role model for other adults.

There were also some more nebulous indicators that suggested she held, or was held, at the periphery of the centre. Whilst she seemed friendly with most people at the centre, no-one appeared to be a particular or close friend which was seen between others. She did not come to a special morning tea as many others did, as it was not held on a day when she was on the session team. There also seemed to be a difference of opinion between her attitude to gun play (by her son) and the attitudes of others in the team, which resulted, for Kim, in a lack of individual agency. This was shown when Paul asked to play with the construction set that he made guns from and was denied by another adult, who then felt she had to explain to Kim what she had said to him and why. The body language of the two women appeared quite awkward, as if neither of them were comfortable with the situation. Paul then asked Kim the same question and Kim replied "we're not allowed them" (Kim obs, para 179). Kim did not feel that she could make the rules in the centre, but had to abide by what the others had decided.

The effect of Kim being on the periphery of the centre and not moving further in towards the core responsibility group was that she chose carefully what she would bring to the curriculum. Not many people seemed to know her well, so what was expected from her was based on information that she chose to share. She did not want people to know that she could play the piano, so she just did not tell anyone and therefore no-one expected her to lead music at the centre. Although there was constant pressure in the centre for people to train for funding purposes, no-one

seemed to put pressure on Kim. The pressure seemed to be applied only to those people who were deemed to be on a trajectory towards the core of the community, those who would take, or were taking, an active responsibility for the centre. As a community member on the periphery, Kim had some freedom from expectations, but at the same time was marginalised when it came to making the rules.

In contrast to Kim, Sally was already at the core of the community, and had been for some time, as shown in Figure 3 on p.108. She had been the President of the centre, and although she had taken on more minor roles since she had had a second baby, she was still interested and involved in the decision making at the centre. For example, she took it upon herself to approach Beth about being the next President in the centre. Sally had just completed the Course 3 training not because of an ongoing interest in early childhood education, but rather because of a disposition for ongoing learning and a commitment to the needs of the centre.

Her identity as someone in the core of this community empowered her individual agency within this group. She was well known and shared her background openly with others and since she was in a position of power within the centre it enabled her to choose what it is she would do on session. For example, it was well known that she had worked as a chef and currently owned a café, but she was not expected to do more than her fair share of the food preparation with the children or providing morning tea for the adults, nor did she volunteer to do more than take her turn at these activities. It did not appear that she had any doubts that she could do what she wanted within the centre, even when it meant working with other people to achieve her ends. An example was when she talked about becoming the supervisor of the starter group the following term, she talked about the difficulties she foresaw in changing the culture of the group to one where the parents took more responsibility for the session, but she never expressed the idea that she would not achieve this. In another incident, Sally was looking for a cooking implement and couldn't find it, her response was "I'll buy it! I'm the equipment officer!" (Sally obs, para 72). When she talked about parents' recurrent complaints about lack of photos in their children's portfolios, her answer was "Well, pick up the camera and take them yourselves" (Sally int, para 399). To Sally, secure in her

identity at the core of the community, full participation was a simply a matter of choice with her individual agency not being limited by her sense of belonging.

Tracey classed herself as a “middle person”, someone who had been there a couple of years, not one of the “experienced people” nor one of the “new mums” (Tracey int, para 474). Her identity was of someone who had gained competence in the activities of the centre and was on a fast, in-bound trajectory (see Figure 3 on p. 108). She was actively seeking more responsibility and seemed poised on the boundary of the core group who ran the centre. She had finished Course 2 of the training and had immediately started on Course 3. Although she never articulated her reasons for doing the training the effect of doing this training was to involve her deeply and quickly in the community of practice. She had a passion for education and had ideas she wanted to put into practice but seemed to recognise that to do that she had to be in a position of power. This was why she was keen to become a sole team leader. As a co-team leader during the term I was observing, she felt that she had not been given any responsibility because the experienced team leader had not shared the role with her. She also mentioned several times about the way interpersonal relationships limited her personal agency in the centre, such as *“But you kind of feel you’re not allowed to be seen talking”* (Tracey int, para 446) and *“I’ve had a few ideas and they’ve just been shot down”* (Tracey int, para 478).

Tracey appeared to see her identity as a middle person as partially constraining, where she could not use her background skills to their fullest because of an informal hierarchy at the centre, a “pecking order” (Tracey int, para 438). Yet she also could project a future for herself as someone belonging to the core group taking responsibility for running the centre.

Jane had been at the centre slightly longer than Tracey had, and was friends with Tracey, but her identity trajectory within the centre was following a different path, as shown in Figure 3 on p. 108. She still felt like a “newbie” and was resisting being “indoctrinated” (Jane int, para 335). Rather than fully embracing the philosophy of the Playcentre, Jane held herself at the periphery and tried to maintain an objective view of work of the Playcentre. Unlike Kim, however, Jane gave the impression that she was on an in-bound trajectory, even if it was not as direct as Tracey’s. Jane

talked about doing the Course 2 training at some point, although she was not currently working on it. She was making friends within the centre, participating in joint activities outside of Playcentre with other centre members and generally becoming part of the network of the community of practice at the centre. Like Tracey, Jane was aware of an informal hierarchy constraining her agency within the centre and preventing her using her background fully in her teaching:

*Especially when it comes to assessing the observations and then planning from there. Her experience is just bang, bang, bang, and so she kind of might have the answers too fast and would be good practice for her to not speak and see if some of us could come up with the answers for our own experience. (Jane int, para 380)*

*There is an unsaid kind of vibe of keeping the momentum going.  
(Jane int, para 251)*

*Playcentre can sometimes be quite a conservative place. And I think that, maybe people think that children only ever want to hear children's nursery rhymes or children's music, and I don't agree with that. (Jane int, para 507)*

But Jane's response to this was different than that of Tracey's. Whereas Tracey endeavoured to get herself involved in the hierarchy so she could influence the culture of the centre, Jane conformed to the expectations placed on her. When she offered art activities, it was of the open-ended variety that the team leader preferred, even though Jane would have liked to sometimes use templates and other modelling strategies; and although she disagreed that the only music children want to hear is specific children's music, she never played any other type of music at the centre. As noted in her case study, however, this did not mean that she altered her ideas; rather she backed away from conflict or from challenging the status quo. Whilst this constrained her individual agency within the centre, she was philosophical about it more than frustrated:

*You know, it's just Playcentre, and it's not like I have a need to get my creativity out through the Playcentre. ... I'll do that at home.*

(Jane int, para 236)

This discussion shows how individual agency was affected by the different identity trajectories within the Playcentre community of practice. When trying to understand the way a parent-as-educator uses their background in their teaching practice, the data showed that it is important to consider not only their current identity within the centre but also their past and projected future trajectories.

### **5.2.3. Community: Team dynamics**

A second influence on individual agency within a group is that of community, as shown in Figure 1 on p. 104 (Reid & Stover, 2005). In this study, the community was represented by the session team that the parent-as-educator worked in, and the influence of team dynamics on teaching practice was a strong theme in the data. The interpersonal relationships between team members, differing team members' working and learning styles, strengths and preferences, affected the extent and manner in which the parents-as-educators used their background skills and knowledges. The parent-as-educator's background was only the starting point, which was then filtered through interpersonal relationships to produce the teaching practice the children experienced. When talking about the topic of temperament, Jane expressed the idea that an individual's teaching practice was affected not just by the person's own temperament, but by the interaction of all the temperaments in the team, creating something that was more than the sum of its parts. She described this as:

*All those different temperaments make a big ball of a temperament. And that kind of creates a vibe on session. And that's why the vibe on Friday session is completely different to the vibe on Tuesday session. Same kids, different ... group cult... group dynamic of adults.*

(Jane int, para 489)

Different sessions having different vibes was a generally accepted idea at Radiator Springs which was mentioned in many informal conversations, and was also obvious to me as an observer. Jane gave an example of the way the vibe affected teaching practices when she described how the creative activities she initiated on a Friday session in previous terms had gone well in the relaxed atmosphere of that session, but on the more structured Tuesday session similar activities had, in her words, fizzled. She attributed part of this to the different team leaders' setting the context for the sessions. The Friday team leader had encouraged team members to do whatever they liked, but the Tuesday team leader (Katie) had a strong Playcentre philosophy of open-ended, child-initiated art without the use of models to guide the children to a particular end-product, which Jane did not always feel met the art needs of the children. The result was that sometimes different art experiences were offered on the different sessions. Yet Jane felt that even when the art activities she offered met Katie's criteria, they didn't work as well on a Tuesday session as on a Friday. This suggests that the vibe of the two sessions, created by the way the teams worked together and the guidance of the team leaders, resulted in children expecting to do different things on different sessions, or valuing different activities on different sessions.

*On Tuesday sessions I would try and initiate maybe a creative idea at the collage table, but it never, it would fizz. ... Same group of kids. Don't know, don't know, I don't know. So it kind of discouraged me a wee bit from doing it, and to be honest, I just kind of go with the flow. I wasn't going to try and sort of enforce my want for more creative things to happen at the collage table, more arty things to happen on a Tuesday session if the children are happy running round outside doing other stuff. (Jane int, para 232)*

If the children responded to the changing sessions by changing their expectations and behaviour, this would indicate that the children were active agents in their learning, and suggests that in this Playcentre the children shaped the practice of the teachers-as-educators by their responses. This idea of the children actively taking into account the different supervision team working on a session when making choices within a free-play programme was depicted in the *Planning for Playcentres* resource (Stover, 2001) in a cartoon which is reproduced in Figure 4.





**Figure 4:** Thursday's core curriculum planning from S. Stover (2001), *Planning for Playcentres*, p.80

More evidence for the children planning their own programme around the different team members is in Jason coming directly to Kim when he arrived on session one day, asking for his face to be painted. Jason's mother later confirmed that he had clearly stated his intention beforehand to ask Kim for face painting. The data point to the parents-as-educators' individual agency and teaching practice being influenced by the whole session community, not just the adults.

Although the vibe of the session might be attributed to a "ball of temperaments", the leader of the session undoubtedly had a huge influence. Katie figured large in the centre member's discussion of the Tuesday session, whether they were on that team or not. Katie was held in high regard in the centre, both for her knowledge and experience, and for her excellent teaching skills. However, her controlling nature dominated the session and this was seen variably. Some people in the centre saw it as a good thing because they like the structure of the session. Jane was ambivalent, as she saw Katie as a friend but recognised that Katie's style allowed Jane to "be lazy" about contributing. Tracey viewed it somewhat negatively because as co-leader she felt she had not been empowered at all, and was grateful that Katie had decided to step aside so Tracey could gain more experience.

Sally was in the position of being a team leader. For her, the mix of experience amongst her team members was a big factor deciding her teaching practice, more so than their personalities. She spoke of how inexperienced many of the team members were and her sense of responsibility to ensuring the session ran smoothly. This resulted in Sally spending a lot of her time either directly instructing the newer parents in the practices of the centre, or doing management tasks herself because the newer parents did not know how. With a different team, Sally's teaching practice might possibly have looked very different.

#### **5.2.4. Summary of the Interpersonal Plane**

Individual parents-as-educators made choices about which skills and knowledges from their background they would use in their teaching practice, but these choices were influenced by their sense of personal agency within the group. Their sense of belonging to the group had a large influence, with the parents who were new to the centre not feeling the same sense of agency as those who were part of the core

group managing the centre. This sense of belonging changed over time, and in this thesis is visualised as relating to their identity trajectory through the Playcentre community of practice (Wenger, 1998) as shown in Figure 3 on p. 108. The individual agency of the parents-as-educators was also affected by the team dynamics of the session team they were working with, and the micro-culture of the session which included the children's responses to the session team. Further influences on personal agency were noted that were more independent of the particular people the parents-as-educators were working with, pertaining more to the culture of Playcentre rather than to interpersonal relationships. These influences are discussed in the next section.

### **5.3. CULTURAL/ORGANIZATIONAL PLANE**

Whether parents-as-educators felt empowered or constrained to act with individual agency in the Playcentre depended to some extent to their views on the Playcentre as an early childhood centre and their alignment with Playcentre philosophy, which I have linked with the components of place and spirituality in the model of individual agency (Reid & Stover, 2005). The view of the Playcentre as a child-centred place separated from their homes and community was common amongst the parents-as-educators, and this was taken to mean that particular rules applied and only particular knowledges were deemed appropriate. The extent to which each parent-as-educator aligned themselves with the Playcentre philosophy then determined whether these rules and knowledges were experienced as empowering or constraining. This section now discusses these two concepts of place and spirituality as was evidenced in the data.

#### **5.3.1. Place: Being at Playcentre**

A third feature of individual agency as shown in Reid and Stover's (2005) model (Figure 1, p. 104) is that of place, the physical environment. Although I observed little discussion about the physical environment of the Playcentre, the parents-as-educators all showed in various ways that the Playcentre was a different place to the home environment, and therefore required different standards of behaviour. An example of this was at morning tea, where one of the parents came to the kitchen door to ask for a piece of apple to be washed because it had been dropped onto the

floor, and said “I wouldn’t worry about it if it were my own child”. The parent in the kitchen replied, “neither would I” (general obs, para 48). But because they were at Playcentre and dealing with other people’s children, they both agreed to abide by a different standard to that which they would have followed at home. Another incident was where Kim told Paul that gun play wasn’t allowed at Playcentre, although it was known that she allowed such play at home. Becoming a competent member in this community of practice involved conforming to these unwritten standards. Whether this conforming was seen as a difficult thing seemed to depend on their identity within the centre, as discussed in the interpersonal plane analysis in section 5.2.2, and their alignment with Playcentre philosophy, as discussed in the next section, 5.3.2.

It was more than just wanting to conform, however. There was a sense of “parenting on show” and of being judged by others, which was voiced by several parents in conversations and interviews. Parenting is very personal with a heavy emotional investment, and to open your parenting up to others to view makes you vulnerable to criticism, but enables you to reap the rewards of learning through feedback. It requires trust in the group around you, and until that trust is built up, it can be a source of stress. Jane put it well:

*I think that people are bringing their experience of being a parent to Playcentre but, people also lack a lot of experiences, so, you know, you might not have that much confidence in your parenting, especially if you’re a new mother, and Playcentre is for new mothers, most of the time, and then if you come to Playcentre as a new mum, and you’re there with other mothers with a lot of experience, that can be quite nerve racking as well as extremely helpful. You know, your children are very good at making you look really stupid. (Jane obs, para 436)*

Steele (2001) had a similar experience in the collaborative parent co-operative school in Utah, USA as a teacher. Instead of being the only teacher in a classroom with the children, she was teaching alongside, and in front of, other adults who wanted to learn from her and were always commenting on and asking questions about her teaching. Although she eventually found the feedback beneficial to her

teaching practice, she initially found it difficult to be in such a different style of classroom to that which she was used to. A goal in the *Belonging* strand of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) that says “children will experience an environment where they know they have a place” could equally apply to adults in these situations. In order to benefit from the feedback inherent in working alongside other adults, the parent-as-educator has to feel comfortable in the place and to know they belong there.

Yet even when the parent-as-educator was comfortable in the Playcentre environment, the fact that this was a child space that was different from the outside world still affected which aspects of their background they used in their teaching practice. Sally, as an experienced member of the Playcentre, was certainly comfortable there but she didn't actively use her science knowledge on session often. She said that she felt “that sort of background is so far removed from dealing with children” (Sally int, para 654). However, she did acknowledge that as a tutor of first year university students she had been involved in activities resembling sandpit play, and she also said that her child knew a lot about the principles of geography because she talked with him about these things at home. Tracey, another parent who appeared comfortable in the Playcentre setting, involved her own children in house renovations at home as a matter of principle, but did not like to get involved in the carpentry at the Playcentre. She also did not attempt to bring any of her beauty therapy background to the sessions, because she felt that the environment of beauty therapy (quiet, serene, relaxed) and the environment of Playcentre (high energy, noisy, active) were totally different and not compatible. There did appear to be an underlying discourse that limited what the parents-as-educators taught in the Playcentre to perceived child-appropriate subjects.

Playcentre is an example of the Western model of centre-based early childhood education, which is physically separated from the wider community (Brennan, 2007; Cole, 2005). Brennan (2005, 2007) raised questions about this model of early childhood education, where centres separate children from the adult community when the children clearly show that they want to be a part of that community. Playcentre has also promoted the child-centred model of early childhood education, where the adult's role is to observe and then follow the child's lead, and a

developmental approach where the activities provided for the child to choose from are considered developmentally appropriate for young children (Burman, 1994; Hedges, 2003b). These factors together contribute to a lack of authenticity in the activities presented for the children, and in some ways, a lack of motivation from the parents-as-educators to share all of their skills. Activities are provided for children to “play at” rather than because the adults value the activity and its outcome, and are prepared to let children learn alongside them.

In this respect, the art activities at Playcentre are solely for the children, and it is expected that Jane will not do her own art work and allow children to observe her and perhaps imitate her. At home, Tracey can be involved in renovating her house because that is a valued activity, and she can provide for her children to play alongside her and learn from her; but it is expected at Playcentre that carpentry ideas are to be initiated by the children with the adult’s role to support them. The activities are designed to be educational and focused on the children’s learning, rather than a culturally valued activity, done in an authentic context, where children learn through guided participation (Rogoff, 1990). Whereas this approach has benefits, in this study I feel that it constrained the parent-as-educator from fully utilising their background in their teaching practice.

### **5.3.2. Spirituality: Alignment of philosophies**

Spirituality is an essential part of individual agency according to Reid and Stover’s model (2005), as it connects us to things more significant than just our own lives and “breathes energy into [our] endeavours” (p. 38). Bone proposed that spirituality “has the power to introduce mystery and wonder into otherwise mundane events” (Bone et al., 2007, p. 344) and can be seen in the everyday life of centres if we are prepared to look with fresh vision. It can provide the motivation for our actions and produce meaning in what we do. This motivation and meaning was important for parents-as-educators in this study, because, as Jane pointed out, “it’s very hard work at Playcentre, it’s not the easy option” (Jane int, para 448), yet the parents were very committed to making the Playcentre function well. The reason lay in their alignment with the philosophy of Playcentre, which connected them to a deeper purpose than simply providing early childhood education for children several times a

week. There is a certain complementarity between Wenger's (1998) definition of alignment as "coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit with broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises" (p. 174), and Reid and Stover's concept of spirituality as a connection to significant things that are more than ourselves. The Playcentre parents-as-educators, by aligning themselves with an organization whose fundamental philosophy is of parents and children learning together, gave meaning and significance to their choice to focus their current lives on parenting.

Alignment with Playcentre philosophy is not necessary to be an official member of the centre, but in terms of the trajectories of identities as discussed in Section 5.2.2 only those who more fully aligned themselves with Playcentre philosophy became part of the core group at the centre of the community of practice. This is consistent with Wenger's (1998) statement that alignment is not an essential part of engaging with others in a community of practice. Those at the periphery did what they had to do to be part of the group; but those at or near the core of the group did what they did for the Playcentre because they believed in the value and significance of what they did. The effect of this seemed to be that those at the periphery were aware of when they were modifying their behaviours (if not their ideas) to conform with accepted practice, and could see that there were barriers to using specific sets of skills and knowledges. However, those nearer the core of the group (Sally in particular) were so aligned with the philosophy and culture of the Playcentre that conforming seemed the natural or right way of doing things. This could be taken to mean that for them, there were no barriers, and they used all of their background that they chose to use. An alternative explanation is that the barriers remain but become invisible. In this case the only background skills that they choose to use are those that align with Playcentre philosophy.

However, it is difficult to fully align oneself with Playcentre philosophy because there are so many different perceptions of what Playcentre philosophy is. The resource *Planning for Playcentres* (Stover, 2001) collected together many different Playcentre philosophy statements and discussions for Playcentre groups to use for reflection. This resource summarises these multiplicity of views with the simple statement: "at the core of Playcentre's philosophy is the affirmation of parents and

children learning together” (p. 17). This did seem to be the core of the philosophy that was enacted at Radiator Springs Playcentre, and the one that it was necessary to align oneself with to become a member of the centre on an in-bound trajectory. Those who did not embrace the concept of adult participation and learning alongside their children were the people who left the centre. Kim was in this category. She liked Playcentre, possibly because it matched her philosophy on the importance of creativity and she therefore saw it as good learning environment for her son. But she felt that Kindergarten would probably be able to provide that sort of learning experience as well, and she found the time commitment to Playcentre overwhelming. Playcentre for her was about children’s learning, not her own. However, the other three case study adults who were not about to leave, talked about Playcentre more in terms of their beliefs about being involved with their children. It would be difficult for another early childhood service to meet their need for validation of their current life choices.

The choosing of Playcentre as a positive choice for being involved in one’s own children’s education has also been seen in other types of programmes. The OC school in Utah is a state school run as a parent cooperative, and parents can choose to send their children there instead of another state school as long as they agree to be involved (Rogoff et al., 2001). Parent helpers in the classroom are seen as a positive (although sometimes challenging) and fundamental feature of this school and parents actively choose this school so that they can be involved. Homeschoolers, too, often make their choice of education method not as an anti-school statement, but as a statement of their belief in their ability to adequately educate their own child (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). In a similar vein, Moss, Brophy and Statham (1992) suggest that parent-run community playgroups in the United Kingdom function most successfully where parents have freely chosen this type of service rather than attending by default because of lack of other services. In all of these different models, the common factor is that the parents align themselves with the philosophy of active, “hands-on” involvement with their children’s education in a centre based service.

At a fundamental level, then, parents who aligned with the philosophy of adults and children learning together were the ones who became more fully involved in the



Playcentre. In this respect, the philosophy was an empowering feature for parents-as-educators, because it gave them permission to be involved and to build on their previous skills and knowledges. However there was variable perception of, and alignment with, other aspects of Playcentre philosophy. It was these other, less fundamental, philosophical points that constrained their teaching practice. Those members who had been there longer were considered guardians of Playcentre philosophy and used phrases such as “that’s not Playcentre” and “she’s not really a Playcentre person”. Many of the newer people had different opinions on learning and teaching within the Playcentre, but as long as they were committed to the fundamental philosophy of learning alongside their children, their response was to stay at the Playcentre even if they had to modify their teaching.

### **5.3.3. Summary of the Cultural/Organizational Plane**

The parents-as-educators in this study had a variety of background skills and knowledges, which they selectively used in their teaching practice. The Playcentre, with its accepted philosophy and practices, influenced the selection of these skills and knowledges by affecting the sense of agency the parents-as-educators had. The sense of Playcentre as a different and special child-centred space was evident in their teaching practice, through the privileging of certain activities and knowledges over others. This tended to limit the extensive use of the parents-as-educators’ skills and knowledges. Playcentre philosophy was shown to be a double edged sword, as it connected the parents-as-educators to a wider purpose and therefore encouraged them to participate, whilst at the same time setting limits on what was appropriate practice.

#### **5.4. CONCLUSION OF CROSS CASE DISCUSSION**

This chapter has looked at which types of background experiences were common influences on the four parents-as-educators' teaching practice, and the possible reasons for this. It has also investigated the apparent lack of connections between their background skills and knowledge and their teaching practice. The analysis of the personal plane revealed parents-as-educators who were focussed on the stage of life they were currently in, and especially on the experience of parenting. They were actively making choices that they deemed appropriate for their own personal growth. The interpersonal plane analysis showed that the choices of the parents-as-educators were affected by their negotiation of an identity within the centre, and the context of the session they were specifically involved with, which included interactions of both adults and children. Overarching considerations, discussed in the cultural/organizational plane analysis, were the influence of general ECE and Playcentre philosophical discourses around the concept of Playcentre as a child-centred, separated space.

Whilst this chapter has focussed largely on interpreting the lack of connections between background skills and knowledges and teaching practice, it should be remembered that choosing not to draw on aspects of the past and instead move on to something new is not necessarily a negative thing. The biblical metaphor of a seed encapsulates this idea:

Unless a grain of wheat shall fall upon the ground and die, it remains but a single grain with no life. (Farrell, 1987, based on John 12:24)

Therefore the implications from these findings must be carefully considered. These implications are discussed in the next chapter, along with suggestions for future research.

# **CHAPTER SIX**

## **6. CONCLUSION**

### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

Parents-as-educators are a core feature of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Playcentre movement. Parents taking on the role of educators in a centre based setting is an uncommon model in early childhood education, as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, but it has been used effectively in Playcentres for many years. However, there has been little research on parents-as-educators, and little understanding of the influences on their teaching practice and subsequently on the curriculum experienced by the children at the Playcentre. The aims of this thesis were therefore to describe the teaching practices of parents-as-educators in a Playcentre, and to interpret these in the light of the previous background experiences. This was investigated through four case studies in one Playcentre, as outlined in Chapter 4, and then the similarities and differences between the cases, including links to relevant research, were discussed in Chapter 5. This concluding chapter now summarises the findings, reflects on the methodology and data collection methods used, and suggests some implications for further research and for the Playcentre organization to consider.

### **6.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The four cases each revealed a description of the teaching practice of a particular parent-as-educator. The cases were then compared in a cross-case analysis that combined the three planes of analysis approach of Rogoff (2003) and the model of individual agency within a group setting of Reid and Stover (2005). The major findings within each plane of analysis – personal, interpersonal and cultural – are set out below.

### **6.2.1. Personal Plane**

The analysis showed that the use of background skills and knowledges in the parents-as-educators' teaching practice was selective and that this depended on their current interests and passions, and on active decisions about the way they wanted their lives to proceed. These people had all chosen to enter into a new phase of life, that of raising a family, and they were all actively involved in finding support for their role as parents. The way they gained support through the Playcentre depended to a large extent on their previous history of formal education. Those with higher levels of qualifications tended to take advantage of the Playcentre training, while those with only school-level qualifications tended to rely more on the informal networking to increase their knowledge of parenting and early childhood education. At the same time, they used the knowledge gained from their parenting experiences to inform their teaching practice at the Playcentre. This role of parent-as-educator is described in Chapter 5 as a duality (Wenger, 1998), where both the parenting and the educating roles are complementary and distinct, yet inseparable. This duality affected their approaches to teaching, their selection of pedagogical strategies and their relationships with both children and adults.

Aside from their current interest in parenting, the parents-as-educators also drew on their skills and knowledges of things they were passionate about. At Playcentre they had a choice over which interests they would actively pursue. Their choices during teaching, therefore, did not always reflect those things that they knew best or were good at, but rather those things they were currently interested in. Some of these choices were active decisions to ignore past experiences, and some of these choices were less conscious, based on a preference for current interests. The level to which previous experiences had been assimilated into the parents-as-educators' value and belief system was also a factor in whether the skills and knowledges from these experiences were incorporated into their teaching practice, consistent with the ideas of an iceberg of practice suggested by Fish and Coles (1998).

### **6.2.2. Interpersonal Plane**

The concept that the parents-as-educators' amount of usage of their background skills and knowledges in their teaching practice could be used as a measure of their individual agency (Reid & Stover, 2005) within the Playcentre was introduced in Chapter 5. This sense of agency was found to be mediated by their sense of belonging in the Playcentre community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The newer members of the Playcentre, and those who held themselves, or were held, on the periphery of the community had a lesser sense of agency than those who were nearer to the core group of responsible and active members. This sense of agency manifested itself by the parent-as-educator feeling more comfortable to use whichever of their background skills and knowledges that they chose to. Those with a lesser sense of agency talked more in terms of not being allowed to do certain things.

The context of the session they worked on also had an effect on the extent of their participation, which was taken to be an indicator of their sense of agency. The Playcentre had different teams of parents-as-educators running the different sessions in a week, and each session had its own particular vibe. So although there was an overall organizational culture in the Playcentre (see Gibbons, 2004 for a discussion of organizational culture in Playcentre), each session also had a micro-culture that influenced the parents-as-educators' participation in that session. This micro-culture was strongly influenced by the team leader of that session, other team members and by the children.

### **6.2.3. Community Plane**

The philosophy of Playcentre had a strong influence on the agency of the parents-as-educators'. It determined in many ways what was deemed acceptable behaviour at Playcentre, and the extent of alignment with the perceived Playcentre philosophy was a factor in the sense of belonging felt by the parents-as-educators. This philosophy was a uniting feature, in that most of the parents chose to stay at the Playcentre because they identified with the philosophy, notably the concept of adults learning alongside their children. However, it was also a barrier to some parents-as-educators' full use of their background, as some skills and knowledges

were not as valued in the Playcentre setting. This barrier was more substantial for those parents-as-educators' who were on the periphery of the community of practice. It is interesting to speculate whether the barrier to using specific skills and knowledges became less substantial as the parent-as-educator moved to the centre of the community of practice, or merely became invisible as they aligned themselves more fully with Playcentre philosophy.

The specific philosophy of child-centredness, and the concept of the Playcentre as a separated child oriented space, was a definite barrier to the full use of the parents-as-educators' background skills and knowledges. The lack of authenticity in the experiences thus offered, being predominately initiated by the children and performed for the children's benefit rather than for the intrinsic purpose of the activity itself, affected the willingness of the parents-as-educators to engage fully in the experiences. When the satisfaction of producing an end product to the best of their adult ability was removed, their passion for that activity was diminished.

### **6.3.        *IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH***

This exploratory research was designed to improve understanding of the teaching practice of parents-as-educators and the influences on this practice. The interpretation of the data as presented in this thesis has implications for the children at Playcentre, for the adults and for the organization as a whole.

#### **6.3.1.    *Implications for children***

The finding that parents-as-educators sometimes experienced restricted agency within the Playcentre that prevented them from utilising their full range of background skills and knowledges meant that the children experienced a restricted curriculum compared to that which could have been possible. Authors have argued for the benefits of as rich a curriculum as possible. For example, Hedges (2002) found that "subject knowledge learning was an interest and priority" for children, and highlighted "the importance of teachers having sufficient subject knowledge in order to respond meaningfully to children's interests and inquiries" (p. 158). Similarly Willberg (2001) argued for "early childhood teachers to provide rich music

experiences when they will be most effective – in early childhood” (p. 167), and also argued that teachers needed sufficient music knowledge and confidence to be able to do this. The parents-as-educators showed that they had a breadth of knowledge that would be relevant to the Playcentre curriculum, but for various reasons they did not utilise this breadth. The challenge for each Playcentre community of practice is to realise the potential of a rich curriculum for the children by encouraging parents-as-educators to utilise their wide range of prior skills and knowledges, whilst at the same time respecting the autonomy of the individual to make choices about the extent of their participation, and future development.

The complexity of relationships in a Playcentre, a consequence of the duality (Wenger, 1998) constituting the parent-as-educator, could result in a continuity of relationships for the child across the home and Playcentre settings with benefits for children’s learning. However, the connectedness of the adult-adult relationships and the adult-child relationships in the centre raises the question of the experience of the child in a Playcentre where the mother (or other caregiver) does not have close friends in the centre. This is an issue which I feel deserves closer attention by individual Playcentres, and could be a subject for future research.

### **6.3.2. Implications for Adults**

The parents-as-educators in this study were shown to be actively following their own agendas for personal growth and development, utilising opportunities to develop their parenting skills and knowledges, and early childhood education in general, in ways that they were comfortable with. This is consistent with the study of Thesing Winks (2006), who found that parent support within early childhood centres was effective where the mothers took active responsibility for seeking out the support they required. By acknowledging and expecting this active responsibility through its parent cooperative structure and philosophy of empowerment, Playcentre is well placed to provide effective parent support. However, it is important that Playcentre maintains the flexibility for parents to choose the support they need, and to resist external and internal pressures that limit the local flexibility of the support and training offered to parents, or required from them as a condition of membership.

### **6.3.3. Implications for the Playcentre Organization**

One of the significant influences on the sense of individual agency of the parents-as-educators, and therefore indirectly on the curriculum offered to the children, was the team leader of the particular session team in which the parents-as-educators worked. This would suggest that Playcentre's traditional emphasis on leadership, and training parents to work with other parents, is well founded. The need for skills in this area has been articulated in recent Aotearoa/New Zealand literature (e.g., Gibbons, 2004; Livingstone, 2001; Thesing Winks, 2006). Playcentre Education has long promoted the value of leadership and adult facilitation within its training programme and this study suggests that any future changes to the curriculum should retain these features.

However, this presents an issue for the current Playcentre Diploma as it is not equivalent to the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) that is now required for teaching in a non-Playcentre early childhood service, partly because of its large adult leadership component. The previous Federation Certificate was accepted in the 1990's as a valid qualification for teaching in a child-care centre, and many people who gained the Federation Certificate went on to work in the early childhood sector. With the establishment of the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) as the benchmark qualification for early childhood, the value and use of the current Playcentre Diploma in the early childhood sector is now unknown. The challenge for Playcentre Education is therefore to determine the reasons for its members completing the higher levels of qualifications, and to ensure that the qualification is suitable for those purposes. If the reason for completing the Playcentre Diploma is to gain a useful and portable qualification for gaining employment in the early childhood sector, then clearly the current Diploma does not fulfil that purpose. If the reasons for completing the Playcentre Diploma are for personal growth and development, and the development of parenting skills, then that purpose is generally fulfilled. However, as this study shows, parents-as-educators' uptake of training generally depends on their previous history of formal education, suggesting that the value of the qualification is at least equally important to the trainees as is the learning that is gained.

This study also showed that the first levels of the qualification are completed to enable the centre to receive government funding, rather than for personal reasons.



Further research into the motivation of parents to complete the various levels of training, and the full Playcentre Diploma in particular, would be beneficial to the organization.

Another major implication for Playcentre is the effect of the philosophy on the parents-as-educators' agency within the centre. The philosophy is in many ways a double edged sword that both holds the group together and restricts their actions. The core philosophy of families learning together is the glue that binds the community of practice, but other philosophies such as the child-centred, child-initiated approach to activities in general, and art in particular, tend to have a divisive effect. Here the challenge for Playcentre at all levels of the organization is to make visible the underlying assumptions that guide the philosophy and open them up to debate.

#### **6.4. REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

This study approached the investigation of teaching practice from the view point of the individual parents-as-educator. The unit of analysis was the individual and the case studies were organized as separate studies, with observations of individual behaviours and individual contributions to the planning and teaching within the centre. However, I found that there were rich data to be gained from attending the session evaluation and planning meetings held at the end of the sessions, both in terms of how individuals contributed and in terms of the way the collective planning was done. Both Gibbons (2004) and Brennan (2005) found that centring their investigations around routine events (morning tea and lunch time) was a useful way of highlighting the effect of group practices on individual learning and development. Brennan went further to argue for researchers to look carefully at the unit of analysis in sociocultural educational research, suggesting that the most useful focus is on the relationship between the individual and social group rather than on either the individual or the group alone. My research showed that the relationship between the individual and the group was of prime importance, and perhaps a methodology that focused more on this relationship and less on the individual would have been a more useful approach.

This research was a small study in one Playcentre. The sample lacked diversity of culture, gender and socioeconomic status amongst the parents-as-educators that would allow some transferability to other situations. It is, however, complementary to other studies such as the large study on the effect of Playcentre participation on the development of social capital (Powell et al., 2005) and the Ministry of Education contract research on quality in parent/whānau-led services (Mitchell et al., 2006), which included more diverse samples. The lack of diversity means that there are some voices that are not being heard, and whilst for one small study this might not be critical, it should not be a continued feature in research on Playcentre. To ensure that voices are not being silenced, future research on Playcentre parents-as-educators should seek to include diversity as a key component of the sample selection.

As the amount of research on parents-as-educators is very limited, this research was exploratory in nature. The lack of specificity in defining what constituted background, and what was to be specifically focussed on in the observations, was a deliberate attempt to not pre-determine the outcomes. Too narrow a focus on specific outcomes can limit what is found in research and other relevant outcomes can be missed (Mitchell, 2007). Now that this study has shown the general links between a parent-as-educator's background and her teaching practice, further study might usefully focus on a specific area, for example the contribution of tertiary qualifications to the teaching of subject content knowledge at the Playcentre.

The issue of credibility of these findings was raised on p. 41 in Section 3.6, where it was claimed that credibility would be established if other Playcentre parents-as-educators could relate to the findings. Several presentations to Playcentre audiences have already been undertaken, and in these cases although there has been some debate, the responses have shown general agreement with the findings. Further presentations and publications are planned, and therefore the robustness of this initial credibility will be tested further.

An interesting sideline feature of the data that has not been explored in this thesis concerns the concept of parent responsibility. It was common practice for the physical care aspect of teaching to be left to the parent to do if the parent was

present. For example, helping a 4-year-old to wipe his nose was considered the responsibility of the parent, not of the session team. This has been seen in other research studies as well, such as Gibbons (2004) who found that the care of toddlers during morning tea time at two Playcentres was generally left to the parents. Yet the idea of the parent cooperative is that the session team takes responsibility for *all* the children on that session. The topic of collective versus parental responsibility for the children at the centre would be interesting to investigate further.

On a final note, I enjoyed researching within my own organization. Although it had the potential to limit the objectivity of the research, I feel that the benefits of being able to easily gain the trust of the participants and the opportunity to reciprocate their welcome in small ways that were based on my Playcentre background outweighed the limitations. I also believe that as a general principle it is beneficial to the Playcentre to have research initiated by Playcentre members, as the research is then likely to centre on topics that are important to the organization. Gaining external viewpoints through collaboration, such as with university supervisors as in this study, or with a university research team as in Powell et al. (2005), is a good way to balance between emic and etic viewpoints in the research, and has the potential to produce a better representation of the research story than without such collaboration.

## **6.5. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

As I finish writing this thesis, the Playcentre Federation is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> year of existence. As Playcentre looks to move forward for the next 60 years there will be many challenges to face in order to respond to changes in society. The concept of parents-as-educators, which has been with the organization since its inception, is one of the core philosophical principles that defines the Playcentre movement and binds it together. This thesis has shown the importance of the concept of parents-as-educators to Playcentre, and therefore this feature should be retained in the future of the service to maintain its uniqueness in the early childhood sector.

This thesis has added to the understanding of Playcentre parents-as-educators and the factors that influence their teaching practice, and has highlighted some challenges for the Playcentre organization to consider in terms of enabling parents-as-educators to offer the richest possible curriculum experiences for their children. If Playcentre can rise to these challenges, then I am confident that it will continue to be a strong and viable early childhood option for a long time in the future.

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## APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

# Playcentre Parents-as-Educators

**Your pseudonym**

(the name by which you wish to be known in the reports):

\_\_\_\_\_

**Your age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What formal qualifications do you have?** (Please tick all that apply)

School Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sixth Form Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>	
University Entrance	<input type="checkbox"/>	
University Bursary	<input type="checkbox"/>	
University Scholarship	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Tertiary Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>	(specify) _____
Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	(specify) _____
Undergraduate degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	(specify) _____
Postgraduate degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	(specify) _____
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	(specify) _____

\_\_\_\_\_

**What other education or training have you had?**

**What work experience have you had?**

**What are your major interests/hobbies?**

**What culture(s) have influenced you in your earlier years?**

**What culture(s) influence you now?**

**Is there anything else about your background that might add to your contribution to Playcentre sessions?**

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW

# Playcentre Parents-as-Educators

### ***Interview Schedule***

Time and venue to be negotiated with interviewee.

#### **SECTION ONE: QUESTIONNAIRE**

- Thank you for filling out the questionnaire. Would you please elaborate/clarify for me....? *(If necessary)*.

#### **SECTION TWO: STATEMENTS ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- When you are on session, what guides your interactions with children?
- With other adults?
- What guides your decisions about the programme?

#### **SECTION THREE: INTERPRETATION OF OBSERVATIONS**

- Here are some examples of your teaching practice that I have observed (select two or three observation examples). Can you tell me more about them, especially in terms of why you did what you did?
- This was my interpretation of these examples of your teaching practice.... (elaborate). *[If significantly different from the interviewee's view, ask for their comments]*.

#### **SECTION FOUR: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS**

- This is what I am suggesting that are common themes in the teaching practice of the four of you (elaborate). What are your comments on this?

#### **SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION**

- In the light of what we have been discussing, is there anything in the questionnaire you would like to highlight for me?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

**Thank you 8-)**

## APPENDIX C: DATA TABLES

### JANE'S TEACHING PRACTICE: McWilliam et al. (2002)

	Who	Planning	Approach	Interaction	Content
<b>Talks to Mk to keep him busy</b> <b>Fishing trough</b>	Other child – young boy Own child – young boy Other children – older girl, boy, middle girl	Planned by her and Tracey, just before the interaction A planned activity. Not sure if she was assigned to this/set it up, or just stationed herself there.	Conversational partner, giving full attention Inviting children in, maintaining the activity, entering in the fantasy, minimal verbal.	Conversation  Tidying, responsive to the children: acknowledging, praising, elaborating.	Fantasy
<b>Jh at the fishing trough</b>	Other child – older boy Adult	Spontaneous, responsive	Non-intervention – lets other adult handle this; then maintains order when she has gone.	Explains	Rules
<b>A passes by</b>	Own child – older boy	Spontaneous, responsive	Attracts his attention to compliment him	Acknowledgement, praise	
<b>Fishing trough</b>	Other children – older boy, girls; Adults Own child – young boy Adults	Spontaneous, responsive	Watching; interacts with chn in the activity and those passing by, helps where required (own child)	Scaffolding; acknowledging, elaborating	Fantasy
<b>Sets up morning tea</b>	Adults	Routine event	Defers to the rostered adult for decisions regarding the set up.	Co-construction – discussion with adults	Centre practices
<b>Helping E wash hands</b>	Other child – middle age girl	Spontaneous, responsive	Helps the one girl who is nearby, in preparation for morning tea.	Verbal elaboration and praise.	Centre practices, Hygiene
<b>Helping Kr and others to wash hands</b>	Own child – young boy; other children	Spontaneous, responsive	Helps her son, and others who are there too.	Scaffolding, verbal encouragement	Centre practices, Hygiene
<b>Setting up the table</b>	Adult Own child – young boy; other child	Spontaneous, responsive	Taking initiative for making sure table is set; helps her own son and other child too.	Verbal request; physical help	Centre practices
<b>Listens to conversation</b>	Adults	Spontaneous	Participant observer: is interested but does not contribute to conversation	Listens	Social

Who	Planning	Approach	Interaction	Content
<p><b>Other chn: 47</b>  Other chn without own child: 26  Own child:  Older 12  Younger 26  Own child without other children:  17  <b>Adult: 41</b>  Alone: 2  Girl: 20  <b>Boy: 57</b>  Young: 28  Middle: 19  Older: 33</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contributes some ideas to planning, not much (eg ferns, on Tue's some crafts)</li> <li>- Mostly spontaneous and responsive.</li> <li>- Takes her turn on rostered tasks, knows and helps with routines but not as the leader of a group of children.</li> <li>- Looks for one on one opportunity</li> <li>- Stays at an activity for a long time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- observer and stage manager when she can arrange it.</li> <li>- Sometimes participates fully in the play</li> <li>- Often does not give full attention to the child and/or activity, but talks to other adults, other children. (get the impression that it is not stimulating enough on a personal level, she works at an adult, not child level)</li> <li>- Her toddler is clingy, so is often with her. She cuddles him, but often doesn't talk to him.</li> <li>- If another adult is present, she will let them take the lead in the activity.</li> <li>- Is a helper, would prefer to actively help than have to directly "teach"</li> <li>- Avoids groups, seeks out small groups or single chn.</li> </ul>	<p>Often non-verbal: physical help, role modelling, cuddling</p> <p>Humour with adults, sometimes chn</p> <p>Non-elaborative: follows on from chn, helps them, but rarely extends or gives extra information.</p>	<p>Carpentry 6  Physical play 5  Creative 5  Music 5  Fantasy 4  Literacy 3  Playdough 2</p> <p>Clay 1  Sand 1  Puzzles 1  Science 1  Cooking 1  Numeracy 1</p> <p>Centre practices 15  Caregiving 8  Social 8  Discuss  Parenting 7  Health 4  Rules/ Sharing 3</p>
<p>Spends a lot of time with adults, and with her younger son. When she plays with others, she often plays with older boys – her son's friends, with or without him. Doesn't spend much time with toddlers other than her own. Mostly plays with boys because of her sons, but sometimes makes a deliberate effort to interact with a girl (eg Rs, Ch).</p>				<p>As she said, a lot of outside stuff. Used to do creative stuff on Fridays. Parenting is a big topic.</p>

## JANE'S TEACHING PRACTICE: Jingbo & Elicker (2005)

/	Initiated by:	Accepted?	Inclination: MD, DI, TC, CO, AQ, AI AD, TA, RE, AA, HT	Parallel: AH, PL, EX EE, EI, PT, HT, IS	emotion: +, 0, -	
<b>Talks to Mk to keep him busy Fishing trough</b>	Jane, to child	Yes		PL	+	
	Jane, to child	Yes	AA	PL	+	
	<i>Child</i>	<i>No/yes</i>		+		
	Jane, to child	Yes		PL	+	
	<i>Child</i>	Yes		PT	+	
	<i>Child</i>	Yes		PT	+	
	<b>C at the fishing trough</b>	<i>Adult</i>	Yes		PL	0
		Jane, to child	Yes	MD		-
	<b>A passes by Fishing trough</b>	Jane, to older son	Yes		EX	+
		Jane, to child	Yes	AQ		+
<i>Child</i>		Yes	AA		0	
Jane, to young son		No	AA		+	
Jane, to child		No/yes	MD		0	
<i>Adult</i>		Yes	RE		0	
Jane, to young son		Yes	DI		+	
Jane, to child		Yes	AI		+	
<b>Sets up morning tea</b>	Jane, to adult	Yes	AD		0	
	Jane, to adult	Yes		EI	0	
	Jane, to child	Yes	DI		0	
<b>Helping E wash hands</b>	Jane, to child	Yes	DI		+	
	Jane, to young son and other children	Yes	DI		0	
<b>Helping Kr and others to wash hands</b>	Jane, to adult	Yes		AH	0	
	Jane, to adult and other children	Yes		EI	0	
<b>Setting table</b>	Jane, to adult	Yes			0	
<b>Conversation at table</b>	Jane, to adult and other children	Yes			0	
<b>Opens muesli bar</b>	<i>Child</i>	Yes	AD		0	

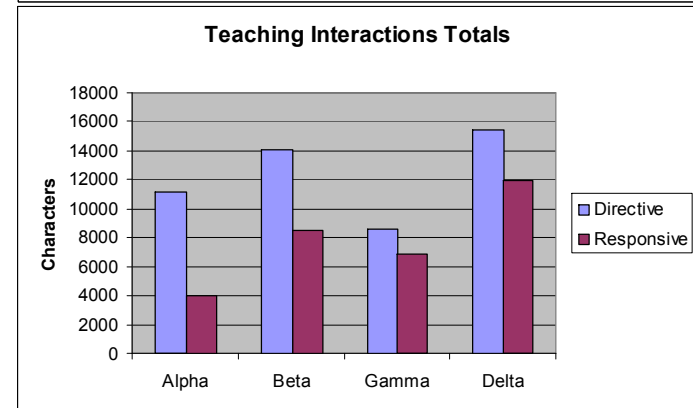
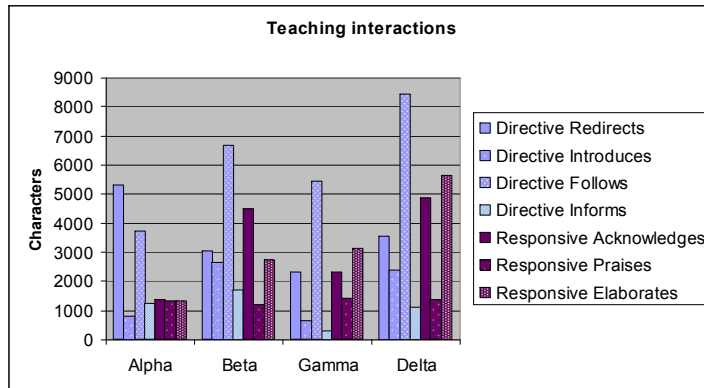
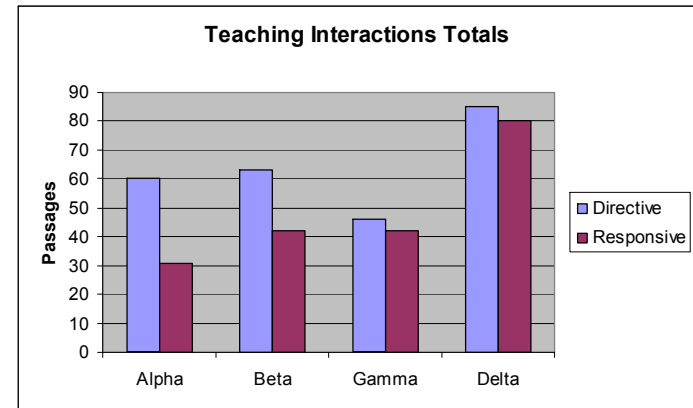
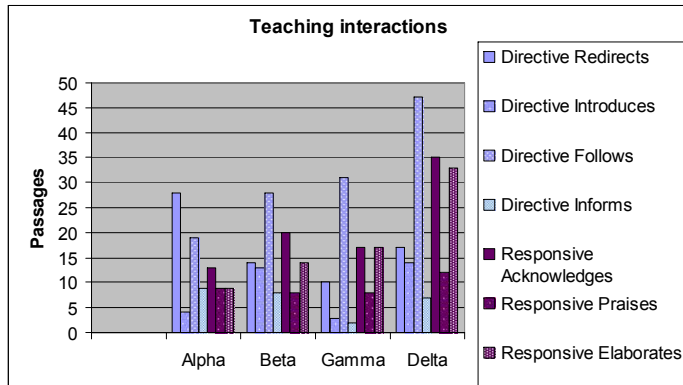
	<b>Initiated by:</b>	<b>Accepted?</b>	<b>Inclination: MD, DI, TC, CO, AQ, AI AD, TA, RE, AA, HT</b>	<b>Parallel: AH, PL, EX EE, EI, PT, HT, IS</b>	<b>Initiator emotion: +, 0, -</b>
	<i>Child – young son</i> 4 <i>Child – older son</i> 5 <i>Child – other</i> 9 <i>Adult</i> 11 Jane to young son 15 Jane to older son 6 Jane to other child 42 Jane to adult 26	4 5 8 11 11 5 37 25	AD, 2AA 3AA 2AD, 5AA RE, 2DI 2AA, 8DI, TC, 2CO MD, DI 7MD, 11DI, 4TC, AQ, 2AI 2AD, HT, DI, 2TC, AI	PT 2PT 2PT AH, PL, 5EE, EI 2PL 2PL, EX 10PL, EX, EI 4AH, IS, 9EI, 7EE	
	Jane does a lot of initiating to other children, much more than to her own.	Almost 100% acceptance, sometimes her approaches to other children are rejected.	Generally takes the adult role with children, ie has the power. Adults generally approach her on an equal basis ie power sharing. But with adults, will share power or even take the “child” subordinate role, and ask to be directed, or help but not lead – gives the power to the other adult.	Shares power quite a bit because she plays with children, and chats with adults.	She can even maintain discipline with a positive tone!
			<i>Maintaining discipline</i> (MD). <i>Directing</i> (DI). <i>Taking care</i> (TC). <i>Comforting</i> (CO). <i>Asking questions</i> (AQ). <i>Asking for information</i> (AI). <i>Asking direction</i> (AD). <i>Tattling</i> (TA). <i>Requesting</i> (RE). <i>Asking for attention</i> (AA). <i>Helping teachers</i> (HT).	<i>Asking for help</i> (AH). <i>Playing</i> (PL). <i>Expressing feelings</i> (EX). <i>Expressing experience</i> (EE). <i>Expressing ideas</i> (EI). <i>Playing with teachers</i> (PT). <i>Inquiring about something</i> (IS).	

## JANE'S TEACHING PRACTICE: Kontos (1999)

	Stage mgr	Playmate/enhancer	Interviewer	Safety/Behaviour Monitor	Uninvolved
Talks to Mk to keep him busy		3 min			
Fishing trough	10 min				
Jh at the fishing trough		2 min		1 min	
Fishing trough	5 min				
Sets up morning tea	10 min				
Helping Kr and others to wash hands	5 min				
Katie asks which adults are sitting down					
Conversation at table		10 min			
Prepares for spaghetti bread baskets	5 min				
Listens to Tracey recount					5 min
Sets up natural collage outside	5 min				
Chat with adults/morning tea					15 mins
Sets up morning tea	5 min				
Sings along		5 min			
Kicks balls into soccer goal		1 min			
Beach resort		4 min			
Goes with E to get chalk	3 min				
Tidying					3 min
Clay table	5 min				5 min
Swings					3 min
Talks to me					3 min
Hide and seek		10 min			
Listens to J		2 min			
Dealing with A's attention seeking		10 min		8 min	
Talking with adult					5 min
Earthquake drill				5 min	
<b>SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>53 MIN</b>	<b>47 MIN</b>		<b>14 MIN</b>	<b>39 MIN</b>

## TEACHING PRACTICE: de Kruif (2000)

Data were taken from the written observations, where a “passage” was taken as an teaching incident; but to compensate for the fact that some passages were longer than others, various other ways of counting the data, such as the combined length of the passages (characters), were investigated to see if patterns were markedly different – which they were not. These data were not used in a statistically significant manner, but simply to explore the idea of directive and responsive interaction patterns in a broad fashion.





## APPENDIX D: INFORMATION AND CONSENT

*(Victoria University of Wellington Letterhead)*

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR RADIATOR SPRINGS PLAYCENTRE

1 July 2006

*Ngā mihi ki ngā whānau o te Radiator Springs Playcentre.*

*Greetings to the families of Radiator Springs Playcentre.*

My name is Suzanne Manning and I have been a member of Playcentre in the *[this Association]* for eleven years. I would like to conduct research in your Playcentre to learn more about how parents' differing backgrounds contribute to the Playcentre sessions.

This research is for my thesis as part of my Masters of Education degree through Victoria University. My supervisors are Dr Carmen Dalli (ph 463 5168) and Dr Judith Loveridge (ph 463 6028), both of the Institute for Early Childhood Studies at Victoria University. You may contact either of them if you have any concerns or queries regarding the way the research is being carried out.

This project proposal has been approved by the New Zealand Playcentre Federation, the Hutt Playcentre Association and the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

The research plan is to focus on four individual parents during term three. To get a sample representative of the diversity at Playcentre, parents will be invited to participate rather than asked to volunteer. To make the observations manageable, and to cause the least disruption to the Centre, only two weekly sessions will be focused on, with two parents from each session being invited to participate.

The research will involve:

- Four observation visits to both sessions during term three (eight visits in total) to observe what the case study adults say and do on session;
- Copying some documents such as observations, session evaluations and/or planning documents, to give a broader perspective to the research;
- A short questionnaire for each of the four case study adults, to gather information on their backgrounds;

- A one hour individual interview with each of the case study adults at the end of term three, to gather their perspective on the way their backgrounds influence their contributions to sessions, and on the initial findings of the study.

My observations can be available for the Centre to use for children's profiles and planning. At the end of the research, a summary of the findings will be given to the centre.

At this point the Centre has agreed to participate in this research. I will now invite individual Centre members to participate as case study parents. Individual members may decline to participate in the case studies, or, if they choose to participate, they may withdraw before the end of the term, or to refuse to answer any question they are not comfortable with.

If parents are not participating as one of the case study adults, they may still be included in the study because I might be observing when they or their children are interacting with a case-study adult. If parents are unhappy about this, they may choose to not participate in this way, or for their children to not participate by indicating this on the consent form. In this case no record would be kept of incidents involving those parents or their children. However, for the research to proceed the majority of families in the Centre must be willing to participate.

The real names of the Centre and the participants would not be used in the research to maintain confidentiality. I will make every effort to disguise the identity of the Playcentre in any reports from the study, however anonymity of the Centre cannot be guaranteed as the description of the Centre could lead others to recognize it.

I will take notes during observations and interviews, and will use a tape recorder during the interviews for accuracy. Tapes will be transcribed by me, and transcripts given to the interviewees to check for accuracy, and clarification if necessary. All tapes and notes will be held in a locked filing cabinet at my home, and destroyed three years after the completion of the project.

No potential risks to you or the Centre are foreseen, and it is hoped that this research will affirm parents in their unique role as educators. It will be published as a thesis, as articles in New Zealand early childhood journals (including the Playcentre Journal) and possibly be the subject of presentations at New Zealand early childhood conferences. A summary of the findings will be given to the Centre, and to each of the four case study adults.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. If you have any questions, please feel free to ring me on 565 0336. If you are now satisfied that you understand what is being asked, and agree to participate, please sign consent forms and return it to the marked box at the Centre.

Suzanne Manning

*(Victoria University of Wellington Letterhead)*

## **Research Project: Playcentre Parents-as Educators Consent Form for [ ] Playcentre Association**

- Suzanne Manning has explained the details of her Masters of Education research study to us, and we have had time to consider the implications of this study and had our questions answered to our satisfaction.
- We understand that Suzanne wishes to conduct case studies with four adults in one of our affiliated Playcentres, involving observations during eight sessions, copying documents for analysis, and questionnaires and individual interviews for the case study adults.
- We understand that the Association will receive a summary of the findings at the end of the study.
- We therefore give permission for Suzanne to invite a Centre to participate in the study.

Signed:

Name:

Position held:

Date:

*(Victoria University of Wellington Letterhead)*

## **Research Project: Playcentre Parents-as Educators Consent Form for Radiator Springs Playcentre**

- Suzanne Manning has explained the details of her Masters of Education research study to us, and we have read the information sheet provided. We have had time to consider the implications of this study and had our questions answered to our satisfaction.
- We understand that Suzanne wishes to conduct case studies with four adults in our Playcentre, which will involve observations during eight sessions, copying documents for analysis, and questionnaires and individual interviews for the case study adults.
- We understand that the Centre will receive a summary of the findings at the end of the study.
- We agree to participate in the study and give permission for Suzanne to invite Centre members to participate in the study as case-study adults.

Signed:

Name:

Position held:

Date:

## Research Project: Playcentre Parents-as Educators Consent Form for Centre Parents

- I have read the Information sheet provided by Suzanne Manning and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw, and to withdraw my child/ren from the study at any time up until the end of the data gathering period.
- I understand that although I and my child/ren are not the focus of the study, the researcher will be observing on sessions and incidents involving me or my child/ren may be recorded unless I specifically request for this not to happen. I understand that my name, and that of my child/ren will not be used without my permission and that the information gathered will be used only for this research, and publications or conference papers arising from this research.
- I understand that the Centre will receive a summary of the findings of the research.
- I agree to being observed on session.
- I agree to my child/ren \_\_\_\_\_ being observed on session.
- I agree to documentation contributed to by me being copied and used for research purposes.
- I agree to documentation regarding my child/ren \_\_\_\_\_ being copied and used for research purposes.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

## Research Project: Playcentre Parents-as Educators Consent Form for Case-study Adults

- I have read the Information sheet provided by Suzanne Manning and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw, and to withdraw my child/ren from the study up until the end of the data gathering period.
- I understand that I am being invited to participate in a study about the influence of parents' backgrounds on the curriculum at Playcentre, as one of four case study adults. I agree to this on the understanding that my name, and that of my child/ren will not be used without my permission and that the information gathered will be used only for this research, and publications or conference papers arising from this research.
- I understand that I will personally receive a summary of findings from the study.
- I agree to being observed on session.
- I agree to my child/ren \_\_\_\_\_ being observed on session.
- I agree to being informally interviewed, either during a session or afterwards.
- I agree to documentation contributed to by me being copied and used for research purposes.
- I agree to documentation regarding my child/ren \_\_\_\_\_ being copied and used for research purposes.
- I agree to filling out a short questionnaire about my background training and experiences, and to being formally interviewed.
- I agree to the formal interview being audio taped. I understand that I will have the opportunity to view the transcript of any audio tapes to check for accuracy and to clarify information.

Signed:

Name:

Date: