An Exploration of Love in the Practice of Infant and Toddler

Teachers

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An Exploration of Love in the Practice of Infant and Toddler Teachers

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Declaration of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required).

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis reports a qualitative study that aimed to contribute to the existing body of empirical research related to love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice, with a specific focus on teaching practice with infants and toddlers. This study, which was conducted in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, also attempted to build theory about love as a legitimate and integral facet of teachers' teaching practice in order for infants and toddlers to flourish. In this study, I used an ethnographic methodology to gather empirical data through fieldwork observations of the research participants' teaching practice, together with semi-structured interviews, to address the research question: In what ways do early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers?

Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions provided this study's theoretical framework. Nussbaum's theory draws on the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia, which refers to the quality of a person's life, to posit that the emotions aim towards a person's flourishing. It is only a person's virtuous actions, together with their mutual relationships of friendship, personal love, or civic love, in which the object of a person's emotion is loved for their own good, that can be considered as integral to a person's eudaimonia (Nussbaum). Nussbaum proposes that experiences of the emotions are cognitively-laden, intellectual acts.

Moreover, from an Aristotelian perspective, civic love both underpins and nourishes the flourishing of society at large (Nussbaum, 1990). If to be civic reflects the actions of someone concerned about their community, then in the context of this study, I argue that love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is a civic love that aims towards the flourishing of the infants and toddlers for whom teachers are responsible.

From my inductive and deductive analysis of data gathered from the research participants, I have found they collectively understand and demonstrate civic love in their teaching practice in the following ways: through restorative actions, and appropriate physical interactions; the provision of a safe, stimulating, and nurturing learning environment; a

motivation to foster children's flourishing; and authentic, intentional, responsive, attuned, trusting, supportive, and respectful relationships with the children for whom they are responsible, and with those children's parents and whānau. Accordingly, I argue that a loving early childhood teacher will represent the characteristics of civic love in their teaching practice.

These findings are supported by salient literature from educational, psychological, neuroscientific, and paediatric perspectives, which emphasise the importance of infants' and toddlers' experiencing dependable, loving, responsive caregiver-child relationships in the first 1000 days of their lives if they are to flourish. However, while findings about the relationship between love and the flourishing of infants and toddlers are available to be drawn upon by the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education community, I have also found that contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice. I argue this is problematic for teachers wanting both guidance about, and legitimisation of, love as an integral facet of their teaching practice.

To address this problem, I extrapolated Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions into early childhood teachers' teaching practice, as follows: A loving early childhood teacher understands that a goal of their teaching practice is to foster children's flourishing. Based on this goal, a loving early childhood teacher makes an ongoing series of cognitive evaluations about the children for whom they are responsible. Based on their cognitive evaluations, a loving early childhood teacher makes decisions about appropriate actions to take in their teaching practice. Based on their cognitive decision-making, a loving early childhood teacher demonstrates civic love though their teaching practice in a manner consistent with the flourishing of those children. Accordingly, I argue that Nussbaum's cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions is a robust foundation upon which early childhood teachers can credibly engage in discourse about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This doctoral thesis is a qualitative study which has aimed to contribute to the existing body of empirical research related to love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice, with a specific focus on teaching practice with infants and toddlers. I conducted my research for this thesis through Australian Catholic University, as a part-time student based in Aotearoa New Zealand. During this period, I was also managing an early childhood centre full-time, including through a global pandemic.

This study has emerged out of my concern that love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is a topic the early childhood community in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to struggle with. A key aim of this study was to provide a credible basis upon which early childhood teachers could engage in discourse about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.

To shape and guide this study, I developed the following research question: *In what ways do early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers?* This study, which was conducted in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, also attempted to build theory about love as a legitimate and integral facet of teachers' teaching practice in order for infants and toddlers to flourish.

Martha Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, drawn primarily from her seminal work, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, provided this study's theoretical framework. Other works by Nussbaum (1990, 1994, 2004a, 2004b) were also drawn upon, where applicable, to support the central claims of this study.

Nussbaum (2001) proposes that "Human beings experience emotions in ways that are shaped both by individual history and by social norms" (p. 140). According to Nussbaum, "When we talk normatively about love we are talking, clearly, about matters both personal

and social" (p. 478). I therefore suggest that teachers' understanding and demonstration of love in their teaching practice will be influenced by their personal upbringing, experience, history, and culture, and by the norms of the societies in which they teach. However, I am not suggesting that early childhood teachers be given the freedom to do as they wish in their teaching practice, as their teaching practice must be conducted in accordance with the applicable regulatory framework.

In addition, due to the complex, composite, and amorphous nature of love, and because teachers will typically come from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds, it is important to clarify at the outset of this thesis that it was not my intention to propose one, all-encompassing or definitive, definition of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice. This is consistent with Nussbaum (2001), who asserts that emotions, such as love, do not lend themselves to specific definition. According to Nussbaum, excessive rigidity in the definition of an emotion is problematic, and any classification of an emotion that suggests clear-cut boundaries, should be treated with suspicion.

1.2 Overview of this chapter

In this chapter, I provide a brief summary of my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013), which was instrumental in influencing my decision to continue this research into love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice. I appreciate that in this thesis I employ language that may not be familiar to all readers. Accordingly, to assist the reader, I provide definitions of the key terms I use throughout this thesis.

I then provide a high-level overview of my place in this thesis, and discuss how the beginning of my career in early childhood education coincided with the development and publication of the first early childhood education curriculum in the world to include a focus on infants and toddlers within its framework (White & Mika, 2013). The majority of this chapter discusses why love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is the focus of this thesis, and why this thesis focused on early childhood teachers' teaching practice with infants and toddlers in particular.

1.3 Background to this thesis

This thesis has built on my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013), which investigated how teachers perceived the concept of love for children in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. I found the research participants in that study had experienced differing expectations from colleagues and parents alike about love in their teaching practice. This resulted in some of the research participants expressing uncertainly about whether their level of emotional engagement with the children for whom they were responsible through their teaching practice was acceptable, and questioning their philosophical and pedagogical beliefs about love in their teaching practice.

I found, while the research participants in that study did value love as a legitimate facet of their teaching practice, this uncertainty was a cause of tension for them. The ambiguity that the research participants in my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013) experienced about teaching with love was a motivation for my decision to continue my research into love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice in this thesis.

Another motivation to undertake this research was to provide early childhood teachers who value love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice with a means to present counterarguments to views of love that seek to trivialise the intellectuality of their teaching practice, with caricatures of early childhood teachers such as "someone who frolics happily and effortlessly with children, [and] who has an endless supply of stories and games to keep the little cherubs happy" (Stonehouse, 1989, p. 62). As Stonehouse asserts, it is necessary to lose the demeaning image of early childhood teachers as "being nice ladies who love children" (p. 78). In a similar vein, I personally have heard this facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice referred to as 'that lovey dovey stuff'.

1.4 Key terms used in this thesis

In this thesis, I employ language that may not be familiar to all readers. To assist the reader, in this section I provide definitions of key terms that I use liberally throughout this thesis.

As I have noted in the introduction to this chapter, this thesis was conducted in an Aotearoa New Zealand context. Aotearoa is the Māori language name for New Zealand (Ryan, 1983). Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. The fieldwork phase of this study was conducted in an early childhood centre in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Tamaki Makaurau is the Māori language name for Auckland (Fehnker et al., 2021).

Early Childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is governed by the Ministry of Education, and Aotearoa New Zealand's national early childhood education curriculum is called *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (Delaune & Surtees, 2023; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014); hereafter referred to in this thesis as *Te Whāriki*.

Te Whāriki was originally published by the Ministry of Education in 1996, and revised in 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2017). *Te Whāriki* takes its name from the Māori language, with Te, meaning 'the', and Whāriki, meaning 'mat', and "metaphorically represents a mat for all to stand on" (Sansom, 2011, p. 19).

Te Whāriki defines infants and toddlers, collectively, as children aged from birth to three years, and suggests that within this timeframe there are the following "overlapping age ranges: infants (birth to 18 months), toddlers (one to three years)" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.13). Where generic reference has been made in this thesis to an individual who attends to a child's needs, the term 'caregiver' has been used.

I also employ the following Māori language terms throughout this thesis: aroha, meaning "love, compassion, empathy, affection" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 66); kaiako, meaning "teacher(s)" (Ministry of Education, p. 66); mana, meaning "the power of being, authority, prestige, spiritual power, authority, status and control" (Ministry of Education, p. 66); and whānau, meaning "extended family, multigenerational group of relatives or group of people who work together on and for a common cause" (Ministry of Education, p. 67).

In this thesis, I refer consistently to 'early childhood education'. However, other scholars use a variety of acronyms: EC (early childhood), ECE (early childhood education), ECCE (early childhood care and education), ECEC (early childhood education and care). My

usage of early childhood education in this thesis is intended to be inclusive of all these acronyms/descriptions.

1.5 My place in this thesis

My own journey in early childhood education has traversed a variety of roles from teacher, centre manager, curriculum advisor, and lecturer, to my current position as head teacher/manager of a community-based not-for-profit early childhood education centre. In 1988, I was accepted to attend the Dunedin College of Education's inaugural three-year Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood Education qualification. In the same year, I enrolled at the University of Otago to undertake Bachelor of Education studies.

After I had graduated with these qualifications, my second year working as an early childhood teacher coincided with the publication of the draft *Te Whāriki* in 1993. I contributed to feedback on the draft as part of the Napier Kindergarten Association's submission to the Ministry of Education about *Te Whāriki's* proposed content.

Te Whāriki is lauded by White et al. (2019) as a "national treasure in its own right" (p. 9). With *Te Whāriki's* publication in 1996, Aotearoa New Zealand became the first country in the world "to give infants and toddlers an inclusive position within a curriculum for teaching and learning" (White & Mika, 2013, p. 93).

Bilingual in its content, I argue that the 1996 version of *Te Whāriki* specifically linked Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood education curriculum to teaching with love. For example, in its English language text, the 1996 version of *Te Whāriki* stipulates that "Any programme catering for infants must provide: sociable, loving, and physically responsive adults who can tune in to an infant's needs" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). The 1996 version of *Te Whāriki* also articulates that "Time and opportunity are provided for the infant and familiar adults to build a trusting and loving relationship together" (Ministry of Education, p. 51). Moreover, reference to aroha was liberally made throughout the Māori language text of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education). I feel fortunate that the commencement of my career in

early childhood education coincided with the development and publication of such an enlightened and loving document.

1.6 Why investigate love?

In my thirty-plus years of experience in the variety of roles in early childhood education that I have noted above, love for children has always been an integral facet of my teaching philosophy and practice. I took this position due in part to the influence of my own whānau, and also because of the positive impact that I observe love having in my teaching practice on the lives of the children for whom I have been responsible. I discuss the connotations of love on children's social, emotional, and physical development throughout this thesis.

Lisa Goldstein's (1997) seminal work, *Teaching with Love: A Feminist Approach to Early Childhood Education*, in which Goldstein theorised her notion of teacherly love, was foundational to my research into love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice, and validated my belief that love in this context is a topic worthy of scholarly study. Goldstein recognises that "Teaching young children is challenging, intellectual work, work that draws on the head as well as on the heart and hands" (p. 89).

Goldstein (1997) argues that "Putting love at the center of the educational enterprise … has the potential to transform the field of early childhood education, giving intellectual authority to the emotional, interpersonal work that is at the heart of teaching young children" (pp. 167-168). Goldstein also proposes that "engaging in the act of teaching with love leads to the development of teacherly love" (p. 153). In this context, Goldstein theorises that "Teacherly love arises when a belief in the value of love in education and a deliberate decision to love students combine with a passion for teaching" (p. 152). I discuss teacherly love in more detail in Chapter 2.

Goldstein's (1997) work in turn introduced me to William Ayers' (1989) *The Good Preschool Teacher*, in which Ayers asserts that "loving children is an essential qualification for preschool teachers" (p. 32). Ayers further asserts that in preschool education settings,

"each child has a right to be loved and understood" (p. 28). I reflected this statement in my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013) when I concluded that, in an early childhood education context, "children have the right to be loved by their teachers, and teachers have the inviolable right and responsibility to love children as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice" (p. 75).

Goldstein (1997) challenges academics to take a greater interest in love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice. However, Goldstein also recognises the inherent difficulty presented to scholars interested in studying love in this context when she acknowledges that "Love is difficult to define, impossible to measure, and outside the boundaries of generalizability, reliability, and validity" (p. 8). Furthermore, Liston and Garrison (2004) identify that the difficulty Goldstein's (1997) challenge presents is exacerbated, because, "When only what is measurable is considered "real," the discourse of love is supressed" (p. 3).

Love nonetheless has powerful connotations in an early childhood education context and is commonly referenced by teachers in relation to their teaching practice (Ayers,1989; Elliot, 2007; Goldstein, 1997; Page, 2013). Despite this, love in teachers' teaching practice remains largely "unexplored by academics and scholars" (Goldstein, 1997, p. 2). The unexplored nature of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is also reflected by Recchia et al. (2018) who argue, that while early childhood teachers categorically associate love with their teaching practice, academics are reticent about articulations of love in this context, instead using terminology that is deemed to be more 'professional' or 'scientific' to describe love in teachers' teaching practice.

Liston and Garrison (2004) also describe the conundrum of a situation where "the benefits of love's discourse and practices are loudly declaimed by many, even while they are silently lived by many more" (p. 3). Like Goldstein (1997), Liston and Garrison (2004) argue that teachers have long known that "love, in all its forms and facets, is so integral to teaching" (p. 2). They too challenge academics "to allow, even invite, the emotions, and

more specifically love, into our understanding and practice of teaching" (Liston & Garrison, p. 2).

Despite the apparent contention associated with love in teachers' teaching practice, Goldstein (1997) unequivocally takes the stance that 'love' is the word that embodies "the essence of early childhood education" (p. 2). I concur with Goldstein's stance in this regard. Accordingly, I have taken the deliberate decision to focus this thesis on love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice.

Barbara Frederickson (2013a) asserts that "Love is our supreme emotion that makes us come most fully alive and feel most fully human. It is perhaps the most essential emotional experience for thriving and health" (p. 10). Moreover, right from infancy, human beings flourish on love (Fredrickson). I argue that my view of love as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice reflects Fredrickson's assertion that love lies within experiences of relationships and connections. According to Fredrickson, "Within each moment of loving connection, you become sincerely invested in this other person's well-being, simply for his or her own sake" (p. 10).

While love can be considered within a myriad number of human relationships, sexual relationships of course have no place in early childhood education and are not addressed further by me in this thesis. It should also be noted that this thesis is strictly secular in nature. In the following section, I discuss why I have focussed this thesis on the ways that early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice, specifically with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible.

1.7 Why focus on infants and toddlers?

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (CDCHU) (2016) acknowledges that, "Children develop within an environment of relationships that begins in the family but also involves other adults who play important roles in their lives" (p. 5). Other contemporary researchers also recognise that the quality of an infant's or toddler's

interpersonal relationships with their caregivers "in the first 1000 days plays the most significant role in shaping a child's lifelong outcomes" (Moore et al., 2017, p. 46).

Moreover, "It is evident that a child's interaction with their caregiver is perhaps the most powerful determinant of their future health and wellbeing" (Moore et al., 2017, p. 33). Research focusing on the first 1000 days in a child's life, drawn from a range of disciplines, is becoming increasingly prevalent (Gradovski et al., 2019; Low et al., 2021; Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, 2018; Moore, et. al., 2017).

Further reinforcing the significance of the first 1000 days in a child's life, infants' and toddlers' brain development is fuelled by their interactive relationships with responsive caregivers (CDCHU, 2016). During infants' first year of life, they become increasingly sensitive to the emotional cues of their caregivers (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), and interact with their caregivers through facial expressions, babbling, and gestures (CDCHU, 2016). It is the reciprocal interactions between infants and toddlers and their nurturing caregivers "that builds neural connections, the architecture of the child's developing brain" (CDCHU, p. 5).

Accordingly, the caregiver's provision of appropriate experiences, support, and encouragement, which "enable children to take over and self-regulate in one area of functioning after another is one of the most critical elements of good caregiving" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 122). Importantly, "the locus of regulatory problems during the early months of life is increasingly seen as residing not in the infant's behavior (e.g., excessive crying, irregular sleeping) but in the transactions that transpire between infants and their caregivers" (Shonkoff & Phillips, p. 122). In this context, "if the caregiver's response is unreliable, inappropriate, or absent, the developing brain's architecture can be disrupted as a result of this under-stimulation" (Moore et. al., 2017, p. 10).

Zauche et al. (2016) also identify that "Early childhood is a critical period for language and cognitive development" (p. 318), and remarkably, "Six-month-old infants can distinguish the full range of sounds used in the world's languages" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 127). Of course, if left completely on their own, an infant would not survive (Shonkoff & Phillips). However, "In relationships with protective, nurturing adults, they thrive" (Shonkoff & Phillips,

p. 93). Within this relationship, it is "the back-and-forth communication exchanges between adult and baby [that] is an essential component of language and brain development" (Zauche et al., 2017, p. 496).

According to Zauche et al. (2017), "Extensive research has shown the profound influence of social engagement for an infant's language development" (p. 496). In this context, the "quantity and quality of talking, interacting, and reading with a child in the first three years of life are strongly associated with language and cognitive development as well as school readiness and academic performance" (Zauche, et. al., 2016, p. 318). The transition from a state of relative helplessness to competence in the first 1000 days is also evidenced by the development of increasing levels of executive function, which includes "The capacity for self-regulation, ranging from sleeping and settling in the earliest weeks of life to the preschooler's emerging capacity to manage emotions, inhibit behavior, and [to] focus attention on important tasks" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 121).

According to Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), "many of the regulatory systems that are essential for infant survival and emotional organization require consistent caregiving attention" (p. 28). Moreover, "Regulation in early development is deeply embedded in the child's relations with others" (Shonkoff & Phillips, p. 122). Fredrickson (2013a) also identifies that developmental science demonstrates a responsive caregiver-infant relationship "is absolutely vital to normal human development" (p. 33). Furthermore, "behavioural synchrony between infant and caregiver sets the stage for children's development of self-regulation, which gives them tools for controlling and channeling their emotions, attention, and behaviours, tools vital to success in all domains of life" (Fredrickson, p. 34).

Given that this study's focus is on early childhood teachers' teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible, I argue it is crucial to recognise that, in early childhood, "Children grow and thrive in the context of close and dependable relationships that provide love and nurturance, security, responsive interaction, and encouragement for exploration" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 7; p. 389). Moreover, "Stability and consistency in these relationships is important, as are the adult's sensitivity, love,

availability, and unflagging commitment to the child's well-being" (Shonkoff & Phillips, p. 265). Lewis et al. (2000) conclude that "The amount and quality of love a child receives have long-lasting neural consequences" (p. 199). Based on findings from data obtained over a twenty-year period of longitudinal study, Lewis et al. arrive at "The unimpeachable verdict: love matters in the life of a child" (p. 199).

I argue that the insights noted above in relation to the critical nature of the first 1000 days in a child's development also highlight the potentially pivotal role that early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers can have in the lives of the children for whom they are responsible through their teaching practice. In the following section, I explore how the expected relationships between early childhood teachers and infants' and toddlers' growing interests and capabilities (Ministry of Education, 2017) are expressed in the 2017 version of *Te Whāriki*.

1.8 Infants' and toddlers' growing interests and capabilities

Aotearoa New Zealand's national early childhood education curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, is underpinned by four principles (Ministry of Education, 2017). These are: Family and community | Whānau tangata, Empowerment | Whakamana, Relationships | Ngā hononga, and Holistic development | Kotahitanga (Ministry of Education). "These principles are the foundations of curriculum decision making and a guide for every aspect of pedagogy and practice" (Ministry of Education, p 17). Intertwined with these four principles are five curriculum strands: Belonging | Mana whenua, Communication | Mana reo, Contribution | Mana tangata, Exploration | Mana aotūroa, and Wellbeing | Mana atua (Ministry of Education). "Together with the principles, these strands provide the framework for a holistic curriculum" (Ministry of Education, p 22).

Te Whāriki positions children "as confident and competent learners from birth" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 12), and sets out the expected relationships between early childhood teachers, and infants' and toddlers' growing interests and capabilities (Ministry of Education). Further highlighting the development that occurs in the first 1000 days of a

child's life, *Te Whāriki* acknowledges that "Physical, cognitive and socio-emotional growth and development are more rapid during infancy than in any other period of life. Neural pathways formed during this period are the foundations for all future learning" (Ministry of Education, p. 13). Accordingly, it is essential for early childhood teachers who work with infants to attend to infants' needs in a sensitive, responsive, and respectful manner through their teaching practice to enable infants' agency (Ministry of Education).

As infants' capacity to communicate their own needs and to anticipate events increases over time, teachers must "sensitively observe their cues and gestures in order to meet their needs and provide opportunities for learning" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 14). In this context, early childhood teachers are responsible for creating and maintaining a peaceful environment with appropriate levels of sensory stimulation in which infants can "learn through respectful, reciprocal interactions with people, places and things" (Ministry of Education, p. 14).

As infants grow into toddlers, they "are rapidly developing their physical, social, cognitive and language capabilities. They need many opportunities to engage in rich and rewarding experiences" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 14). *Te Whāriki* recognises that "Toddlers are active, curious, and seeking to make sense of their world. They enjoy testing limits, causes and effects as they develop and refine their working theories" (Ministry of Education, p. 14). As toddlers' growth and development continues, they learn to navigate their world as independent learners, and develop their ability to self-regulate both physically and emotionally (Ministry of Education).

According to *Te Whāriki*, early childhood teachers are required to acknowledge and respect toddlers' rights to increasing agency within an early childhood education environment (Ministry of Education, 2017). Early Childhood teachers demonstrate their respect for toddlers through actions such as, but not limited to, providing toddlers with boundaries that are clear and consistent, by being attentive to toddlers' interests, by offering toddlers opportunities for novel and repeated learning experiences, by remaining calm in interactions with toddlers, and by providing toddlers with options in support of their

development of self-regulation (Ministry of Education). Having explored the expected relationships between early childhood teachers and infants' and toddlers' growing interests and capabilities in an Aotearoa New Zealand curriculum policy context (Ministry of Education), in the following section I provide an outline of how this thesis explores the ways early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible.

1.9 Outline of this thesis

I present this thesis in seven chapters, inclusive of this Introduction. In this chapter, I introduce the research question and my place in this thesis. I discuss the importance of dependable, loving, responsive caregiver-child relationships in the first 1000 days of a child's life, if a child is to flourish, and why this thesis has focused on early childhood teachers' teaching practice with infants and toddlers.

In Chapter 2, I outline the process I undertook to establish this study's final literature pool, and discuss how my review of that literature enabled me to make the claim that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers. I argue that, while there appears to be a consistent narrative in research from psychology, neuroscience, and paediatrics about the relationship between love and the flourishing of infants and toddlers, this narrative has not been universally incorporated into early childhood education discourse (language, curriculum, and scholarly debate) about teachers' teaching practice.

In Chapter 3, I explore Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions and explain why it was chosen as this study's theoretical framework. I relate Nussbaum's theory to early childhood teachers' teaching practice, and set out my arguments why Nussbaum's theory provides a robust foundation upon which early childhood teachers can credibly engage in discourse towards attaining broad consensus about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.

In Chapter 4, I outline this study's research paradigm to establish its ontology, epistemology, and methodology. I address ethical considerations, the concept of reflexivity,

and my position in this thesis as researcher. In this qualitative study, I took an ethnographic approach to gathering empirical data from the research participants. I discuss the methods I employed to establish summary categories to accurately reflect the ways the research participants understood and demonstrated love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible.

In Chapters 5 and 6 collectively, I present findings based on the qualitative data I analysed, including quotes from the research participants to illustrate the ways in which they understood and demonstrated love in their teaching practice. In Chapter 5, I respond to the first part of the research question: In what ways do early childhood teachers *understand* love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers? In Chapter 6, I respond to the second part of the question: In what ways do early childhood teachers *demonstrate* love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers? I must clarify at this juncture that the presentation and discussion of this study's findings in two chapters is purely structural, and there is no intention to imply a binary division between 'mind' and 'body' or to suggest that the research participants in this study brought anything other than their 'whole selves' to their work with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible.

I conclude this thesis in Chapter 7, by summarising the key findings and setting out the central claims. I recognise the limitations of this study, but also identify the contribution it can make to the field of early childhood education, and to the existing body of empirical research related to love in early childhood teacher's teaching practice with infants and toddlers. Opportunities for future research are suggested.

To preface the remainder of this thesis, a central theme, and one that I will return to often, is the potentially pivotal role that loving early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers can have in the lives of the children for whom they are responsible through their teaching practice, and the positive effect of love not only on children but ultimately also on the community and larger society of which those children are members. It is also important to reiterate that the research question does not ask if, or whether, early childhood teachers

teach with love, but in what ways. We need to start naming love in early childhood teachers'

teaching practice for what it is.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, I introduced this study by discussing the importance of dependable, loving, responsive caregiver-child relationships in the first 1000 days of a child's life if a child is to flourish. I expand on that discussion in this chapter through my review of the literature in this study's final literature pool, from which I argue that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers.

I then build on this argument with a critique of the extent to which love, and its contribution to infants' and toddlers' flourishing, features in contemporary early childhood education discourse to provide clarity and guidance for teachers in their understanding and demonstration of love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible. From this critique, I argue that contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice. In the following section, I provide a description of the process I undertook to establish this study's final literature pool.

2.2 Establishing this study's final literature pool

In this section, I describe the process I used to locate, order, and critique literature to establish a final literature pool for review. I commenced this process by determining the following three *key concepts* as the parameters to base my search for relevant literature upon: Teachers, Early Childhood, and Emotions. I derived 'Teachers' and 'Early Childhood' directly from the research question: *In what ways do early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers?* However, from my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013) I was aware of the relative paucity of literature specifically relating to *love* in early childhood education. Accordingly, to provide what I

anticipated would be a greater pool of potential literature for review, I chose 'Emotions' to complete the three key concepts.

The literature reviewed in this chapter is drawn primarily from peer-reviewed published articles, with supporting material from books, and doctoral theses. I provide an illustrative overview of the process I followed to establish this study's literature pool in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1

Establishment of literature pool
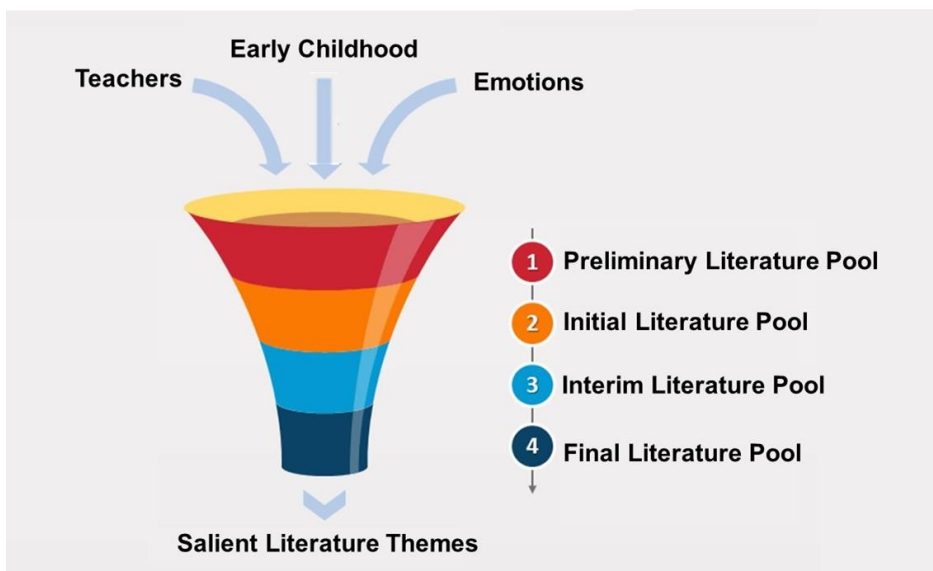
I established this study's preliminary literature pool by initially reviewing the articles already known to me through my previous research to determine which of them contained sufficient content relating to one or more of the three key concepts that I have noted above. I then expanded the preliminary literature pool by undertaking the following search process: I input the three key concepts into the Australian Catholic University library search functionality, both individually and in combination. I also accessed data bases such as ProQuest, and ERIC via the Australian Catholic University library. However, I only considered literature for inclusion in this review if it met the following qualifying criteria: written in English; not more than twenty years old; and, in relation to articles, peer reviewed.

Limiting the literature to material written in English was a prudent and logical decision because this is the only language in which I am fluent. My original intention was to limit the literature for inclusion in this review to literature published within the previous ten years. However, I ultimately extended this date range to cover a twenty-year period in an endeavour to locate sufficient material to ensure a robust review of salient literature. The search for literature to include in this review commenced in 2015, meaning a date range extending back to 1995. This resulted in the location of a range of material, in addition to that already known to me, to create this study's initial literature pool. I then applied the self-imposed rigour of only reading the abstracts (articles and doctoral theses) and forwards (books) to determine which of them contained sufficient content pertaining to one or more of the three key concepts to merit their promotion into this study's interim literature pool.

References to other articles within the articles in the interim literature pool were also valuable sources of potential content for inclusion in this literature review. When I identified such references, I applied an ancestry search approach to locate the source material in question. This sometimes resulted in the location of literature that fell outside of the three key concepts and the qualifying criteria, meaning it was excluded from this review.

I then undertook a more rigorous review to determine which literature in the interim literature pool was sufficiently relevant to the research question to warrant inclusion in this review. To ensure the optimisation of the time that I invested in my review of the literature in the interim literature pool, I then re-read abstracts (articles and doctoral theses) and forwards (books), and ordered the literature by allocating a 'Primary', 'Secondary', or 'Tertiary' categorisation. Primary literature contained content pertaining to all three of the key concepts; secondary literature contained content pertaining to two of the three key concepts; and tertiary literature contained content pertaining to only one of the three key concepts.

The next step towards determining this study's final literature pool was to critique the literature in the interim literature pool by reviewing it in greater detail and making annotations to highlight content relevant to this study's research question. However, during this process it became apparent to me that using Emotions as a key concept, which I had initially deemed

to be a prudent decision, instead resulted in this study's interim literature pool including

literature that, in my determination, was not sufficiently relevant to the research question to

merit its inclusion in this review because there was an insufficient focus on love. Accordingly,

I revised the three key concepts that I based my search for relevant literature upon, by

replacing 'Emotions' with 'Love'. Like 'Teachers' and 'Early Childhood' I derived 'Love'

directly from the research question. I provide an overview of the revised process I followed to

establish this study's literature pool in Figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2

Establishment of literature pool - revised
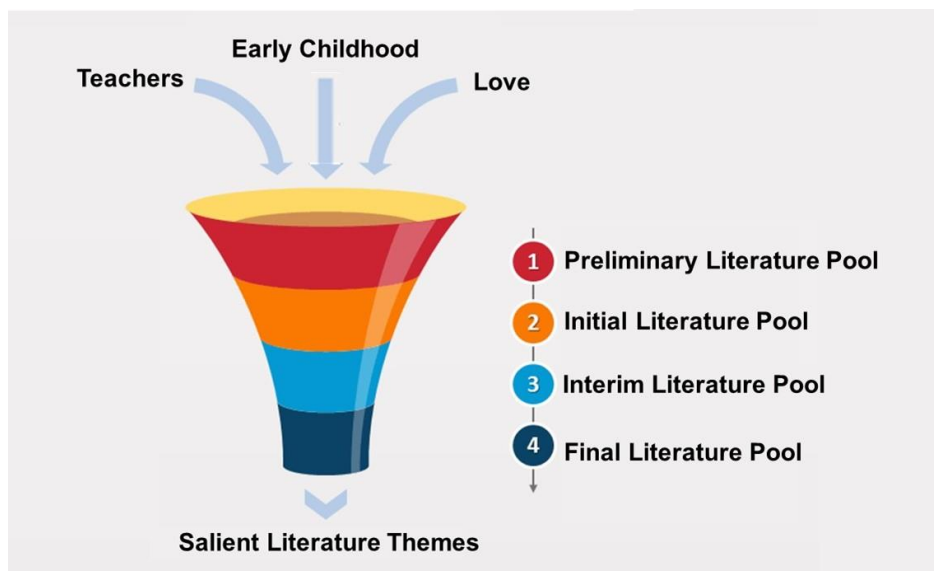
Having this new combination of key concepts necessitated a repeat of the process I

have described above, from scratch. Note, to ensure that I was keeping abreast with current

research, in late 2021/early 2022, I revisited the search process described above to

determine whether there had been literature published since 2015, which was of sufficient

salience to the research question to merit inclusion in this review. As I have noted above, my

2015 interim literature pool drew on material from the preceding twenty years as at that date.

It is important to clarify that despite the 2021/2022 update, all relevant content from the 2015

search is still included in the final literature pool. In the following section, I describe the

process I undertook to identify salient themes in the literature relevant to this study's research question.

2.3 Identifying salient themes in the literature

The literature that comprised this study's final literature pool reports research in the fields of education, psychology, neuroscience, and paediatrics. To identify salient themes in the literature relevant to the research question, I took the following approach: I thoroughly re-read the literature, annotating key issues, discussions, and arguments. I tabulated the number of times the issues, discussions, and arguments occurred in the literature, together with the consistency of arguments across the authors.

From this approach, I identified the following two overarching themes: (1) that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers; and (2) that contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice. I discuss these themes in the following sections.

2.4 Love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers

As I have noted in Chapter 1, an appreciation of the critical nature of the first 1000 days in children's development is increasingly prevalent in child development literature (Gradovski et al., 2019; Low et al., 2021; Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, 2018; Moore, et. al., 2017). In this section, I discuss contemporary views about love as a contributory factor in human flourishing, based on research from psychology and neuroscience. Based on paediatric research, I also discuss contemporary views on relational health in the caregiver-child relationship, as a crucial factor in children's development, noting that love lies within experiences of relationships and connections. I then consider how these views can be related to early childhood teachers' teaching practice, particularly for teachers who work with infants and toddlers. I conclude this section with a high-level synthesis of contemporary

educational perspectives on how love in teachers' teaching practice contributes to students' flourishing.

2.4.1 Psychological perspectives on human flourishing

The discussion in this sub-section draws primarily upon the work of psychologist, Barbara Fredrickson. To provide context for this discussion, it is important to understand that human emotions are thought to have evolved as survival mechanisms (Fredrickson, 1998), whereas, "To *flourish* means to live within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience" (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005, p. 678, emphasis in original).

According to Fredrickson and Branigan (2005), "Emotions are short-lived experiences that produce coordinated changes in people's thoughts, actions, and physiological responses" (p. 313). In this context, the thoughts and actions that may be called forth in response to emotional experiences are referred to as "thought-action repertoires" (Fredrickson & Branigan, p. 313).

Negative emotions, such as anger, or fear, "function to narrow a person's momentary thought–action repertoire … by calling to mind and body the time-tested, ancestrally adaptive actions represented by specific action tendencies" (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 5). "This function is without question adaptive in life-threatening situations that require quick and decisive action in order to survive" (Fredrickson, p. 5). Anger, for example, may call forth an attack 'or fight' response, whereas fear may call forth an escape 'or flight' response (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). However, Fredrickson and Levenson (1998) note that "action-oriented explanatory models, which have served the negative emotions well, may not do as well for describing the functions of positive emotions" (p. 192). In the following sub-section, I discuss the approach Fredrickson takes to describing the functions of positive emotions, through the broaden-and-build theory.

2.4.1.1 Origins of Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory. Fredrickson's formal study of emotions commenced during postdoctoral research in the early 1990s (Fredrickson, 2013b). With Levenson, Fredrickson initially hypothesised that certain positive emotions, rather than sparking specific actions, may instead function to lessen, or 'undo' the effect of negative emotions (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998). However, based on Fredrickson's subsequent 1998 review of works of pre-eminent evolutionary psychologists, including Csikszentmihalyi and Isen, Fredrickson discounted the undo effect as a viable hypothesis (Fredrickson, 2013b). From her 1998 review, Fredrickson determined that "Undoing was unlikely to be the evolved function of positive emotions" (p. 15). Instead, Fredrickson (1998) concluded that the function of positive emotions "was to *build* [emphasis added] an individual's resources for survival" (p. 15), which led in turn to the introduction of "the *broaden-and-build model* of positive emotions" (p. 18, emphasis in original).

According to Fredrickson (1998), "The broaden-and-build theory describes the form of positive emotions as to broaden awareness and their function as to build resources" (p. 15). Fredrickson suggests the broaden-and-build model "can explain why the propensity to experience positive emotions has evolved to be a ubiquitous feature of human nature and how, in contemporary society, positive emotions might be tapped to promote individual and collective well-being and health" (p. 18). Fredrickson proposes that both negative and positive emotions evolved "to be part of our universal human nature through selective pressures related to survival, albeit on vastly different timescales" (p. 15). Whereas, as noted above, negative emotions evolved as an immediate survival mechanism, in contrast, positive emotions "carried adaptive significance for our human ancestors over longer timescales" (Fredrickson, p. 15).

As Fredrickson (1998) explains, positive emotions lead to a broadened mindset that is a key ingredient for "discovery of new knowledge, new alliances, and new skills" (p. 15). Accordingly, "Resources built through positive emotions also increased the odds that our ancestors would experience subsequent positive emotions, with their attendant broaden-and-build benefits, thus creating an upward spiral toward improved odds for survival, health,

and fulfilment" (Fredrickson, p. 15). According to Fredrickson (2001), "From the perspective

of the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions are vehicles for individual growth and

social connection: By building people's personal and social resources, positive emotions

transform people for the better, giving them better lives in the future" (p. 224).

Fredrickson and Branigan (2005), subsequently conducted two experiments to test

the hypotheses of the broaden-and-build theory "that positive emotions broaden the scope of

attention and thought-action repertoires" (p. 313). The participants in the experiments were

104 United States of America university students, who were enrolled in an introductory

psychology course. In both experiments, the participants watched five film clips "that elicited

(a) amusement, (b) contentment, (c) neutrality, (d) anger, or (e) anxiety" (Fredrickson &

Branigan, p. 313). Experiment 1 tested scope of attention "using a global-local visual

processing task" (Fredrickson & Branigan, p. 313). Experiment 2 tested thought-action

repertoires "using a Twenty Statements Test" (Fredrickson & Branigan, p. 313).

Of the five film clips used in the experiments, two were designed to elicit positive

emotions, two to elicit negative emotions, with the fifth serving as a neutral control

(Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). In the experiments, each participant viewed two different

randomly selected film clips and were then asked to report how they had felt during the

viewing (Fredrickson & Branigan). According to Fredrickson and Branigan, to enhance the

generality of their findings, "each experiment used conceptually and methodologically distinct

measures to assess broadening" (p. 325). Fredrickson and Branigan found that "Compared

to a neutral state, positive emotions broadened the scope of attention … and thought-action

repertoires" (p. 313), whereas, "negative emotions, relative to a neutral state, narrowed

thought-action repertoires" (p. 313). Fredrickson and Branigan concluded that their

experiments supported the hypotheses of the broaden-and-build theory.

According to Ekman and Simon-Thomas (2021), "Prior to Fredrickson's

groundbreaking work, positive emotions were largely viewed as self-serving for pleasure.

Now, positive emotions are tied to the generation and discovery of new knowledge, forging

new alliances, and developing new skills" (p. 3). In the following sub-section, I discuss how,

in the context of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, Fredrickson conceptualises love as a determinant of human flourishing.

2.4.1.2 Fredrickson's conceptualisation of love as a determinant of human flourishing. The primary emotion Fredrickson (2013a, 2013b) associates with human flourishing is love. According to Fredrickson (1998), "Most theorists acknowledge that love is not a single emotion and that people experience varieties of love" (p. 8). In this context, Fredrickson holds that "love experiences are made up of many positive emotions, including interest, joy and contentment" (p. 8). I provide a summary of Fredrickson's definitions of joy, contentment, and interest, as constitutive of love, respectively, as follows.

In Fredrickson's (2013b) view, "Joy emerges when one's current circumstances present unexpected good fortune. People feel joy, for instance, when receiving good news or a pleasant surprise" (p. 4). According to Fredrickson (1998), "joy creates the urge to play and be playful in the broadest sense of the word" (p. 6). Play involves exploration and invention, and the skills a person acquires through the learning experiences prompted by play can become durable intellectual, physical, and social resources (Fredrickson). These resources can then be drawn upon long after the experience that instigated the joy has passed (Fredrickson, 1998, 2013b). Moreover, playing, and other pleasant activities, including interacting with and helping others, "forecast greater gains over time in the cognitive resource of mindfulness, which in turn predicts increased levels of flourishing in an upward spiral dynamic" (Fredrickson, 2013b, p. 26).

Fredrickson (1998) emphasises that in the broaden-and-build model, contentment "should be distinguished from *pleasure*" (p. 7, emphasis in original). According to Fredrickson, contentment "creates the urge to savor and integrate recent events and experiences creating a new sense of self and a new world view" (p. 8). In this context, "integration, receptiveness, and increasing self-complexity characterize contentment as an emotion that broadens individuals' momentary thought–action repertoires and builds their

personal resources" (Fredrickson, p. 8). Fredrickson speculates that "the changes sparked by contentment are more cognitive than physical" (pp. 7-8).

In Fredrickson's (1998) broaden-and-build model, the concept of "Interest is sometimes used interchangeably with curiosity, intrigue, excitement, or wonder" (p. 7). According to Fredrickson (2013b), "Interest arises in circumstances appraised as safe but offering novelty. People feel interest, for instance, when they encounter something that is mysterious or challenging, yet not overwhelming" (p. 4). In this context, interest "not only broadens an individual's momentary thought–action repertoire as the individual is enticed to explore, but over time and as a product of sustained exploration, interest also builds the individual's store of knowledge" (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 7). "The knowledge so gained becomes a durable resource" (Fredrickson, 2013b, p. 4).

While the positive emotions of joy, contentment, and interest are distinctly different (Fredrickson, 1998), love arises when any of these positive emotions are experienced "in the context of a safe, interpersonal connection or relationship" (Fredrickson, 2013b, p. 6). In this sense, Fredrickson hypothesises "that love broadens and builds to a greater degree than other, individually experienced positive emotions" (p. 43).

I argue that the relationship between positive emotions and human flourishing encapsulated in the broaden-and-build theory have direct relevance for early childhood education, not least because, as Fredrickson (1998) observes, "the early love relationship between infant and caregiver provides a foundation for interest-inspired exploration, which in turn can increase the child's cognitive or intellectual resources" (p. 12). In the following sub-section, I apply the tenets of Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory to early childhood education.

2.4.1.3 Applying broaden-and-build theory to early childhood education. As I have noted in Chapter 1, Fredrickson (2013a) asserts that love lies within experiences of relationships and connections. I argue that Fredrickson's recognition of the foundational nature of loving caregiver-infant relationships highlights the potentially pivotal role a loving

early childhood teacher can have in the development of infants' (and toddlers') emotional well-being, and hence to their ability to flourish. Applying the tenets of the broaden-and-build theory to early childhood education, I further argue that an early childhood education environment will be conducive to children's flourishing if teachers demonstrate the following attributes in their interactions with the children for whom they are responsible through their teaching practice: (1) they are genuinely interested in the children; (2) they share their encouragement of and joy in the children's achievements; and (3) they are engaged with the children in the children's reflections on their explorations and experiences.

I contend the broaden-and-build theory implies that if children are recipients of their teachers' positive emotions of interest, joy, and contentment, they will experience their teachers' love. Through experiencing teachers' love, children can build durable personal resources, evidenced by, but not limited to, a propensity for self-initiated play, self-initiated interactions with other children, and curiosity, which can in turn contribute to their ongoing development of physical, intellectual, and social resources (Fredrickson, 2013a). I argue this highlights the potentially pivotal role that loving early childhood teachers can have in the lives of the children for whom they are responsible.

In the following sub-sections, I continue this discussion of perspectives on human flourishing by drawing on research from neuroscience and paediatrics. The neuroscientific content highlights the importance of love, and the paediatric content highlights the importance of relational health.

2.4.2 Neuroscientific and paediatric perspectives on human flourishing

In the next three sub-sections, I draw on neuroscientific and paediatric research, respectively, to discuss love as a crucial factor in children's development. I then relate this content to early childhood teachers' teaching practice. As a preface to this discussion, I must clarify that the inclusion of content from research on adverse early childhood experiences is to highlight the importance of early childhood education environments where such adverse effects are *not* present, and hence, are conducive to children's flourishing.

2.4.2.1 Neuroscientific perspectives on love as a contributory factor in human flourishing. From Esch and Stefano's (2005a) review of neuroscientific literature on the relationship between love and mental and physical health, they identify that "Love has consequences for health and well-being" (p. 264). In this context, "love may activate areas in the brain responsible for emotion, attention, motivation and memory (i.e., limbic structures), and it may further serve to control the autonomic nervous system, i.e., stress reduction" (Esch & Stefano, p. 264). Moreover, according to Esch and Stefano (2005b) love is "a complex neurobiological phenomenon" (p. 175; p. 187) that "encompasses wellness and feelings of well-being" (p. 175).

In the context of Talay-Ongan's (2000) review of literature pertaining to "The field of neuroscience and child development (*developmental neuroscience*)" (p. 32, emphasis in original) Talay-Ongan observes that "The human brain … is deeply affected by experience, and shaped by stimulation. Soon after birth, different areas of the brain establish connections with each other as the child engages in discovery and exploration" (p. 28). However, "Unlike the cells in the other organ systems that grow and regenerate, the brain does not grow in the numbers of the neural cells it has" (Talay-Ongan, p. 28). Instead, "What contributes to neural development and increase in brain weight is growth in *connections* between the cells by their fibres, which literally sprout and reach out and touch each other" (Talay-Ongan, p. 28, emphasis in original). It is these synaptic connections that establish the links and networks within the infant's brain that "expand and strengthen as the experiential repertoire of the baby expands" (Talay-Ongan, p. 28).

To emphasise the significance in infancy of an environment where a child can engage in exploration and discovery, Twardosz (2012) conducted a review of "developmental and neuroscience literatures that are closely connected with early development and education concerns" (p. 96), together with a review of "current research and scholarship that applies neuroscience perspectives and methods to topics relevant to the early development and education field, such as self-regulation and the effects of poverty" (p. 97). From these reviews, Twardosz asserts that "After birth, the individual's experiences

with the environment play a critical role in continuing to form connections among the billions of neurons produced during the prenatal period, particularly in the cerebral cortex" (p. 98). Note, "The cerebral cortex is a mammal-specific region of the forebrain that functions at the top of the neural hierarchy to process and interpret sensory information, plan and organize tasks, and to control motor functions" (Sansom & Livesey, 2009, p. 1). Moreover, the cerebral cortex "is essential for perception, cognition, and behavior" (Twardosz, 2012, p. 97).

According to Twardosz (2012), neuroscientific research indicates that stressful environments in early childhood may adversely affect the infant's or toddler's brain development and its functioning "through the action of cortisol, a glucocorticoid that is released as part of the human stress response" (p. 103). Exposure to chronic stress in early childhood has been shown to affect the activity of the stress response systems within the brain (Blair, 2010; Twardosz, 2012), which in turn has consequences for the regulation of cognition and behaviour (Blair, 2010).

Blair et al. (2008) conducted a study of 1,292 mother-infant dyads drawn from "families from predominantly low-income, rural communities" (p. 1095) to examine "Relations of maternal and child characteristics to child cortisol reactivity to and recovery from emotional arousal" (p. 1095). Longitudinally "at approximately 7 months of age (infancy) and then again at approximately 15 months of age (toddlerhood)" (Blair et al., p. 1095), the study assessed "Maternal behavior, family income-to-need ratio and social advantage, and child temperament, attention, and mental development" (Blair et al., p. 1095) The findings of Blair et al.'s study "suggest a developmental process through which the environment directly and indirectly influences emerging stress regulation in early childhood" (p. 1106). Furthermore, Blair (2010), writing in the context of a review of "the effects of psychosocial stress on child development" (p. 181), notes that high levels of cortisol in infancy may have an influence on development of the structures in the brain and associated neural circuitry important for initiating and regulating an individual's response to stress, and to the development of executive functions. "Executive functions are core life skills, and they include capacities like impulse inhibition, working memory, cognitive flexibility, abstract thought, planning, and

problem solving" (Garner & Yogman, 2021, p. 15). In the following sub-section, I continue this discussion of perspectives on human flourishing by drawing on research from paediatrics focusing on relational health.

2.4.2.2 Paediatric perspectives on love as a contributory factor in human flourishing. I argue that loving caregiver-child relationships are an integral facet of relational health. Hambrick et al. (2019) reinforce the importance of a calm and stable early childhood environment to facilitate the development of executive functions, noting that "stress occurring during the first days, weeks and months of life, may be particularly influential for neurodevelopmental or brain-related outcomes" (p. 2). To establish this position, Hambrick et al. conducted a clinical study to examine the association between early-life stress and severe relational poverty, occurring during the first 2 months of life. Examples of early life stress include domestic violence and caregiver drug use, while examples of severe relational poverty include caregiver neglect, and lack of caregiver attunement (Hambrick et al.). Hambrick et al. also examined "a variety of brain related, clinician-rated functions, including self-regulation and relational capacities" (p. 1). Hambrick et al. focussed on "the first 2 months of life given research suggesting that the first few months of life may be the most rapid time of *ex-utero* brain growth" (p. 3, emphasis in original). Hambrick et al. found that "From a clinical perspective, relational poverty in early childhood is a significant stressor" (p. 12).

Garner and Yogman (2021) authored a policy statement on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, in support of the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships (SSNRs) that children need if they are to flourish. The policy statement asserts the importance of relational health to promote "not only the healthy, happy children of today but also the well-regulated parents and productive citizens of the future" (Garner & Yogman, p. 3).

The policy statement finds that for relational health to buffer the effects of childhood adversity, including early-life stress and severe relational poverty, and to build children's resilience in these circumstances, "responsive interactions between children and engaged,

attuned adults are paramount" (Garner & Yogman, 2021, pp. 6-7). This finding is based on

data reported in working papers published by the United States National Scientific Council

on the Developing Child (NSCDC) (2004, 2007, 2015) and Center on the Developing Child

at Harvard University (CDCHU) (2011). The NSCDC (2004) notes that "Young children

experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect

virtually all aspects of their development – intellectual, social, emotional, physical,

behavioral, and moral" (p. 1)

Moreover, "The quality and stability of a child's human relationships in the early years

lay the foundation for a wide range of later developmental outcomes" (NSCDC, 2004, p. 1).

These developmental outcomes include, but are not limited to, sound mental health, self-

confidence, motivation to learn, the capacity to develop and sustain friendships, and the

ability to control aggressive impulses and resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways (NSCDC). A

key contributory factor as to whether these developmental outcomes eventuate are a child's

social interactions with engaged, attuned, and attentive caregivers (NSCDC, 2007).

Furthermore, the quality of a child's early environment is "crucial in determining the

strength or weakness of the brain's architecture, which, in turn, determines how well he or

she will be able to think and to regulate emotions" (NSCDC, 2007, p. 1). Sensitive,

responsive caregiving plays an important role in supporting young children's development of

executive functions, meaning "The environment of relationships in which young children live

literally shapes the architecture of their brains" (NSCDC, p. 7). The NSCDC also notes that

"The exceptionally strong influence of early experience on brain architecture makes the early

years of life a period of both great opportunity and great vulnerability for brain development"

(NSCDC, p. 1).

Adverse early childhood experiences can compromise or delay young children's

development of executive functions. This can manifest as a loss of emotional control or a

disruption of activity-specific concentration. However, a responsive caregiver's provision of a

safe and predictable environment that offers children a sense of security can foster the

healthy emergence of executive functions (CDCHU, 2011).

Irrespective of the circumstances contributing to childhood adversity "the single most common finding is that children who end up doing well have had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult. (NSCDC, 2015, p. 1). "The ability to respond to life's challenges in a positive, adaptive manner is rooted in the quality of the relationships that children have with their primary caregivers and other important individuals in their lives" (NSCDC, p. 9).

Garner and Yogman (2021) take this position further, noting that "The power of relational health is that it not only buffers adversity when it occurs but also proactively promotes future resilience" (p. 2). In this context, Garner and Yogman assert that appropriately skilled adults, "are essential, not only to form and maintain SSNRs with children but also to scaffold and develop the basic social and emotional skills that enable children to be resilient and flourish despite adversity" (p. 2).

To summarise the discussion in this and the previous sub-section, in the immediate post-natal period, an infant's environmental experiences play a crucial role in determining the rate of brain growth through the ongoing formation of neural connections, particularly in the cerebral cortex (NSCDC, 2007; Talay-Ongan, 2000; Twardosz, 2012). Love in the relationship between caregiver and infant plays an important role in the activation of the limbic structures in the brain associated with emotion, attention, motivation, and memory (Esch & Stefano, 2005a). Research also highlights the effect of early childhood experiences on children's brain development, including self-regulation and executive functions (Garner & Yogman, 2021; Hambrick et al., 2019).

Children need to experience safe, stable, nurturing relationships if they are to flourish (Garner & Yogman, 2021), and children's capacity to flourish is profoundly influenced by their earliest relationships with the caregivers who are responsible for them (CDCHU, 2011; Garner & Yogman, 2021; NSCDC, 2004, 2007, 2015). Loving caregiver-child relationships "Undoubtedly … have a stress-reducing and health-promoting potential" (Esch & Stefano, 2005b, p. 188). In this context, "Clearly, love has a positive connotation" (Esch & Stefano, p. 176). In the following sub-section, I relate neuroscientific perspectives on love, and

paediatric perspectives on relational health as an integral facet of loving relationships, to early childhood education.

2.4.2.3 Relating neuroscientific and paediatric perspectives to early childhood education. I argue it is vital for early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers to appreciate the significance of infancy and toddlerhood in human development, not least because "Early relational experiences with engaged and attuned adults have a profound influence on early brain and child development" (Garner & Yogman, 2021, p. 7). In human brain development, Twardosz (2012) identifies that "almost all of an individual's estimated 100 billion neurons [nerve cells] are formed early in the prenatal period" (p. 97).

In basic anatomical terminology, "Neurons differentiate into the various types of cells that make up the cerebral cortex" (Twardosz, 2012, p. 97). They "then form the axons (projections that transmit information to other neurons) and dendrites (projections that receive information from other neurons) that connect them to one another" (Twardosz, p. 97). Of significance to this study, due to the timeframe in human development when early childhood teachers will be forming relationships with infants and toddlers, "Some of these connections (synapses) form during the latter part of the prenatal period, but most of them are formed after birth" (Twardosz, p. 97).

Within the cerebral cortex, "The prefrontal cortex plays an essential role in various cognitive functions, such as planning and reasoning" (Tsujimoto, 2008, p. 345), together with "working memory and inhibitory control" (Tsujimoto, p. 347). Tsujimoto's review of literature pertaining to cognitive development during early childhood, with a specific focus on the prefrontal cortex, highlights that this part of the human brain "undergoes considerable maturation during early childhood" (p. 346). Also acknowledging the significance of infancy and toddlerhood, Talay-Ongan (2000) identifies that "in no other period in [human] development is the brain as responsive to environmental input as in early childhood" (p. 28).

Relating neuroscientific and paediatric perspectives to early childhood education, as one of the environments which can have a direct involvement in infants' and toddlers'

development, early childhood teachers can have an important role in infants' and toddlers'

development through the provision of the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships I have

described in the previous sub-section. In this context, Talay-Ongan (2000) suggests that the

"Emotional tonality set in infancy may assist or hinder a child from self-regulating at later

stages" (p. 34), and this "also seems to affect the ease with which the child adapts and

interacts in a learning environment" (Talay-Ongan, p. 34). Moreover, progress towards

meeting developmental milestones, the growth of core regulatory processes, and the

building of foundational skills to adapt to future adversities, are all associated with early

positive relational experiences between infants and their caregivers (Hambrick et al., 2021).

The American Academy of Pediatrics 2021 policy statement emphasises that

"positive experiences in childhood are associated with improved outcomes later in life"

(Garner & Yogman, 2021, p. 5). Relational experiences that are associated with positive

impacts on health, behaviour, and learning in early childhood include, "engaged, responsive

caregivers, shared children's book reading, access to quality early childhood education, and

opportunities for developmentally appropriate play with others" (Garner & Yogman, p. 5).

Furthermore, "Children who develop warm, positive relationships with their kindergarten

teachers are more excited about learning, more positive about coming to school, more self-

confident, and achieve more in the classroom" (NSCDC, 2004, p. 2).

In summary, research from paediatrics highlights the crucial role that early childhood

teachers can have in young children's lives through the provision of healthy relationships

that promote infants' and toddlers' well-being (NSCDC, 2004). The American Academy of

Pediatrics 2021 policy statement challenges caregivers "to actively promote positive

relational experiences throughout infancy and childhood" (Garner & Yogman, 2021, p. 5).

From a child developmental perspective, Twardosz (2012) asserts that "Research on the

effect of experience on the structure and function of the brain across the lifespan pertains

directly to the concerns of professionals involved with children's early development and

education" (p. 96). Twardosz challenges early childhood teachers to become knowledgeable

about how neuroscience perspectives and methods are "contributing to research on children's early environments and experiences" (p. 96).

Applying findings from neuroscience and paediatrics to this study, I argue that early childhood teachers can have a potentially pivotal role in children's lives through their appreciation that early childhood is a sensitive period in human development, and by, to the extent within their control, providing children with the engaged, stimulating, positive environments, and the calm, safe, stable, and loving relationships, they need if they are to flourish. In the following sub-section, I introduce contemporary educational perspectives to this discussion of love as a contributory factor in human flourishing.

2.4.3 Educational perspectives on love as a contributory factor in human flourishing

As I have discussed in the previous sub-sections, contemporary research in psychology, neuroscience, and paediatrics indicates that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing. Based on my review of the literature in this study's final literature pool, there are also some education scholars who acknowledge that love in teachers' teaching practice contributes to students' flourishing. I provide a high-level synthesis of education scholars' views in this sub-section.

Hoveid and Finne (2014) argue that if teachers' teaching practice is motivated by love, teachers will work to give children the possibility "to flourish through education" (p. 256). Teaching practice in this context "consists of trust in pupils' learning capacities and the desire to help pupils improve their abilities and talents" (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, p. 29). Also in this context, Hatt (2005) asserts that "Adult actions and interactions toward children must, of necessity, be intentional, appropriate, and directed toward the positive being and becoming of each child" (p. 686). Loving teachers therefore work to create learning environments that are conducive to students' flourishing by discovering students' strengths, strengths that the students themselves may not even realise they possess (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, 2012). According to Määttä and Uusiautti (2011), in a loving teacher's teaching practice, "love appears as goal-oriented action" (p. 35).

Early childhood education scholars, including Goldstein (1997, 1998), Manning-Morton (2006), Page (2011, 2013, 2017, 2018), Recchia et al. (2018), Rouse and Hadley (2018), and White and Gradovski (2018), all argue that students flourish if they receive love through their teachers' teaching practice. Goldstein (1998) asks, "Why do so many teachers allow love to play a role in their teaching practices?" (p. 263); and answers, "First of all, it benefits the children being taught" (p. 263). Rouse and Hadley (2018) concur, noting that love "is essential to their [children's] social, emotional and educational outcomes" (p. 170), and argue "that care (keeping children safe and their physical needs met) and love (keeping children emotionally safe) are integral parts of early childhood education" (p. 160). Accordingly, it is imperative to "recognise that love and care are integral to high-quality ECEC settings" (Rouse & Hadley p. 170). This view about the essential nature of love in early childhood education is consistent with Manning-Morton (2006), who asserts that in early childhood education settings, "children do not thrive if they do not … receive loving attention" (p. 45). In the following section, I discuss the extent to which, or even whether, these views have been incorporated into contemporary early childhood education discourse.

2.5 Contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice

As I have noted in the previous section, contemporary research in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and paediatrics indicates that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing. However, from my review of literature in this study's final literature pool pertaining to early childhood education, the second overarching theme that I identified from the literature is that contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice. I commence this sub-section with a discussion of this theme. I then outline three models that have been developed to provide clarity and guidance about love in teachers' teaching practice: *Teacherly Love*, *Pedagogical Love*, and *Professional Love*.

2.5.1 Contemporary discourses on love in early childhood education

In Chapter 1, I established that Goldstein's (1997) work had validated my belief that love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is a topic worthy of scholarly research. This was despite the contradiction of a situation that Goldstein (1998) identifies where "Teachers often speak about loving their students; [and] academics, too, take teachers' love for students to be a commonplace of education. However, there has been no attempt to theorize how love operates in the classroom lives of teachers and children" (p. 257). I draw on articles by Goldstein (1998, 1999), based on *Teaching with Love* (1997), to generate discussion in this sub-section.

According to Goldstein (1998), while "Teachers' love is obvious" (p. 258), paradoxically, "The love that informs teachers' practices has the distinction of being both too obvious and yet too difficult to research" (Goldstein, p. 298). Nonetheless, Goldstein asserts that love in teachers' teaching practice "is too important to ignore" (p. 258).

Echoing Goldstein, Page (2011) recognises the implicit danger of allowing love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice to remain under-articulated and under-researched. Page acknowledges and cautions that "Love is not easily defined or discussed, but not talking about love implies that the topic is somehow taboo" (p. 312). Furthermore, Page (2018) identifies that, in relation to policy and curricular articulations of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice in England in particular, there is "a distinct dearth of clarity, guidance, definitional standards and operationalizable norms" (p. 134).

According to Page (2013), "For too long the subject of love has been neglected in … educational research"; an inattention that serves only to deny the existence of love in teachers' teaching practice. In Page's view, the effective denial of the existence of love in teachers' teaching practice in educational research "is not borne out … in [early childhood teachers'] everyday experience" (p. 555).

The relative neglect of love as a topic of discussion in educational research is reflected in Aslanian's (2015) review of discourses on love, care, and maternalism. Based on Aslanian's review, she asserts that "Discourses of love today are rare in ECE" (p. 161). In a

paper in which White and Gradovski (2018) present what they "perceive to be a much needed philosophical engagement with notions of love and care based on an understanding of pedagogy as an intersubjective, interpretive and shaping relationship" (pp. 208-209), they assert that, even though early childhood teachers "think love is an important part of their engagement with young children on a daily basis" (p. 201), "discussions about love in the same sentence as pedagogy lie virtually dormant or, at best, conflicted, in educational literature" (White & Gradovski, p. 201). Accordingly, in early childhood education discourse, "love remains a concept that is seldom discussed" (White & Gradovski, p. 201).

Consequently, "Literature explicitly discussing 'pedagogy' in the same sentence as 'love' is rare to educational discourse" (White & Gradovski, 2018, p. 202). In an environment where "Loving young children in professional contexts is not often discussed" (Page, 2011, p. 312), it should therefore not come as a surprise that "articulations of love remain an elusive concept for practice" (White & Gradovski, 2018, p. 201).

To discover how love is viewed in early childhood teachers' teaching practice, Recchia et al. (2018) conducted a study using a grounded theory approach, in which they explored how eight Master of Early Childhood students, new to working with infants, came to an understanding about love in teachers' teaching practice. The study was conducted over the course of a 15-week semester, during which the students spent 12 hours per week on practicum in an infant classroom in the United States of America.

Based on Recchia et al.'s (2018) literature review as part of their study, they identify that "the deep and complex connections between love, care, and education in childcare … have been for the most part overlooked, silenced, or simply ignored" (p. 142). Recchia et al. also identify that "while ECCE teachers enounce 'love' straightforwardly and unquestionably in their everyday work lives, scholars rarely name love and replace the term with more scientific and professional descriptors (e.g. responsive, highly-valued, respect, attachment)" (p. 144).

The notion that early childhood teachers consider love for children to be a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice (Aslanian, 2015; Goldstein, 1997, 1998, 1999;

Page 2011, 2013, 2018; Recchia et al., 2018; White & Gradovski, 2018) appears to be borne

out in the findings of Recchia et al.'s (2018) study, based on their analysis of the eight

students' weekly reflections and course assignments. Recchia et al. established five key

outputs from the data obtained through their study: (1) that "love is about understanding

babies as individual beings" (p. 147); (2) that "love is about giving and sharing time and

space" (p. 147); (3) that "love comes to life in everyday shared moments" (p. 147); (4) that

"love transcends time and space" (p. 147); and (5) that "love emerges as a critical

component in professional infant care and education" (p. 147).

These findings are consistent with Simpson (2010), who conducted interviews with

English early childhood teachers in a "contribution to the discussion on early years

professionalism and reports findings from a qualitative research project that tracked a small

number of early years professionals who were among the first in England to acquire this new

status early in 2007" (p. 5). Simpson found that 'love for children', 'caring', 'nurturing',

'passion', and 'rapport with children' were among the common terms used by interviewees to

express their professionalism, as opposed to "the language of technical proficiency and a

commitment to meeting targets" (p. 8).

However, the notion that early childhood teachers consider love for children to be a

legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice, is not universally translated into policy

and curricula documentation (Page, 2018; Warren, 2021; White and Gradovski, 2018;

Zhang, 2019). Page (2018) asserts that "There is a significant gap in the *English* early years

system about the places of love, care and intimacy and such terms are often shrouded in

language such as building a 'positive relationship' as opposed to a 'loving' one" (p. 134,

emphasis in original). Page takes her critique of the English early childhood education

system further, by noting that, "In fact, the words 'loving' and 'secure' have been

sequestered completely from recent iterations of early years policy in England (DfE 2012,

2014, 2017)" (p. 134).

Zhang (2019) identifies a similar trend in Aotearoa New Zealand through his research

to determine the extent to which love for children is "considered essential to early childhood

teaching, and why?" (p. 261). Zhang's research included interviews with "15 experts (labeled with Expert 01–15) from eight early childhood teacher education providers (five universities, three institutes of technology) across New Zealand" (p. 261). Zhang determined expertise in this context to be based upon the following criteria: "(1) Her/ his contribution to the early childhood discipline is nationally or internationally recognized; (2) S/he has a current interest in early childhood teacher education" (p. 261). The participants in Zhang's research were "2 professors, 2 associate professors, 9 senior lecturers, and 2 lecturers" (p. 261).

According to Zhang's (2019) research findings, "The majority of experts held that love in teaching should not be part of professionalism" (p. 266). In this context, Expert 06, whom Zhang denotes as "Professor, University C" (p. 265), stated "There are some children that you actively dislike, and you still have to behave professionally with those children, don't you? So would I have love as professional standards? No, I wouldn't, because that's not the job" (p. 266). Expert 15, whom Zhang denotes as "Senior Lecturer, Institute of Technology C" (p. 267), expressed the view that, while they accepted qualities such as compassion, empathy, caring, and responsiveness may be considered constituent components of love, they nonetheless did not believe it was appropriate to talk about love when talking about teaching. The attitudes expressed by the majority of the early childhood education academics in Zhang's study appear to reflect what Warren (2021) refers to as "traditional professionalism discourses [that] devalue love as separate from professional knowledge and skills" (p. 566).

Zhang (2019) stresses that "the subject of the expert interviews is love in teaching rather than love and care in teaching; that is, the interviewer did not direct the experts to compare between love and care" (p. 267). Nonetheless, "Some experts made it explicit that caring instead of loving should be the right term to define the professional relationship between teachers and children" (Zhang, p. 266). According to Expert 06 in Zhang's research, "We've got words like "nurturing" and "caring" … about being relational, and they [early childhood teachers] need to form relationships [with children], but are they love relationships? No" (pp. 266-267).

Sentiments of this nature appear to be reflected in the minimalistic way that love is currently articulated in Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood education curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, which, as I have explained in Chapter 1, was revised in 2017 from the original 1996 version. According to Zhang (2019), "It is notable that in its revised version, the wording that denotes love in teaching has been removed" (p. 268). Zhang's research established that "This change has not been made inadvertently but intentionally according to Expert 06 who was on the Te Whāriki review panel" (p. 268).

As Warren (2021) notes, while *Te Whāriki* is replete with photographic imagery "indicating warm relationships among teachers and children" (p. 566), it "does not address love as an aspect of teaching" (Warren, p. 566). According to Warren, in the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education context, the concept of love "is generally unsupported in official documents" (p. 566). White and Gradovski (2018) also suggest that, due to the tentative and elusive presence of love in *Te Whāriki*, many infant early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand now report having experienced a "lack of clarity about the location of love as pedagogy, despite its obvious presence in their work" (p. 204). Zhang's (2019) findings mirror Page's (2018) assertion about the sequestration of references to love in English early years policy, which "indicates that love does not exist in the public lives of children outside of the private sphere of home and family; [and] if it does it is somehow taboo" (p. 134).

Nonetheless, in a statement that I argue is consistent with my finding from the literature that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers, White and Gradovski (2018) assert that love is a "central component of learning since it is through sensitive, attuned and loving attachments with adults that infants are now known to thrive" (p. 203). However, while White and Gradovski also argue that "The understanding and enactment of love as a legitimate aspect of pedagogy in the early years in its own right … already exists in [teachers' teaching] practice" (p. 202), from my review of the literature in this study's final literature pool, I contend that love in early childhood

teachers' teaching practice is a topic that some early childhood education scholars and teachers continue to struggle with.

My above contention is supported by Rouse and Hadley's (2018) suggestion that "Notions of love and happiness in ECEC settings seem to be a problematic language for many educators" (p. 167). In an Australian context, Hadley and Rouse (2018) conducted, and compared, four case studies to understand the similarities and differences in language and expectations between families and teachers as they reflected on the family-teacher early childhood education partnership. In Australia, Early Childhood education is governed by the Department of Education, and Australia's national early childhood education curriculum is called *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) (Hadley & Rouse).

From their research, Hadley and Rouse (2018) found "The language that underpinned the conversations with the families in relation to the expectation for their child in the ECEC centre focused on notions of care, love, happiness and friendships" (p. 55). According to Hadley and Rouse, "It was clear from all four studies that the families wanted educators who *knew* their child" (p. 55, emphasis in original). Moreover, "Rather than just focusing on learning and educational programs, the concerns presented by the families were about ensuring that their child was happy and safe, having fun, being cared for and loved" (Hadley & Rouse, p. 55). Conversely, however, "a search of the EYLF for the word 'love' revealed that it is never mentioned" (Hadley & Rouse, p. 59).

In an Aotearoa New Zealand context, Warren (2021) asserts that "Love within early childhood care and education settings occupies a contested and problematic place for early childhood teachers, children, their families, and policy makers" (p. 565). Warren bases this assertion on her 2018 doctoral thesis, which investigated how emotions, specifically love and caring, are entangled with professionalism in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research participants in Warren's thesis were four qualified early childhood teachers, whose teaching practice Warren observed over a six-month period. Warren found that "Love is a significant, complex, and problematic aspect of early childhood teaching that

is simultaneously valued, undervalued, feared, and overlooked" (p. 565). Warren's observations are consistent with those views of Page (2011, 2013, 2017, 2018), Recchia et al. (2018), and White and Gradovski (2018), that I have noted above.

My argument that contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice is also consistent with Goldstein's (1998) view that, while love is experienced widely in the relationships between teachers and their students, it is at the same time, "somehow invisible, transparent, something that has been taken for granted and deemed unworthy of scholarly attention" (p. 258). I further argue that the lack of coherence about love in contemporary early childhood education discourse is exacerbated because, as Goldstein recognises "Love is difficult to define, impossible to measure, and outside the boundaries of generalizability, reliability, and validity" (p. 258).

According to Goldstein (1998), the problematic nature of love from a research standpoint has led to "the lack of systematic inquiry into this topic" (p. 258), and potentially to a situation where "even teachers who feel love [in their teaching practice] sometimes are unwilling to admit it" (p. 263). To mitigate such a scenario, Goldstein recommended documenting love in teachers' teaching practice to legitimise it, and theorised the concept of *teacherly love*. In the following sub-section, I provide an overview of Goldstein's theory.

2.5.2 Teacherly love

Goldstein (1995) conducted an exploration of love in the teaching of young children for her doctoral thesis, in an American context, to establish the concept of teacherly love. To focus and guide her research, Goldstein employed Sternberg's model of love, which encompasses the interplay of three components, "intimacy, commitment, and passion" (p. 31).

Goldstein's (1995) research was conducted over a three-month timeframe, during which she entered a collaborative teaching relationship, as a teacher-partner, with a fellow kindergarten teacher. During this timeframe, Goldstein engaged as a daily participant in her teacher-partner's classroom in a range of researcher roles: (1) firstly as participant-observer

for four weeks; (2) then as participant-contributor for a further four weeks, as a fully-fledged co-teacher; (3) and finally, by phasing out of an active teacher role back into the role of participant-observer. This latter role provided Goldstein with the opportunity to re-examine her initial observations of her teacher-partner, and to reflect upon, and refine, her vision of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice (Goldstein, 1995, 1997). Based on her research, Goldstein theorised the concept of teacherly love (1995, 1997, 1998, 1999).

According to Goldstein (1997), Sternberg's model of love is useful because, in Goldstein's view, it "can be applied honesty to nonsexual varieties of love" (p. 18). While Goldstein acknowledges that Sternberg's model was not designed for the purpose of defining love in teachers' teaching practice, she nonetheless proposes that its three components, with slight modifications, can be applied to teacherly love. I provide a high-level summary of Goldstein's definitions of intimacy, commitment, and passion, in the context of teacherly love, as follows.

Goldstein defines the intimacy component of teacherly love as embodying "trust, the sharing of meaningful experiences, a degree of mutuality and reciprocity among participants, a commitment to open communication, and a depth of feeling" (1997, p. 19; 1998, p. 258; 1999, p. 360). For Goldstein (1998), "Commitment is a crucial part of a teacher's professional life: commitment to the students and to the subject matter being taught is a fundamental part of a teacher's responsibility" (p. 259).

Passion, however, taken at face value, cannot be directly applied to discussions of teacherly love because of its sexual connotations (Goldstein, 1997, 1998,1999). As Goldstein (1997) stresses, "Under no circumstances is it appropriate for a classroom teacher to be driven toward romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation and the like in her relationships with students, especially in early childhood educational settings" (p. 20). Nonetheless, for Goldstein (1998), passion is a legitimate component of teacherly love if it is "defined as a teacher's compelling desire to teach, to work with children, and to facilitate interactions between children and content" (p. 259). In Goldstein's view, "a passionate teacher is energized by … students and is fulfilled by the work with them" (p. 259). In this

context, passion "plays an important role in excellent teaching – and, by extension, in loving education" (Goldstein, 1997, p. 20; 1998, p. 259).

In summation of the three core components of teacherly love, Goldstein (1998) theorises that "Teacherly love begins as a commitment to love and that commitment is fulfilled as it interacts with the teacher's passion for his or her work and with the intimacy that develops over the natural course of classroom life" (p. 259). In the following sub-section, I discuss the concept of *pedagogical love*.

2.5.3 Pedagogical love

Kaarina Määttä and Satu Uusiautti (2011, 2012, 2013) have written extensively about various aspects of love in a Finnish context. According to Määttä and Uusiautti (2011, 2012), in Finland, the education system puts love at the core of its definition of what it is to be a good teacher. Määttä and Uusiautti's description of *pedagogical* love is based on their review of literature, but they do not claim authorship of the concept. In this sub-section, I summarise Määttä and Uusiautti's description of pedagogical love.

According to Määttä and Uusiautti (2011, 2012), at its core, pedagogical love consists of a teacher's trust and belief in their students' ability to learn, and their motivation to help students to realise their potential. Importantly however, while it is reasonable to expect that a teacher will be technically proficient in the subject matter being taught, it is unreasonable to expect teachers to be perfect people, or omniscient (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012).

Nonetheless, teachers need to establish a relationship with their students where the students receive support, encouragement, and confirmation of their achievements (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011). Teachers' pedagogical love aims to discover students' interests and strengths, and then to create a learning environment conducive to students' development of those interests and strengths. In doing so, a loving teacher aims to build students' self-image and self-esteem as capable learners. In this context, pedagogical love is manifested in

teachers' teaching practice as trust, patience, forgiveness, and guidance (Määttä & Uusiautti).

When a student becomes doubtful about their strengths and abilities, a loving teacher provides encouragement, and employs teaching strategies to assist the student to overcome those doubts. According to Määttä and Uusiautti (2011), in this context, a loving teacher acts to first maintain, and then enhance, students' self-image and self-esteem by using techniques and attributes, such as "concretizing, illustrating, asking questions, discussing, listening and repeating, thanking for the small steps forward, providing remedial or supplementary instruction, making the standards lower temporarily in order to make time for maturing, and not giving up or quitting easily" (p. 35).

With respect to pedagogical love, Määttä and Uusiautti (2011) conclude that, "At their best, teachers help pupils – children or adults – to experience their own potentiality and see what life can offer. Pedagogical love may guide a learner to consider the better world as achievable" (p. 37). As Määttä and Uusiautti further note, "Love influences the direction of people's action as well as its intensity" (p. 32).

This discourse is recognised by Page (2018), who acknowledges "The extensive interest in love in early childhood education within the *Finnish* context" (p. 134, emphasis in original). In the following sub-section, I discuss Page's approach to documenting love as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice, through her theorisation of professional love.

2.5.4 Professional love

Page's (2010) doctoral thesis focussed on the factors that women in England, with babies aged one year and below, who were planning to return to paid employment, considered when making employment decisions and childcare arrangements. Specifically, Page wanted to know what importance the six mothers in her study placed on whether the early childhood teachers who would be caring for their children would love them. Page used a small-scale life history research method, based on deep-level interviews with her research

participants. Page found the women in her study did consider that having early childhood teachers who would love their children to be a crucial determinant in their decision whether to return to paid employment. Page also introduced her fledging conception of *professional love*. Page coined this term to reflect early childhood teachers' close relationships with the children for whom they are responsible. As Page acknowledged in her doctoral thesis, professional love required further exploration and conceptualisation; an endeavour that Page continues to pursue.

In this sub-section, I provide an overview of Page's (2011, 2018) theorisation of professional love. In Page's (2011) opinion, open dialogue between teachers, parents, and policymakers about the need for children to be loved in early childhood education is essential, because "Notions of love within the context of early childhood care and education are poorly understood" (p. 313).

According to Page (2011), loving teachers establish "reciprocal relationships with [the] young children for whom they are responsible, [and] do so with the rights of the child wholly embedded at the centre of every aspect of their practice" (p. 313). In making this statement, I understand Page to assert that reciprocity in the relationship between early childhood teachers and the children for whom they are responsible, through their teaching practice, is at the core of the theoretical framework she refers to as "'*professional love*'" (p. 313, emphasis in original). Another of the core features of professional love is motivational displacement (Page), which encapsulates the notion of putting someone else's needs ahead of your own (Aslanian, 2015), and/or of "putting oneself in others' position" (Tan, 2022, p. 3).

As Page (2011) explains, "It is in relation to both *reciprocity* and *motivational displacement* that I locate my own theoretical framework" (p. 313, emphasis in original). In this context, I understand Page (2018) to suggest that there will be times in a loving teacher's interactions with children when the teacher's attention is completely absorbed with the needs of those children, in that moment in time. I do not however interpret Page to propose that teachers would ever be expected to subjugate their own emotional and physical needs fully and irreversibly to those of the children for whom they are responsible.

Indeed, as White and Gradovski (2018) caution, if the teacher-child relationship were to be reduced merely to one in which there is an ""infant" who needs care" (p. 207), and a "teacher who is obligated to give it" (p. 207), then early childhood teachers would be required "to commit themselves to the one cared for without revealing their own motivations, judgements and personal values" (p. 204). Such an extreme level of subjugation or displacement "would result in a danger for complete dissolvement of the career's [*sic*] personality as his or her motivations and attention should be focused on the one she or he cares for" (White & Gradovski, pp. 203-204). Again, I do not interpret Page (2018) to be advocating such an extreme position, not least because she is explicit that her nomenclature of professional love is founded on the concept of motivational displacement *together with* the concept of reciprocity.

With the concepts of motivational displacement and reciprocity as its cornerstones, Page's (2011, 2018) theoretical framework of professional love encapsulates a teacher-child relationship imbued with the teacher's self-awareness, altruism, respect, and authenticity. Accordingly, Page (2018) envisions professional love as being situated in an early childhood education context, developing gradually over time, and sustained by ongoing reflection, commitment, and perseverance on the part of the teacher. Page asserts that such a situated understanding of love in early childhood education "can only come about if those in society who have a role to play in the lives of young children can debate the 'hard stuff'" (p. 126). According to Page, such a debate would necessitate addressing the emotional complexities involved in the intimate relationships between early childhood teachers and the young children for whom they are responsible through their teaching practice, to create what Page refers to as "a 'phenomenology of love' within the early years setting" (p. 126).

According to Page (2017), the challenge faced by teachers and scholars who champion love as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice appears to be exacerbated by a tension that some early childhood teachers experience when considering love in their teaching practice. Page made this determination based on "a mixed-methods study [conducted in 2015], which examined practitioners' views

on love, care and intimacy within the English early years policy context" (p. 378). For additional context, Page's study was conducted against the backdrop of several well-publicised cases of child abuse in England in the preceding decade. Page's interpretation of her research data "suggested that the level of concern raised by the participants increasingly pointed to the tension between policy and practice, as participants admitted to feeling confused about how to realise appropriate loving behaviours" (p. 293).

Page's 2015 study drew primarily on in-depth interviews with eight early childhood education "professionals who worked in a practice-based role with children aged under three years" (Page, 2017, p. 391). Page concludes "that even though all of the participants demonstrated their knowledge about the need for young children to be loved … there remained a level of confusion for them about how to appropriately show affection and love in their professional role" (p. 395).

According to Page (2017), the findings of her 2015 study also showed that for her research participants, there were "many unanswered questions about how policy is interpreted and practice enacted when guidance about appropriate love and intimacy in early years [teaching practice] is lacking" (p. 395). Page's conclusions support the second overarching theme that I have identified from the literature, which is that contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the key findings from my review of the literature in this study's final literature pool.

2.6 Conclusion

Based on my review of the literature in this study's final literature pool, I find a consistent narrative in research from psychology, neuroscience, and paediatrics indicating the importance of love in the caregiver-child relationship as a contributory factor in infants' and toddlers' flourishing. This research highlights that, immediately from birth, receiving love from a responsive caregiver has vital implications for a child's cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development.

From a psychological perspective, there is a direct correlation between positive emotions, primarily love, and human flourishing (Ekman & Simon-Thomas, 2021; Fredrickson, 1998, 2021; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). From a neuroscientific perspective, the quality of children's earliest relationships with the caregivers who are responsible for them profoundly influences their capacity to flourish (Esch & Stefano, 2005a; Hambrick et al., 2021; Talay-Ongan, 2000; Twardosz, 2012). Moreover, love is a multifaceted neurobiological phenomenon that has positive connotations for cognitive development (Esch & Stefano, 2005a). From a paediatric perspective, research indicates that early childhood relational experiences with loving caregivers are associated with positive impacts on health, behaviour, and learning (CDCHU, 2011; Garner & Yogman, 2021; NSCDC, 2004, 2007, 2015). Accordingly, I argue that early childhood teachers, particularly those who work with infants and toddlers, have a responsibility to ensure that the early childhood education environment is imbued with love.

However, while findings about the relationship between love and infants' and toddlers' flourishing are available to be drawn upon by the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education community, I also identify that contemporary early childhood education discourse, at least in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice. I argue that the lack of coherence about love in early childhood education discourse is problematic for teachers wanting clarity and guidance about love in their teaching practice. A key factor that appears to have contributed to this lack of coherence is that love is not universally recognised as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I further argue, that without broad consensus about love in early childhood early childhood education discourse, it is understandable that this is a topic some early childhood education scholars and teachers alike continue to struggle with. I contend that where such a situation exists, in relation to any given topic, it is almost inevitable that a lack of understanding, clarity, and credibility will ensue.

The deliberate sequestration of love from early childhood education policy documentation in some countries (Page, 2018; Zhang 2019) would appear to perpetuate the lack of clarity and guidance available to teachers seeking to understand how, or even whether, to incorporate love into their teaching practice. As a result, discussions about love in contemporary early childhood education discourse are rare (Aslanian, 2015; Page, 2011; White & Gradovski, 2018).

Nonetheless, based on the literature discussed in this chapter, I find that some education scholars recognise and advocate for love in teachers' teaching practice (Aslanian, 2015; Goldstein, 1998, 1999; Hatt, 2005; Hoveid & Finne, 2014; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, 2012; Page, 2011, 2013, 2017, 2018; Recchia et al., 2018; Rouse & Hadley, 2018; White & Gradovski, 2018). I also find that when a teacher's teaching practice is motivated by love, it benefits not only the children being taught (Goldstein, 1998), but also the wider society (Hatt, 2005; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011).

It is my contention that the dissemination of a recognition of love, as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice, is a challenge that needs to be embraced by the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education community. In Chapter 3, I test the potential of Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions to provide a theoretical framework from which early childhood teachers can engage in discussions about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

As I have argued in Chapter 2, without broad consensus about the presence of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice, it is understandable that this is a topic some early childhood education scholars and teachers struggle with. In this chapter, I discuss Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, and outline its place in this thesis as its theoretical framework.

In Nussbaum's (1990) view, emotions have a "cognitive dimension in their very structure" (p. 41). Accordingly, I argue that Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, which positions love as an intellectual act, provides a robust foundation upon which early childhood teachers can credibly: (1) articulate that love in their teaching practice aims towards the flourishing of the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible; (2) present counterarguments to views of love that seek to trivialise the intellectuality of teachers' teaching practice with phraseology such as that lovey dovey stuff; and (3) engage in dialogue about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.

According to Nussbaum (2001), we cannot ignore the role the emotions play in human life. In this vein, Nussbaum determines that to have "an adequate theory of the emotions" (p. 2), one must consider the emotions' "cultural sources, their history in infancy and childhood, and their sometimes unpredictable and disoderly [*sic*] operation in the daily life of human beings who are attached to things outside themselves" (Nussbaum, p. 2). To understand how Nussbaum reaches this determination, I first present an overview of the antecedents of Nussbaum's theory, which has its roots in ancient Greek philosophical thought. The Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia* is foundational to Nussbaum's theory, and I introduce this concept in the following section. I then discuss the relevance of eudaimonia to a *loving* early childhood teacher's teaching practice.

I also discuss how Nussbaum (2001), in arriving at her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, deemed it necessary to make material modifications to those ancient Greek philosophical perspectives to ensure their relevance in a twenty-first century context. I discuss these modifications, as they relate to this thesis, in later sections of this chapter. Emotions and infancy are a key focus of Nussbaum's philosophical perspectives on the intelligence of the emotions, and this is also discussed. I conclude this chapter with a brief overview of scholarly critiques of Nussbaum's theory, drawn from a range of reviews of *Upheavals of Thought*.

3.2 Antecedents of Nussbaum's cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions

According to Nussbaum (2001), the "diverse phenomena of our emotional life are well explained by a view that has its antecedents in the ideas of the ancient Greek Stoics" (p. 3). In Nussbaum's (1994) work, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, she describes Stoicism as "an enormously complex and diverse movement in philosophy. It exercised a deep and broad influence … over a period of more than five hundred years, shaping poetry and politics as well as explicitly philosophical thought and writing" (p. 43). Sedley (2015) further describes Stoicism as "one of the three leading movements constituting Hellenistic philosophy. Its founder was Zeno of Citium (334–262 B.C.), who was succeeded as school head by Cleanthes (331–232)" (p. 1025). In Sedley's view however, "the third head, Chrysippus (c.280–c.206), was its greatest exponent and most voluminous writer" (p. 1025).

According to Nussbaum (2001), the Stoics held the emotions to be "forms of evaluative judgement that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person's own control great importance for the person's own flourishing" (p. 22). From this premise, Nussbaum argues that any contemporary exploration of the emotions is both "compatible with" (p. 22), and indeed "best explained by, a modified version of the ancient Greek Stoic view" (p. 22).

Nussbaum (2001) summarises the Stoic view of the emotions into the following "three salient ideas: the idea of a *cognitive appraisal* or *evaluation*; the idea of *one's own flourishing* or *one's important goals and projects*; and the idea of the *salience of external objects as elements in one's own scheme of goals*" (p. 4, emphasis in original). However, for the Stoic view to have relevance in a twenty-first century context, Nussbaum acknowledges the need for it to first undergo "several modifications" (p. 4).

Consequently, in arriving at what Nussbaum (2001) describes as a "contemporary neo-Stoic view" (p. 5), she proposes that, for her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, it is necessary to consider a number of additional "issues the Stoics are not known to have addressed" (p. 4). In the context of this thesis, it is important to clarify that in this chapter I only address the modifications that Nussbaum makes to the Stoic view of the emotions that are relevant to this study's research question. These are the "need to make distinctions between general and particular [concrete] emotions, and between "background" and "situational" emotions" (Nussbaum, pp. 4-5); and an acknowledgement of the existence "of childhood emotions" (p. 7), the latter being, according to Nussbaum, "the most dramatic" (p. 7) of her modifications to the Stoic view.

As Nussbaum (2001) notes, this latter modification is necessary because the Stoics "appear to have had the implausible view that children … do not have emotions" (p. 6), and that consequently it was a mistake on the part of the Stoics that their conception of human emotional life took "no apparent interest in childhood" (p. 6). Nussbaum further notes that it was also a mistake for the Stoics not to have questioned "how early experiences shape the mature emotional life" (p. 6). In Nussbaum's view, "We can see that this was an error" (p. 6), because "adult experience[s] of emotion[s] involve foundations laid down much earlier in life" (p. 6). Moreover, "adult human emotions cannot be understood without understanding their history in infancy and childhood" (Nussbaum, p. 178).

In relation to Nussbaum's (2001) decision to expand upon the Stoic view of the emotions to overcome its relative shortcomings, Deigh (2004) notes that "she [Nussbaum] gives the Stoic theory the explanatory depth [that] its classical statement lacks" (p. 466). As

Deigh summarises in his critique of *Upheavals of Thought*, "Consequently, if you're drawn to the Stoic theory but believe that … humans begin to experience emotions in infancy, you must either modify the Stoic conception of judgment or attribute linguistic capacities to … babies". According to Deigh, "Nussbaum does the former" (p. 465) because "Emotions, she holds, have developmental histories beginning soon after birth" (pp. 465-466). I discuss Nussbaum's assessment of the emotions in infancy in a later section of this chapter.

Nussbaum (2001) uncompromisingly ties her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions "directly to the ancient Greek concept of *eudaimonia*" (p. 31, emphasis in original); a philosophical notion conceived by Aristotle (Naor et al., 2014). It is important however to clarify that Aristotle "384–322 B.C." (Wedin, 2015, p. 52), whom Wedin describes as the "preeminent Greek philosopher" (p. 52), was not himself a member of the Stoic school of philosophical thought, having died some twelve years prior to the foundation of that school (Sedley, 2015; Wedin, 2015). Nonetheless, it is apparent that, just as Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions is predicated on the Stoic view, Nussbaum's philosophical outlook is also highly influenced by Aristotle's works (Richardson, 2015).

Nussbaum (2001) makes it explicit that in her work, it is the Greek-language spelling of the word 'eudaimonistic', *not* the English-language 'eudaemonistic', with its hedonistic connotations, which Nussbaum associates with her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions. According to Nussbaum, this is because "the English word has acquired associations with one specific type of view, namely, the view that the supreme good is happiness or pleasure" (p. 31).

In this context, Naor, et al. (2014) explain that Aristotle distinguished "between hedonia, which expresses the feeling aspect of happiness, and eudaimonia, which expresses the more general notion of human prosperity and sense of well-being" (p. 2). According to Naor, et al., "Whereas eudaimonia refers to quality of life as a whole, and especially to an individual's virtuous functioning in life, hedonia refers merely to having good feelings, or getting what you want, or enjoying something you are doing" (p. 2).

A fundamental point Nussbaum (2001) emphasises in *Upheavals of Thought*, is that in the ancient Greek Stoic view "emotions are appraisals or value judgements, which ascribe to things and persons outside the person's own control great importance for that person's own flourishing" (p. 4). Also fundamental to Nussbaum's cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions is the concept "that the emotions appear to be *eudaimonistic*, that is, concerned with the person's flourishing" (p. 31, emphasis in original). As Nussbaum explains, a person's (or agent's) "conception of *eudaimonia* is taken to be inclusive of all to which the agent ascribes intrinsic value" (p. 32, emphasis in original). Accordingly, "if one can show someone that she has omitted something without which she would not think her life complete, then that is a sufficient argument for the addition of the item in question [in that person's conception of their eudaimonia]" (Nussbaum, p. 32).

In this context however, I believe it is important to recognise that while Nussbaum (2001) argues the "ancient eudaimonistic framework will be a good one for thinking about the emotional life" (p. 52), Nussbaum also notes one must acknowledge, "that people's sense of what is important and valuable is often messy, [and] disorderly" (p. 52). Nonetheless, what I understand Nussbaum to be arguing, is that the emotions not only include judgement or cognitive evaluation, but also that those judgements or cognitive evaluations are eudaimonistic insofar as they focus on those external objects that are of significance to the person's flourishing.

Thus, when a person constructs their conception of eudaimonia, they seek to build in those items, elements, objects, or persons about which or whom they believe they can make the evaluative claim "that such-and-such [the item, element, object, or person in question] is an important part of my own scheme of goals and ends" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 47). It is important to reiterate that the evaluative claim referred to immediately above is not a hedonistic determination, and hence it is not only mistaken but misleading in this context for 'happiness' to be construed "as a translation for *eudaimonia*" (Nussbaum, p. 32, emphasis in original).

Moreover, when such an evaluative claim is made, people "typically think that this is so *because* of some real value the item possesses: it is such that, without that thing (or a thing of that sort), my life would be incomplete" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 47, emphasis in original). What I understand Nussbaum to propose with this point, is that it is the person's *judgement* of the salience or importance of the item, element, object, or person in question to them, which determines the extent of their emotional response when something occurs in relation *to* that item, element, object, or person. According to Nussbaum,

> For this reason, Chrysippus plausibly said that grief (along with other emotions) contains not only the judgement that an important part of my life has gone, but that *it is right* to be upset about that: it makes a truth-claim about its own evaluations. It asserts the real value of the object, it says that getting upset is a response to something really important, not just a whim. (p. 47, emphasis in original)

Therefore, "in a eudaimonistic theory, the actions, relations, and persons that are included in the conception are not all valued simply on account of some instrumental relation they bear to the agent's satisfaction" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 32). Importantly for Nussbaum, "only virtuous actions" (p. 32), together with the "mutual relations of civic or personal love and friendship, in which the object is loved and benefited for his or her own sake, can qualify as constituent parts of a person's *eudaimonia*" (p. 32, emphasis in original).

To summarise the concepts discussed in this section, Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions has its antecedents in ancient Greek philosophical thought. The notion of human flourishing is a key component in both the Aristotelian and Stoic conceptions that Nussbaum draws upon. The Stoic view of the emotions holds that emotions involve cognitive appraisal or evaluation. It also ascribes significance to the objects upon which the emotion is focused in the life of the person experiencing the emotion. Fundamental to Nussbaum's cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions is Aristotle's conception of eudaimonia, which describes the completeness and flourishing of a person's

life. In the following section, I explore the concept of eudaimonia, and its relevance to this thesis as it relates to early childhood teachers' teaching practice.

3.3 A loving early childhood teacher's eudaimonia

In the previous section, I have discussed how the emotions appear to be concerned with a person's flourishing; that is, they are eudaimonistic (Nussbaum, 2001). According to Nussbaum (2001), in an agent-object relationship there are only certain actions, relations, and persons that or whom can qualify as constituent parts of a person's eudaimonia, these being an agent's virtuous actions, together with an agent's mutual relationships of friendship, personal love, and civic love. It is through the enactment of the various constituent parts of an agent's eudaimonia that the object of the agent's emotion is loved and benefited for its or their own sake or good (Nussbaum).

In the context of this thesis, I interpret the concept of 'civic' to be reflective of the actions of a person who has a concern about what is taking place in their community. Further, the early childhood teacher is the 'agent' in the agent-object relationship and the 'object' is the infant or toddler for whom the teacher is responsible through their teaching practice.

Nussbaum (2001) bases her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions on a conception of the eudaimonistic nature of emotions *in conjunction* with the following premises: That the emotions "are *about* something: they have an object" (p. 27, emphasis in original); where "the object is an *intentional* object: that is, it figures in the emotion as it is seen or interpreted by the person whose emotion it is" (p. 27, emphasis in original); that the "emotions embody not simply ways of seeing an object, but beliefs – often very complex – about the object" (p. 28); and that the emotions, "are concerned with *value*, they see their object as invested with value or importance" (p. 30, emphasis in original). Accordingly, the emotions "evaluate the external object or person as an important part, not of the world from some detached and impersonal viewpoint, but of the world from the viewpoint of the agent's own goals and projects" (Nussbaum, p. 82).

According to Nussbaum (2001), "love is a particular kind of awareness of an object, as tremendously wonderful and salient, and as deeply needed by the self" (p. 477). Relating this statement and the premises of the emotions noted immediately above to this thesis, I argue that for a *loving* early childhood teacher, their teaching practice is motivated by their understanding of the potentially significant role they can have in the lives of the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible, and by their intention for those infants and toddlers to flourish through their teaching practice. I therefore expand on the notion of the agent-object relationship, by suggesting, that in such a relationship, where the agent is a *loving* early childhood teacher, the object is a *flourishing* infant or toddler. In this sense, I further argue that the love early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate through their teaching practice is *civic love*, insofar as it is consistent with the actions of a person who has a concern about what is taking place in their community. Consequently, I argue that civic love, together with the early childhood teacher's virtuous actions through which an infant or toddler is loved for their own good, is intrinsic to a loving early childhood teacher's teaching practice and is a constituent part of their eudaimonia. In the context of this thesis therefore, a eudaimonistic teaching approach aims not only towards an infant's or toddler's flourishing, but ultimately also towards the flourishing of the community and larger society of which that infant or toddler is a member.

At this juncture, I believe it is important to introduce another element to this discussion of love as it relates to early childhood teachers' teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible. According to Nussbaum (2001), "love, while an emotion, is also a *relationship*" (p. 473, emphasis in original). In this context, I argue it is important to acknowledge an additional intellectual challenge to early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers, namely, that some of their interactions are with pre-linguistic children. Accordingly, I also argue it is important to recognise that this aspect of early childhood teachers' teaching practice with infants and toddlers adds an additional layer of both complexity and subtlety to the interplay in the agent-object/teacher-child relationship.

To explain the duality of love as both an emotion and a relationship, Nussbaum (2001) draws upon the work of Aristotle, for whom, according to Nussbaum, "love is not present without a mutual relationship" (p. 473). As Nussbaum explains, "In a reciprocal relationship of Aristotle's sort, the emotions involved a conception of the object as a person who wants and actively seeks my good, and for whom I both want and actively seek the good" (p. 474). Therefore, as Nussbaum asserts, "we cannot even understand the emotional aspect of love fully without seeing how it is frequently related to interactions and exchanges of the sort Aristotle is thinking about" (p. 474).

In the context of this thesis, what I understand Nussbaum (2001) to assert is that, from an Aristotelian perspective, a loving early childhood teacher's civic love manifests in the following core beliefs: (1) Their belief in the importance of a mutual relationship between them and the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible through their teaching practice; (2) their belief that the infants and toddlers both want and actively seek their civic love; and (3) their belief that, because of their civic love, the infants and toddlers will flourish. Accordingly, I argue that a loving early childhood teacher can make the evaluative claim that the flourishing of the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible is an ineliminable motivation underpinning their teaching practice.

Working from the premise that civic love both underpins and nourishes the flourishing of society at large (Nussbaum, 1990), I further argue that if a loving early childhood teacher understands that the love in their teaching practice is a civic love that aims towards children's flourishing, they can be empowered to engage in dialogue about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice. In the following section, I discuss how a loving early childhood teacher can contribute towards an infant's fledgling emotional development.

3.4 Infancy, emotions, and a loving early childhood teacher

In Chapter 2, I have argued that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing. I have also set out the position that from an educational, psychological, neuroscientific, and

paediatric perspective, early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers must, to the extent that is within their control, ensure the early childhood education environment is conducive to infants' and toddlers' development, and hence, to their ability to flourish.

As I have noted in the introduction section of this chapter, emotions and infancy are a key focus of Nussbaum's (2001) philosophical perspectives on the intelligence of the emotions. Nussbaum observes that "the emotions of later life make their first appearances in infancy, as cognitive relations to objects important for one's well-being, and also that this history informs the later experience of emotion" (p. 179). I argue that Nussbaum's observation in this regard is directly relevant to this study because an early childhood teacher can constitute the object with whom an infant establishes an inchoate cognitive relationship. I further argue that an infant can flourish through this relationship.

In this section, I examine Nussbaum's (2001) views on the development of emotions in infancy, although it is important to clarify that this topic is not the focus of this thesis per se. As I have previously established, the focus of this thesis is the loving early childhood teacher, who is the 'agent' in the agent-object relationship with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible through their teaching practice, and the 'object' is a flourishing infant or toddler.

The purpose of including Nussbaum's (2001) views on the development of emotions in infancy in this chapter is to further illustrate the crucial role that loving early childhood teachers can have in infants' fledgling emotional development, and their ongoing flourishing as they progress through toddlerhood. In this section, I also briefly discuss how the development of the emotions in infancy is relevant to the emotions experienced in adulthood.

In proposing that "the past shadows the present" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 473), Nussbaum argues "that most of the emotions of adult human beings cannot be well understood without looking at the history of object relations that informs them" (p. 473). Nussbaum characterises emotions "as complex object relations" (p. 473), and asserts that this "is true most especially of love. It cannot be well understood unless we examine it as part of the complex fabric of a story that extends over time" (p. 473). Moreover, Nussbaum

also argues "that the childhood history of emotions shapes adult emotional life: that the emotions of adult life originate in infancy, and that this infantile history shapes their adult structure in powerful ways" (p. 230). What I understand Nussbaum to underscore with this argument is that an adult human's emotional repertoire is established in infancy through their interactions with their caregivers during this critical period of their development. This is also consistent with my discussion in Chapter 1, where I have identified the importance of dependable, loving, responsive caregiver-child relationships in the first 1000 days of a child's life if a child is to flourish.

In the context of this thesis, I contend that Nussbaum's (2001) arguments emphasise the pivotal role a loving early childhood teacher can have on the inception and flourishing of an infant's emotional well-being. As I have discussed in the previous section, by positively effecting an infant's emotional development, a loving early childhood teacher can also make a positive contribution towards the longer-term emotional well-being of the community and larger society in which that child will grow into adulthood.

In relation to "the drama" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 183) of human infancy, Nussbaum observes that, "Human infants arrive in the world in a condition of needy helplessness more or less unparalleled in any other animal species" (p. 181). Nonetheless, "from the first there are agencies in the environment that minister to its [an infant's] needs, supplying what it cannot supply for itself" (Nussbaum, p. 182).

While, as I have acknowledged in Chapter 2, early childhood education is but one of many environments that can have a direct involvement in infants' and toddlers' development, early childhood teachers, along with parents, whānau, and other "agencies therefore take on an intense importance in the infant's inchoate and as yet undemarcated awareness of the world" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 182). Nussbaum observes that the infant's fledging relationships with these agencies is primarily restorative, and "focuses, from the first, on its [the infant's] passionate wish to secure what the world of nature does not supply by itself – comfort, nourishment, [and] protection" (p. 182).

I argue Nussbaum's (2001) above observation has direct relevance to the early childhood teacher, as one of the agents in an infant's life who can have this restorative role. Indeed, as Nussbaum notes, "In early infancy, when action is more or less impossible, the passive experience of receiving comfort [from a caregiver, such as an early childhood teacher] removes the [infant's] incipient sense of helplessness" (p. 187).

According to Nussbaum (2001), to "have a starting point for talking about the infant's emotions" (p. 183), it is necessary to consider "three distinct facets of the infant's neediness" (p. 183). "First and most obvious is the "need of every life-sustaining help," the basic bodily need for nourishment and care" (Nussbaum, p. 183). Second, is the "need for comfort and reassurance" (Nussbaum, p. 185); and third, is the need for "cognitive stimulation" (p. 189). I briefly address each of the above facets of neediness, as they relate to an infant's development of emotions, and to this study, as follows.

Of the need to provide an infant with nourishment, and to attend to their *basic hygiene* needs [facet one], Nussbaum (2001) conclusively notes that "this has been emphasized in all discussions of infancy and needs little further comment here" (p. 183). Nussbaum however argues that infants' requirement to have their *comfort and reassurance* needs met [facet two] "is not reducible" (p. 185) to simply meeting their nourishment and hygiene needs. Indeed, infants' reliance on their relationships with caregivers who will meet their needs for comfort and reassurance, are, in Nussbaum's view, "in some ways even more powerful than the bond of nourishment" (p. 187).

According to Nussbaum (2001), infants' development of emotions commences with their "need for the removal of painful or invasive stimuli, and for the restoration of a blissful or undisturbed condition" (p. 183). As Nussbaum further notes, at this very early stage of an infant's emotional development, "this restorative agency will at first be experienced by the infant not so much as a distinct object, but [more] as a process of transformation through which the infant's own state of being is altered [for the better]" (p. 184).

And yet, "As the infant's ability to perceive definite objects and to become aware of its own boundaries develops" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 184), the infant also becomes

increasingly aware of the centrality in their life of "those object(s) who are perceived [by the infant] as the agents of this restoration of the world" (p. 184). This restorative role is primarily undertaken by a person who develops an emotional "identification with the infant" (Nussbaum, p. 186), and for whom the infant is seen as an object of importance and commitment in that person's "scheme of ends" (p. 33). As Nussbaum observes, it can be the infant's "mother, father, nurse, or some other caretaker or caretakers who plays or play the primary [restorative] role" (p. 184).

In the context of this study, I understand Nussbaum's (2001) observations to suggest that, if an early childhood teacher establishes a positive emotional relationship with an infant for whom they are responsible, and considers an infant's well-being as a priority of their teaching practice, then they will act in a manner conducive to meeting an infant's basic hygiene, comfort, and reassurance needs. This will also be conducive to an infant's development of an overall sense of emotional well-being.

Nussbaum (2001) also identifies that when an infant is held by their caregiver, this is a powerful mechanism for the provision of comfort and reassurance, and for the removal of an infant's sense of helplessness. Although Nussbaum does not discuss the topic of infant holding in great depth in *Upheavals of Thought*, Nussbaum nonetheless acknowledges that being held is conducive to the formation and ongoing development of an infant's emotional relationship with their caregiver. In this particular context, Nussbaum defers to the expertise of other researchers, including the anthropologist, Sarah Hrdy.

According to Hrdy (1999), "Human infants have a nearly insatiable desire to be held and to bask in the sense that they are loved" (p. 493). However, as to whom it falls to satisfy the infant's desire to be held, there is nothing "that rules out a mother sharing or delegating caretaking to others" (Hrdy, p. 494). In societies where immediately from birth infants are accustomed to being "passed among multiple caregivers with whom they become very familiar and are quite at ease" (Hrdy, p. 495), then "Far from growing up less secure, such infants are if anything more so" (p. 495).

While Nussbaum (2001) does not engage in great depth in *Upheavals of Thought* with the importance of a caregiver's holding of an infant for whom they are responsible, she does note that "If early holding has been successful, she [the infant] has developed an increasingly subtle interplay with the object [the caregiver], which contains elements of trust" (p. 213). According to Nussbaum, subtle interplay of this nature is "characteristic of love" (p. 214). In Chapter 6, I provide a more extensive discussion about the importance of an early childhood teacher's appropriate holding of the infants (and toddlers) for whom they are responsible, and the subtle interplay involved in this aspect of their teaching practice.

I continue this section with a discussion of an infant's requirement for *cognitive stimulation*, the third facet of an infant's emotional neediness (Nussbaum, 2001). Nussbaum asserts that, unlike the Stoics, "Aristotle got it right: the interest in cognitive mastery is a part of human infants from the start of life" (p. 189). Moreover, this hunger for cognitive mastery "is extremely valuable in helping it [the infant] begin to sort out the world" (Nussbaum, p. 189).

According to Nussbaum (2001), "in order to explain why infants get going and pursue projects of their own in the uncertain world" (p. 190), it is necessary to consider the infant's "original need for cognitive distinction-making, and an original joy in sorting out the world" (pp. 189-190). As Nussbaum observes, "curiosity, cognitive interest, and wonder is especially apparent, and essential to explain [an infant's] initiative and creativity" (p. 190). What I understand Nussbaum to propose with the above observations, is that without infants' propensity for self-initiated endeavour, they would otherwise be reduced merely to being passive recipients of their caregivers' largesse. This perspective is reinforced by Cooper and Quinones (2022) who argue that infants (and toddlers) need to be viewed "as capable initiators … [of] their own interests, intents, and learning agendas" (p. 965). In this context, "Children's expressions of agency are demonstrated through their voice and non-verbal cues, body gestures, and movements" (Cooper & Quinones, p. 968).

I further interpret that, in making the above observations, Nussbaum (2001) is suggesting that an infant's burgeoning emotions develop initially as the result of a series of

caregiver-initiated transformations, through which an infant's physical and emotional well-being is constantly restored to a state of equilibrium. As I have argued in the previous section, virtuous actions of this nature on the part of a loving early childhood teacher are a constituent part of their eudaimonia. According to Nussbaum, the infant's emotions thus "develop gradually, as the infant becomes more and more cognizant of the importance of the transformations to its [the infant's] being, and of the fact that they arrive, so to speak, from outside" (p. 190).

In Nussbaum's (2001) view, "To a certain extent, then, the child's emotions, if things go well, evolve in relation to an environment that is relatively stable, which provides spaces for the development of wonder and joy, as well as stable love and gratitude" (p. 209). However, as Nussbaum acknowledges, "But of course no such environment is completely stable, nor can it be, if the child is to learn to be active and independent" (p. 209). Indeed, Nussbaum asserts that, "Caretakers must come and go, support the child and allow her to fend for herself, so that, through her evolving emotions … she will learn how to get around in the world" (p. 209). According to Nussbaum, "This intermittance of care, and the intermittance of safety that results, is an essential part of becoming able to live" (p. 209).

In the context of this thesis, I argue that Nussbaum's (2001) assertions reinforce the pivotal role a loving early childhood teacher can have in an infant's emotional development through the provision of an environment where they have their needs for nourishment and care, comfort and reassurance, and cognitive stimulation met. Of further relevance to early childhood teachers' teaching practice, it is also important to note that Nussbaum emphasises the necessity for caregivers to allow infants the time and space they need for self-initiated exploration of their environment to facilitate their emotional development.

Moreover, the subtle interplay between infants and their caregivers that occurs in an environment conducive to infants' physical and mental development, and hence, to their ability to flourish "is an essential ingredient of love" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 224). Accordingly, I argue that it is important for early childhood teachers to understand that through their virtuous and restorative actions - such as, but not limited to, holding, hugging, kissing,

carrying, gazing, talking, humming, smiling, singing, and utterances – not only are they meeting an infant's comfort and reassurance needs, they are also making a positive contribution to an infant's emotional development. I further argue that this understanding can empower a loving early childhood teacher to engage in dialogue to present counterarguments to views of love that seek to trivialise the intellectuality of their teaching practice with phraseology such as that lovey dovey stuff.

I now continue my discussion of Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory with an overview of another of the modifications to the Stoic view of the emotions which Nussbaum deemed necessary to make to ensure its relevance in a twenty-first century context. In the next section, I discuss the distinctions which Nussbaum makes between 'general' and 'particular' or 'concrete' evaluative judgements; and between 'background' and 'situational' emotions, and their relevance to this thesis.

3.5 General and particular evaluative judgements, and background and situational emotion judgements

As a brief preface to this section, it is important to recall that Nussbaum (2001) proposes the "emotions are forms of judgement" (p. 22), and that the emotions are "intelligent responses to the perception of value" (p. 1). It is also important to recall that Nussbaum's cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions has its antecedents in the views of the ancient Greek Stoics.

The last of Nussbaum's (2001) modifications to the Stoic view of the emotions I discuss in this chapter, is the "distinction between *general* and *concrete* [particular] evaluative judgements, and a distinction between *background* and *situational* [emotion] judgements" (p. 67, emphasis in original). I note however from my review of *Upheavals of Thought*, that Nussbaum devotes relatively little commentary to the former.

I also believe it is important at the outset of this section to establish a distinction between the types of judgements being discussed. Where Nussbaum (2001) uses the terms

'general' and 'particular' or 'concrete', this is in reference to **evaluative** judgements, whereas the terms 'background' and 'situational' are used in reference to **emotion** judgements.

To commence this discussion, I first briefly address the distinction between general and particular/concrete evaluative judgements. I then continue this discussion of Nussbaum's (2001) modifications to the Stoic view of the emotions with a high-level description of background and situational emotion judgements, and conclude with a discussion of how these concepts relate to this thesis.

3.5.1 General and particular/concrete evaluative judgements

In *Upheavals of Thought*, Nussbaum (2001) uses the event of her mother's death to illustrate both general and particular/concrete evaluative judgements, and the distinction between the two. Nussbaum notes that the grief her mother's passing invoked in her, comprised "a number of different [general] evaluative judgements (p. 68); including, "The judgement that at least some things and persons outside the self have great importance for my flourishing; the judgement that people with certain characteristics of generosity and warmth have such importance; the judgement that one's mother has such importance" (p. 68).

Nussbaum (2001) acknowledges that, for her, these general evaluative judgements were "difficult to disentangle" (p. 68). Nussbaum explains that the concretisation of her grief in this regard stemmed from the following evaluative judgement: "But what makes the emotion center around this particular mother, among all the many wonderful people and mothers around the world, is that she is *my* mother, a part of my life" (p.31, emphasis in original).

As Nussbaum (2001) further notes, general and concrete/particular *evaluative* judgements of this nature interweave with background and situational *emotion* judgements "in many complex ways" (p. 74). In the following sub-section, I briefly discuss the distinction between background and situational emotion judgements.

3.5.2 Background and situational emotion judgements

Nussbaum (2001) asserts that "the central form of a background emotion is always love or attachment to some thing or person" (p. 74). According to Fitterer (2008), to emphasise the importance of this assertion, Nussbaum (2001) devotes considerable attention in "*Upheavals of Thought* to a detailed analysis of love as the main instance of background emotion" (p. 78).

In the context of Nussbaum's (2001) theory, "a background emotion is one that persists through situations of different types" (p. 69), which is "closely associated with a whole network of beliefs and expectations at many different levels of generality" (p. 75). As Fitterer (2008) observes, a "Background emotion … is a fundamental set of concerns, usually operative without our explicit awareness" (p. 93).

Nussbaum (2001) further asserts that background emotion judgements "are not simply dispositional; they have a *psychological reality* [emphasis added], and often explain patterns of behaviour. One loves one's parents, children, spouse, friends, continuously over time, even when no specific incident gives rise to an awareness of the love" (Nussbaum, p. 70). Moreover, "Love is very often non-conscious. Take love of one's children. Sometimes we are aware of that love, but in much of daily life it persists without being noticed" (Nussbaum, 2004b, p.475).

Situational emotions, by contrast, occur when a background emotion is "combined with a specific judgement that situates the emotion's object in a concrete way in some actual … context" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 73). However, since in Nussbaum's view, some ""situations" may be more or less enduring" (p. 69), the relationship "between the background and the situational … really suggests a *continuum* [emphasis added]" (p. 69). Notwithstanding the notion of the background-situational continuum that Nussbaum suggests, situational emotion judgements therefore "arise in the context of some particular situation" (p. 69). In the following sub-section, I relate the concepts of background and situational emotion judgements to this thesis.

3.5.3 Relating background and situational emotion judgements to this thesis

In relating the psychological reality of background emotions to this thesis, I contend that for a loving early childhood teacher, a primary example of a background emotion judgement is their commitment to children's flourishing as an ineliminable component of their teaching practice, their civic love, and hence their eudaimonia. Putting this background emotion judgement into a situational context, in the event of an infant or toddler attending an early childhood centre for the first time, a loving early childhood teacher manifests their ongoing commitment to children's flourishing by meeting the child's immediate and concrete need for comfort and reassurance. Through the combination of their background and situational emotion judgements in this context, a loving early childhood teacher would act in such a way as to ensure, at least to the extent they are able to control, that the child feels safe in what is a new, and potentially strange and frightening, environment.

Taking the key transition process of settling an infant to sleep in an early childhood centre as another example, the concepts of background and situational emotion judgements were also reflected in my research data. As I discuss in Chapter 5, research participant 'Anna's' background emotion judgements of authenticity, respect, and intentionality underpinned her teaching philosophy. One manifestation of these background emotion judgements was Anna's empathy with the emotions of the infants and toddlers for whom she was responsible through her teaching practice (see Chapter 6).

To conclude my discussion of Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, in the following section I provide a brief overview of critiques of Nussbaum's theory. I also provide excerpts from Nussbaum's (2001; 2004a) works where I have deemed it necessary to clarify certain points of conjecture.

3.6 A brief overview of critiques of Nussbaum's theory

Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions has drawn scholarly debate from fellow philosophers. In this section, I provide a brief overview of five critiques of Nussbaum's theory, drawn from scholarly reviews of *Upheavals of Thought*.

While the philosophical scholars whose reviews are included in this section are broadly appreciative of *Upheavals of Thought* as a complete body of work, some of these scholars nonetheless provide their own interpretation of Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, and reject aspects of Nussbaum's theory based on those interpretations. Where applicable, I also include Nussbaum's (2001; 2004a) own words to provide clarity when the critiques included in this section do not appear to contain accurate representations of Nussbaum's theory.

Solomon's (2002) review of *Upheavals of Thought* identifies that the book consists of "three elegant studies of the role of the emotions in human flourishing" (p. 897). My study however draws primarily on what Solomon describes as "The first part of *Upheavals*, a treatise in itself, [which] concerns the nature of emotion and Nussbaum's now familiar thesis that emotions are evaluative judgements, a thesis, in its broad outlines, that she inherits directly from the Stoics" (p. 897). In Solomon's opinion, "Among its [*Upheavals of Thought's*] virtues are Nussbaum's sensitive and sympathetic use of recent psychological as well as psychoanalytic literature and bringing together many of the most important insights of the past thirty as well as the past 2000 years" (p. 901).

According to Solomon (2002), "one of the real strengths of the book is its deep appreciation for the developmental dimension of emotions … that is, the way that infancy and early childhood experiences prefigure and shape the emotions we have in later life" (p. 898). As Deigh (2004) also acknowledges in his review of *Upheavals of Thought*, "by treating emotions as originating in infancy" (p. 466), and by recognising that the "events of infancy that first excite emotions … contribute to their subsequent development, she [Nussbaum] gives the Stoic theory the explanatory depth its classical statement lacks" (p. 466).

As discussed in this chapter, in Nussbaum's (2001) theory, adult emotions first emerge in infancy as cognitive relationships between the infant and their caregiver, although as Solomon (2002) notes, this is not a universally held view. Solomon identifies that there are some scholars who hold to "the outdated idea that there are two distinct 'faculties' of emotion and intelligence and the more recent counter-claim that emotions precede (rather

than are constituted by) cognition" (pp. 898-899), and base their criticism of Nussbaum's (2001) theory on these positions. However, according to Solomon (2002), Nussbaum (2001) does not adhere to either of these positions, and proposes instead that "Emotions are not to be contrasted with or opposed to but are rather of a piece with our intelligence" (p. 899).

However, for some critics the predominant objection to Nussbaum's (2001) theory of the emotions as evaluative judgements is that "it seems to leave out something essential" (Solomon, 2002, p. 899). For those critics, an assessment of the emotions cannot be complete without a consideration of feelings, or affect, "as essential non-cognitive components of emotion" (Solomon, p. 899). Solomon observes that the pragmatic way in which Nussbaum (2001) could have defended her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions from this criticism "of course, is to drop the idea of a purely cognitive theory and accept feelings (if not physiology as well) as essential non-cognitive components of emotions. Nussbaum refuses to take this easy route" (p. 899).

As Ben-Ze'ev (2004) observes in his review of *Upheavals of Thought*, it "is an admirable work and I strongly agree with most of its fundamental arguments" (p. 451). Nonetheless, there is a "major issue upon which we [Ben-Ze'ev and Nussbaum] differ" (Ben-Ze'ev, p. 451). While Ben-Ze'ev agrees with Nussbaum (2001) that emotions "express a complex mental mode" (p. 451) including "cognition and evaluation" (p. 451), in Ben-Ze'ev's (2004) view, emotions must also include "feelings and motivation" (p. 451); a position which Ben-Ze'ev claims that Nussbaum (2001) rejects.

According to Ben-Ze'ev (2004), "Feelings and motivations (desires) in her [Nussbaum's] view are intimately connected with emotions, but are not essential to them (p. 451)". Ben-Ze'ev further asserts that "Nussbaum argues that if feelings and desires were missing from a certain emotion, we would not withdraw our ascription of that state as an emotion" (pp. 451-452). Based on this reasoning, Ben-Ze'ev concludes that "The absence of feelings and motivation [in Nussbaum's (2001) theory] implies not merely that they are irrelevant to a particular level of discussion, but that they are irrelevant to the emotional experience in general. This claim, I believe, is incorrect" (p. 452). Ben-Ze'ev's reasoning in

this regard however appears to contain a contradiction, insofar as Ben-Ze'ev acknowledges that feelings and motivations *do* have an intimate connection with emotions in Nussbaum's (2001) theory. Accordingly, this would suggest that, for Nussbaum, feelings and motivation *are* relevant to the emotional experience.

Indeed, as Nussbaum (2004a) notes in her own précis of *Upheavals of Thought*, "While feelings and bodily states are typically involved in emotions, I argue that no specific feeling or bodily state should be included as a necessary element in the definition of a type of emotion" (p. 443). While it seems apparent therefore that Ben-Ze'ev's (2004) and Nussbaum's (2001, 2004a) philosophical views on the nature of emotions in this regard may not be wholly in alignment, neither do they appear to be diametrically opposed.

Cates (2003) and Ortiz Millán (2016) have also both taken the view that Nussbaum (2001) explicitly rejects the possibility of a non-cognitive element in the emotions. Cates (2003) cites Nussbaum (2001) as stating "The argument is not that emotions *include* a cognitive component, as well as other components. The argument is that emotions just are cognitions, and nothing more" (p. 328, emphasis in original). Yet as Ben-Ze'ev (2004) and Nussbaum (2004a) state, Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions does allow for the inclusion of feelings in Nussbaum's definition of an emotion. Nussbaum's theory also allows that judgements or cognition may be sufficient on their own for emotion, but *only* "if they have the requisite eudaimonistic evaluative content" (pp. 56-57).

As to whether a judgement or cognition has the requisite eudaimonistic evaluative content to elicit an emotion, Nussbaum (2001) explains that the object towards which a person directs their emotion(s) "must ultimately be seen as part of the person's own scheme of ends" (p. 55). If, however, the importance of the object to the agent "is beneath a certain threshold" (Nussbaum, p. 55) then an emotional response will not occur. Conversely, "above that threshold, differences of intensity are occasioned by differences in the eudaimonistic evaluation" (Nussbaum, p. 55). For example, "The anger we feel is proportional to the size of the harm that we think has occurred; the grief we feel is proportional to the extent of the loss. People grieve only mildly for a person who has been a small part of their lives" (Nussbaum,

p. 55). According to Nussbaum, "it is the nature of the eudaimonistic evaluation that explains the intensity of the emotion" (p. 56). "The experience of emotion is, then, cognitively laden" (Nussbaum, p. 65). In this sense, according to Solomon (2002), the subtitle of *Upheavals of Thought*, 'The Intelligence of Emotions', is particularly apt.

Although Solomon (2002) acknowledges that "I do not particularly consider myself one of Martha's [Nussbaum's] many 'fans'" (p. 901), Solomon concedes, "that much of the power of the book lies in the combination of Nussbaum's careful theorizing and her insightful phenomenology" (p. 898). According to Solomon, while "*Upheavals* represents an updating of Stoic philosophy" (p. 897, emphasis in original), Solomon nonetheless asserts that "it [*Upheavals of Thought*] is fully intended to stand as a theory in its own right and this is certainly how it should be read" (p. 897). In the following section, I provide a conclusion to this chapter by summarising the salient aspects of Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions as it relates to this thesis.

3.7 Conclusion

Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, drawn primarily from her seminal work, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, provided this study's theoretical framework. Nussbaum's theory posits that emotions are intellectual acts, and that in an agent-object relationship, an agent's experience of an emotion towards an object is cognitively laden.

In the context of this study, the agent is a loving early childhood teacher and the object is an infant or toddler for whom the teacher is responsible, and aspires to flourish, through their teaching practice. According to Nussbaum (2001), the agent's cognitive evaluation of the importance of an object to the agent determines the extent to which, or even whether, the agent experiences an emotion about that object. For Nussbaum, the primary determinant of the importance of an object to an agent is the agent's love for, or attachment to, the object in question. In Nussbaum's theory, the agent will hold a range of fundamental expectations and beliefs about an object, which persist at an unconscious or

background level until such time as the agent encounters a specific situation which brings the importance of the object back into the agent's conscious focus.

In establishing her theory, Nussbaum (2001) draws upon the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia, which posits that emotions appear to be concerned with a person's flourishing. In this context, I argue that civic love, virtuous actions, and a commitment to children's flourishing, are ineliminable components of a loving early childhood teacher's teaching practice, and constituent parts of their eudaimonia.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the pivotal impact a loving early childhood teacher can have on the inception of an infant's emotional development through the provision of an environment where they have their needs for nourishment and care, comfort and reassurance, and cognitive stimulation, met. I argue that the provision of such an environment can positively contribute to a child's flourishing in infancy, and as they progress from infancy through to toddlerhood and on into later life.

For Nussbaum (2001), the link between infantile and adult emotions is undeniable. Based on this premise, I further argue that the pivotal role a loving early childhood teacher can have in the emotional well-being of society's youngest citizens, and ultimately the flourishing of the community and larger society of which that child is a member, is too important to ignore.

Accordingly, I contend that Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions provides a robust foundation upon which early childhood teachers can credibly engage in discourse towards attaining broad consensus about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice. In Chapter 4, I discuss the methodology I used to gather empirical data from this study's research participants about the ways they understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, I have discussed Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions as this study's theoretical framework for my exploration of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice with infants and toddlers. Foundational to Nussbaum's theory is the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia, where to be eudaimonistic includes a person's concern for the flourishing of others.

For Nussbaum (2004b), emotions such as love "are evaluative and eudaimonistic perceptions or thoughts" (p. 473), and I argue that, for the loving early childhood teacher, their eudaimonia is manifested in their teaching practice as civic love, virtuous actions, and a commitment to children's flourishing. Consequently, I have drawn on Nussbaum's (2001) theory to support my argument that love is a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice. In this chapter, I discuss why ethnography is a suitable methodology to gather empirical data to test this argument.

As a preface to this discussion, I first outline this study's research paradigm to establish its ontology, epistemology, and methodology. I then provide a brief history of ethnography, before discussing this methodology in a contemporary context. I follow this discussion with an overview of the concept of reflexivity, my position in this study as a eudaimonistic researcher, and my eudaimonistic approach to fieldwork relationships.

I also address ethical considerations, and the process I followed to locate an early childhood centre for my ethnographic fieldwork and subsequent semi-structured interviews with the research participants. I conclude this chapter with a detailed discussion of the methods I have used in the data collection and analysis phases of this study.

4.2 Research paradigm

In general terms, a paradigm constitutes a particular set of assumptions that may be held about the world, together with a further set of assumptions about appropriate approaches for making enquiries into that world (Punch, 2009). More specifically, a *research* paradigm "refers to a set of beliefs and practices associated with a particular style of research" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 326). As Denscombe notes, research paradigms may be very broad, with quantitative and qualitative research approaches being the most obvious examples. According to Hammersley (2013), qualitative research can be defined as:

a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis (p. 12, emphasis in original).

Expanding on this definition, a qualitative research approach places an emphasis on the generation and development of explanations and descriptions, versus the testing of predetermined hypotheses (Hammersley, 2013). This means that rather than developing a detailed plan at the outset of a given study and then implementing it, the qualitative researcher adopts a flexible approach to the research design (Hammersley). This flexibility is further reflected in the data analysis phase(s), where data is not placed into pre-determined categories, but instead the categories are generated through the data analysis process(es). (Hammersley). Moreover, the categories themselves tend to be flexible and open-ended to allow for individual data to be assigned to more than one category (Hammersley).

In qualitative research, "The predominant mode of analysis is verbal description and interpretation, supported by illustrative or evocative examples" (Hammersley, 2013, p. 14). Further, Hammersley asserts that in qualitative research, "data, and inferences from them, are always shaped by the social and personal characteristics of the researcher" (p. 13). This subjectivity, while not possible to be eliminated in its entirety, may nonetheless be mitigated

by the provision of reflexive commentary by the researcher to "enable readers to allow for any effects of the researcher's characteristics, or of how the research was carried out, that might [otherwise] obscure or threaten the validity of the analysis" (Hammersley, p. 13). This study has taken a qualitative approach as its research paradigm to address the research question: *In what ways do early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers?*

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), "Three interconnected, generic activities define the qualitative research process" (p. 11). These are a study's "*ontology*, *epistemology*, and *methodology*" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 11, emphasis in original). Behind these activities or premises stand the researcher's personal biography (Denzin & Lincoln). In this context, the researcher sees the world from, amongst other things, the perspective of their own culture (Denzin & Lincoln). Accordingly, the researcher approaches their research from the following three perspectives: their ideas about the world (ontology); their questions about the world (epistemology); and their ways of examining those ideas and questions (methodology) (Denzin & Lincoln). In the following sub-sections, I outline each of the three philosophical perspectives noted above, respectively, as they relate to the research conducted in this study.

4.2.1 Ontology

According to Denscombe (2010), ontology refers to a "general view about social reality" (p. 326). In this context, Lincoln et al. (2011) "believe that a goodly portion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making activities of groups and individuals around those social phenomena" (p. 116). Expanding on this premise, "The meaning-making activities themselves are of central interest to social constructionists and constructivists, simply because it is the meaning-making, sense-making, [and] attributional activities that shape action (or inaction)" (Lincoln, et al., p. 116).

From this perspective therefore, the constructivist tendency is towards "a refusal to adopt any permanent, unvarying … standards by which truth can be universally known

(Lincoln, et al., 2011, pp. 119-120). This refusal stems from an appreciation that

"Agreements about truth may be the subject of community *negotiations* regarding what will

be accepted as truth" (Lincoln, et al., p. 120, emphasis in original). Accordingly, it may be

argued that "truth–and any agreement regarding what is valid knowledge–arises from the

relationship between members of some stake-holding community" (Lincoln, et al., p. 120).

In the context of this study, the stake-holding community is the Aotearoa New

Zealand early childhood sector, whose members' teaching practice, as I have identified in

Chapter 1, is governed by the Aotearoa New Zealand Ministry of Education. At the macro

level, the truth of early childhood teaching practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is established

in accordance with a regulatory framework which is underpinned by the following

documentation: the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (Ministry of

Education, 2008); the Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres

(Ministry of Education, 2008); the Early Childhood Education Curriculum, *Te Whāriki*

(Ministry of Education, 2017); the Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the

Teaching Profession, *Ngā Tikanga Matatika* (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand,

2017); and the Indicators of Quality for Early Childhood Education, *Te Ara Poutama*

(Education Review Office, 2020).

At the micro level, I argue that truth, as it relates to early childhood teachers' teaching

practice, and specifically in the context of this study, truth about *love* in early childhood

teachers' teaching practice, is determined by what would foster a child's flourishing in an

early childhood centre, in accordance with the vision and philosophy of that early childhood

centre. I argue therefore that an early childhood centre's philosophy about love will be

underpinned by each individual teacher's world view about love in their teaching practice,

and that each teacher's world view about love will be influenced by their moral imperatives,

based on their personal upbringing, history, and experiences, and by their cultural and

societal norms. This is consistent with Delaune (2019), who notes that *Te Whāriki*

encourages teachers "to see children according to the particular philosophical vision

appropriate to their contextual setting" (pp. 724-725). This is also consistent with Nussbaum

(2001), who suggests that any enquiry into human flourishing needs to be both "subtle and multifaceted" (p. 378).

As I have discussed in Chapter 3, ontologically, Nussbaum (2001) insists that a person's eudaimonia is constructed from the perspective of that person's sense of what is important and valuable to them in their world, and consists of the elements in a person's life that are so important to them that without those elements a person would consider their life to be incomplete. Nussbaum holds a similarly Aristotelian viewpoint about the nature of emotions, arguing that if a judgement or cognition is to have the requisite eudaimonistic evaluative content to elicit an emotion, the person must be committed to the object of that emotion, as an important part of their world, towards the object's flourishing.

In the context of this study, Nussbaum's (2001) emphasis on the object's flourishing means that early childhood teachers can evaluate their teaching practice as loving if it contributes to children's flourishing. A flourishing infant or toddler is integral to a teacher's love. I argue that my own world view about early childhood education, and hence the perspective from which I have approached this study, namely, that love is a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice, is wholly consistent with Nussbaum's above ontology.

I have argued that children have a right to be loved by their teachers, and that early childhood teachers have a right and responsibility to love children in an educational context in partnership with those children's parent(s)/whānau (Hughes, 2010; 2013). The question of whether other early childhood teachers understand love to be a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice, and if so, the ways they demonstrate this understanding, is the subject of this thesis. In the following sub-section, I discuss epistemology, the second philosophical principle from which a researcher conducts their research.

4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology, broadly, "is about issues having to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particular areas of inquiry" (Powell, 2012, p. 30). As Creswell

and Poth (2018) describe the concept, epistemology refers to "how the researcher knows reality" (p. 326).

According to Powell (2012), the two main schools of modern epistemology are rationalism and empiricism, where rationalism holds that "knowledge can be acquired through the use of reason" (p. 30), and empiricism holds that "knowledge is obtained through experience" (p. 30). In this study, I have taken an empirical approach to learning about the research participants' ontological world views of love in early childhood education, and whether these world views are reflected in their teaching practice. However, I recognise the challenge of determining a truth about love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice, not least because, as Goldstein (1998) and Nussbaum (2004b) note, respectively: ""Love" is a term that can be twisted and stretched to cover an inordinately large area of behaviors and feelings" (p. 262); and, "there may be varieties of love" (p. 477).

Moreover, "Because the word *love* is used in an almost infinite variety of contexts, it has an almost infinite variety of meanings" (Berscheid, 2006, p. 173, emphasis in original). As Berscheid observes, "This fact is unfortunate from the point of view of those who wish to construct a simple definition of love and a set of algorithms representing its causes and consequences" (p. 173). Nonetheless, according to Berscheid:

> People generally know what *love* means in common discourse because they construe its meaning from knowledge of precisely who, in what situation, in what culture, is using the word to describe his or her attitudes, emotions, feelings, and behaviors about a person or a thing. It is the *context* in which *love* is used that establishes its meaning. (p. 173, emphasis in original)

Berscheid's (2006) notion that love can be defined from the perspective of the person who experiences the emotion is reflective of Nussbaum (2001), whose cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions provides this study's theoretical framework. In Nussbaum's view, the emotions "always involve appraisal or evaluation" (p. 23). In this vein, Nussbaum

acknowledges that her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions "does not take a stand one way or another on the nature of value, but tries to present the valuational nature of our appraisals from the internal viewpoint of the person having the emotional experience" (pp. 22-23). I argue that Nussbaum's acknowledgement of this aspect of her cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, suggests that at the individual ontological level, early childhood teachers may hold differing world views about love in their teaching practice. This is consistent with the Aristotelian perspective, which holds that for an individual, emotions are perceptive responses that are "closely connected with beliefs about how things are and what is important" (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 41).

Nussbaum (1990) also proposes that love encompasses both creation and discovery, which has resonance in the notion of "the essential role of supporting others well-being in the potential to flourish oneself" (Ekman and Simon-Thomas, 2021, p. 2). From this, I argue that through an early childhood teacher's creation of an early childhood education environment that is conducive to *children's* flourishing, early childhood teachers may also flourish by discovering deeper dimensions of themselves and the reality of their love. This flourishing may be both professional and personal.

Epistemologically, my formal academic inquiry into love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice commenced with my Postgraduate study, and resulted in the publication of my first journal article on this subject. This line of inquiry continued in my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013), where I investigated how teachers *perceive* the concept of love for children in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. In my Master of Education study, I sought to learn about the research participants' perception of love in their teaching practice through their responses to semi-structured interview questions.

However, as Creswell and Poth (2018) note, epistemology refers to "how the researcher knows *reality* [emphasis added]" (p. 326). Accordingly, in this study I have expanded on the findings of my earlier research by not only asking the research participants what they *understand* about love in their teaching practice, but also by observing them in their natural teaching environment to collect data about the ways that they *demonstrate* love

in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible. Empirically therefore, this study is grounded in the research participants' lived reality. In the following sub-section, I discuss the qualitative methodology I used to collect empirical data from the research participants.

4.2.3 Methodology

According to Creswell (2013), "The procedures of qualitative research, or its *methodology*, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data" (p. 22, emphasis in original). Moreover, "During the data analysis, the researcher follows a path of analyzing the data to develop an increasingly detailed knowledge of the topic being studied" (Creswell, p. 22).

From the perspective of the ontological and epistemological premises that I have described in the previous sub-sections, as the researcher in this study I was predisposed to a research methodology involving interpersonal relationships, not numbers. Accordingly, to address the research question, I conducted a qualitative study using contemporary ethnography as this study's research methodology. I discuss ethnography further in the following section.

4.3 Ethnography

For the purpose of this study, I have taken the term ethnography "to refer to a form of social and educational research that emphasises the importance of studying at *first hand* what people do and say in particular contexts" (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4, emphasis in original). According to Hammersley, first hand study of this nature "usually involves fairly lengthy contact, through participant observation in relevant settings, and/or through relatively open-ended interviews designed to understand people's perspectives, perhaps complemented by the study of various sorts of document–official, publicly available, or personal" (p. 4). To provide context for this discussion about ethnography, in the following sub-section, I present a brief history of this methodology.

4.3.1 A brief history of ethnography

The term ethnography has its origins "in nineteenth-century Western anthropology, where an ethnography was a descriptive account of a community or culture, usually one located outside the West" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 10). According to Hammersley and Atkinson, "At that time 'ethnography' was contrasted with, and was usually seen as complementary to, 'ethnology', which referred to the historical and comparative analysis of non-Western societies and cultures" (p. 10).

While "Ethnology was treated as the core of anthropological work" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 10), "ethnologists did not collect information by means of direct observation" (Gobo, 2011, p. 17). Ethnologists "instead … examined statistics, the archives of government offices and missions, documentation centres, accounts of journeys, archaeological finds … or they conversed with travellers, missionaries and explorers" (Gobo, p. 17). This approach was known as the 'etic' perspective, and occurred when the researcher took an outsider's view of the culture being studied (Gobo).

However, as the nineteenth century progressed, "the term 'ethnology' fell out of favour because anthropologists began to do their own fieldwork, with 'ethnography' coming to refer to an integration of both first-hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 10). Ethnographic methodology continued to evolve in the twentieth century, with the British anthropologist, Malinowski, being a notable practitioner (Gobo, 2011). Malinowski instigated the 'emic' perspective, where the researcher takes an insider's view of the culture being studied (Gobo), and "is commonly regarded as the first to systematize ethnographic methodology" (Gobo, p. 18).

According to Gobo (2011), "Malinowski described the methodological principles underpinning the main goal of ethnography" (p. 18), which Malinowski (1922) proposes as being "to grasp the native's point of view, *his* relation to life, to realise *his* vision of his world" (p. 25, emphasis in original). The aim of the earliest social anthropologists "was to provide a detailed and permanent account of the cultures and lives of small, isolated tribes"

(Denscombe, 2010, p. 79). In this context, Malinowski famously conducted research on the Kula people of the Trobriand Islands in Melanesia with whom he "lived for two years (between 1914 and 1918)" (Gobo, 2011, p. 18).

The 1920s ushered in a differentiation in research focus between anthropologists and sociologists (Brewer, 2000). Whereas British anthropologists had previously sought to gain a cultural understanding of the colonies that the then British Empire was seeking to assimilate into the "'British family of nations'" (Brewer, p. 11), United States of America sociologists began to focus upon research subjects based in their own society, albeit belonging to a different social stratum to that of the researchers (Brewer).

Among the earliest proponents of this new sociological focus were researchers from the University of Chicago, which in the 1920s became the first university in the United States of America to establish a sociology department (Barley, 1989), and whose researchers came to be known as the 'Chicago School' (Gobo, 2011). As Hamersley and Atkinson (2007) note, "The 'Chicago School' was concerned with documenting the range of different patterns of life to be found in the city, and how these were shaped by the developing urban ecology" (p. 10).

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, "ethnographic methodology was incorporated into sociology" (Gobo, 2011, p. 18), and Chicago School sociologists "published numerous ethnographies" (Barley, 1989, p. 43) of perceived "deviant subcultures based on the life histories of people who partook of the subculture" (p. 43). Since the 1930s, "the use of ethnography as a research methodology has proliferated across the social sciences and within different academic fields such as education, healthcare sciences and business" (Reeves et al., 2013, p. 1367).

According to Hamersley and Atkinson (2007), in the twenty-first century, "'ethnography' plays a complex and shifting role in the dynamic tapestry that the social sciences have become" (p. 11). In the following sub-section, I present an overview of contemporary ethnographic methodology.

4.3.2 Contemporary ethnographic methodology

Contemporary ethnographic methodology emphasises "the importance of *understanding things from the point of view of those involved*" (Denscombe, 2010, pp. 80-81, emphasis in original). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), in contemporary ethnographic methodology, data are usually collected from a range of sources, and usually by a range of methods. These methods can include, but are not limited to, the researcher's participation either covertly or overtly in the daily lives of the research participants during which the researcher observes the research participant's behaviours, listens to their conversations, and asks them questions through formal and/or informal interviews (Hammersley & Atkinson). Ethnography in this context "places a primacy on the importance of situated meaning and contextualized experience as the basis for explaining and understanding social behaviour" (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 5).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) identify five features that they propose are representative of most contemporary ethnographic methodology. I summarise these as follows. Firstly, the researcher studies the research participant's behaviours, conversations, and interactions in the research participant's everyday situated context, not under researcher-created conditions (Hammersley & Atkinson).

Secondly, the researcher gathers data from a variety of sources, though primarily by observation of the research participants, together with brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Thirdly, the process of collecting data is relatively fluid insofar as the data generated is research participant-driven, based on a natural flow of events in the research participant's everyday situated environment (Hammersley & Atkinson).

Fourthly, to ensure the study is sufficiently in-depth, the research is typically small in scale, focusing on a finite number of cases, for example a single group of people or setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Fifthly and finally, the categories for interpreting the data are generated through the data analysis process. This involves the researcher's interpretation of the research participant's behaviours, conversations, and interactions, and

the researcher's determination as to whether the data has implications for wider associated contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson).

As I have noted above, as the researcher in this study I was predisposed to a research methodology involving interpersonal relationships. In this thesis, I have expanded on my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013) by going into the field to observe the research participants' teaching practice in its situated context. Accordingly, I argue that ethnography is a suitable methodology for collecting data from the research participants to address this study's research question. In the following section, I provide a brief introduction to the concept of reflexivity, and its relevance to ethnographic research.

4.4 The concept of reflexivity

In contemporary ethnographic methodology, the researcher's analysis of qualitative data is dependent on the researcher's personal interpretation of those data (Adler & Adler, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). As Coffey (1999) observes, "Qualitative research generally and ethnographic endeavour in particular is, by its very nature, interpersonal and intimate" (p. 56). In this context, ethnographers need to acknowledge that there are external factors such as "the location of the setting, the sensitivity of the topic, power relations in the field and the nature of the social interaction between the researcher and the researched, all of which influence how the data are interpreted" (Brewer, 2000, p. 127).

Accordingly, Brewer (2000) asserts that researcher-attributed meaning to the data "needs to be done reflexively" (pp. 126-127). In this vein, Creswell (2007) also asserts that an ethnographic researcher needs to be "conscious of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study" (p. 243). Moreover, "The analysis of qualitative data calls for a reflexive account by the researcher concerning the researcher's self and its impact on the research" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 303). "The concept of reflexivity [therefore] acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 19).

In Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) view, the concept of reflexivity rejects "the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher" (p. 19). Furthermore, social research cannot be conducted "in such a way that its findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics" (Hammersley & Atkinson, p. 19).

The concept of reflexivity also "rejects the notion of the detached, aloof and objective researcher who produces knowledge claims as if in a vacuum" (Brewer, 2000, p. 131). In Brewer's view, reflexivity is a necessary consideration in good ethnographic research practice. Moreover, reflexive researchers "attend to an ethic of care for those who participate in the research" (Begoray & Banister, 2010, p. 788). In this context, "Researchers acknowledge and reflect upon their obligations and care for participants but demonstrate these through engaging in mutual dialogue and understanding" (Begoray & Banister, pp. 788-789). In the following section, I exercise reflexivity to introduce my position in this study as a eudaimonistic researcher.

4.5 A eudaimonistic researcher

In Chapter 3, I introduced and discussed eudaimonia, Aristotle's philosophical and aspirational conception of a person's endeavour to be a good citizen, to live a complete, just, and ethical life, and to have concern for the flourishing of others (Nussbaum, 2001). Given that the concept of eudaimonia is foundational to this study's theoretical framework, it was also imperative for me as the researcher to conduct this study in a eudaimonistic manner.

In this context, the principal ethical attributes of a eudaimonistic researcher as I interpret the role, are honesty, integrity, authenticity, consideration, confidentiality, respect, kindness, seeing the good in others, and a desire for others to flourish. As these are ethical attributes which I advocate for and aspire to in my own professional teaching practice and personal life, the notion of a eudaimonistic researcher is one which sits comfortably with me. In the following section, I discuss the ethical considerations that underpinned this study as an expression of eudaimonia.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Prior to commencing the data collection phase of this study, ethics review by the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee was sought, and approval for this study was granted on 14 November 2019 (HREC reference number 2019-167H). A copy of the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee approval confirmation email is provided as Appendix A to this study.

The following documentation, approved by Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee, is also provided in the appendices: Script for telephone recruitment (Appendix B); Information Letter to Centre Manager/Owner (Appendix C); Information Letter to Research Participant (Appendix D); Information Letter to Parent/Caregiver (Appendix E); Consent Form to Centre Manager/Owner (Appendix F); Consent Form to Research Participant (Appendix G); Consent Form to Parent/Caregiver (Appendix H); Semi-structured interview questions (Appendix I).

In conducting this research, I acknowledge that I have ethical responsibilities, which I must abide by. As Denscombe (2010) asserts, the importance of a concern for research ethics in contemporary social research cannot be overstated, with a primary notion being "that no-one should suffer harm as a result of participation in the research" (p. 7). In the sub-sections which immediately follow, I address the issues of confidentiality, and each research participant's right to withdraw from this study. In the section where I describe how I located an early childhood centre for ethnographic fieldwork, and where I met the research participants for the first time, I address how I ensured the research participants understood the nature of this study, and describe how they provided their informed consent to participate.

4.6.1 Confidentiality/use of pseudonyms

In this study's Participant Information Letter (Appendix D), I advised the research participants that I did not anticipate that there would be any risks associated with their participation in this study beyond the experience of normal daily working life. Nonetheless, I

recognised there was a small risk to confidentiality, given the close and collegial nature of the early childhood education profession in Aotearoa New Zealand. To address this as a potential issue, I protected the research participant's identities using pseudonyms. The early childhood centre, and the infants and toddlers for whom the research participants were responsible, were also thoroughly de-identified.

4.6.2 Participants' right to withdraw from this study

In this study's Participant Information Letter, I advised the research participants that their participation in this study was completely voluntary, and there was no obligation on them to participate. Further, the research participants had the right to withdraw from this study and to withdraw any data they had provided as part of this study up until the end of the fieldwork phase.

4.6.3 Ethical conduct in human research

This study was conducted in consideration of ethical principles informed by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018), and the Australian Catholic University (2016) research code of conduct that mandates for "high ethical standards in the conduct of research, including honesty, integrity, and scholarly and scientific rigour" (p. 3). On receipt of approval from Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee to proceed with the data collection phase of this study, I commenced the process of locating and approaching an early childhood centre in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, in which to conduct my ethnographic fieldwork. In the following section, I describe this process.

4.7 Locating an early childhood centre for ethnographic fieldwork

With reference to Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) five features of contemporary ethnographic methodology, research in this context is typically small in scale, focusing on a

finite number of cases, which may even be limited to a single group of people, or to a single setting, in order "to facilitate in-depth study" (Hammersley & Atkinson, p. 11). Accordingly, I conducted the ethnographic data collection phase of this study with one group of people within one early childhood centre. The small-scale nature of this study is also consistent with Denscombe's (2010) advice, which notes that "qualitative research tends to involve relatively few people or events. Much of this reflects the preference for depth of study and the associated 'thick description' which only becomes possible in relation to limited numbers" (p. 238).

Another reason for adopting a small-scale approach to this study was the manual nature of qualitative data analysis. According to Denscombe (2010), in qualitative research "there *is* a vast difference in the time it takes to analyse results" (p. 238, emphasis in original), meaning that "qualitative research tends to be associated with *small-scale* studies" (Denscombe, p. 238, emphasis in original).

The process of locating an early childhood centre in which to conduct ethnographic fieldwork commenced with internet searches to identify an early childhood centre that met the following criteria: (1) the centre was licenced to teach infants and toddlers; (2) the centre location was within a reasonable travelling distance from my home in central Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; and (3) the centre was open for operation during the Aotearoa New Zealand summer school holiday period. This latter criterion was necessary because the early childhood centre I manage would be closed during this period, meaning I would be able to utilise this time to conduct the ethnographic fieldwork. Through my internet searches I found a centre which met all the above criteria.

Using the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee approved script for telephone recruitment as a template for my initial conversation with the centre owner, I contacted them by telephone call to outline my research proposal and to explain I was interested in conducting my research at their centre. In this conversation, I assured the centre owner there was no compulsion on them to agree to my request. The centre owner explained to me that they would first need to consult with the manager of the

centre to determine whether it was convenient for me to conduct ethnographic fieldwork there. At the centre owner's request, I emailed copies of the Information Letters and Consent Forms to them for them and the centre manager to review.

The centre owner called me back two days later to explain that unfortunately the early childhood centre I had identified could not accommodate my request to conduct my research there. However, the centre owner told me they had identified another of their early childhood centres as a potential research site. The centre owner explained that they had already spoken with the manager of this alternative centre on my behalf, and the centre manager was interested in meeting with me to discuss the possibility of my research being conducted there. In this telephone call, the centre owner and I organised a mutually convenient date and time for us to meet at the alternative centre for introductions with the centre manager.

On 4 December 2019, I met with the centre owner and the centre manager to discuss my research proposal, and to share a morning tea with them, which I provided. I discussed my research with the centre owner and centre manager, and outlined what participation in this study would entail.

The centre manager told me they had already spoken with their infant and toddler teaching team about their potential involvement in my research, and had provided them with the Participant Information Letters, and Consent Forms for them to consider. The centre manager immediately confirmed that the centre's infant and toddler teachers were excited to be involved in the research. In the following sub-section, I provide an anonymised description of the fieldwork location.

4.7.1 The fieldwork location

The early childhood centre where I conducted this study's fieldwork operates from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and is licenced to teach infants and toddlers (three months of age up to two years of age), and young children (two years of age up to five years of age). The centre is a two-story construction, purpose-built for childcare provision, and

situated in a quiet residential street. Ground-floor access to the centre is via a foyer area, from which access is available to the kitchen, the centre's two teaching rooms – one for infants and toddlers, and one for young children – and to the second floor.

The two teaching rooms are separated by a large wooden sliding door that can be opened to allow access between the rooms. Within the infant and toddler teaching room, there are three further rooms: a nappy changing room, and two sleep rooms. Each teaching room has a large glass sliding door opening onto a deck, which extends into a shared outside area. The outside area features a sandpit, a large tree trunk and stones for climbing, other climbing and playing equipment, and green open space.

Upstairs from the foyer area is the staff room, and a shared office space, which overlooks the outside area. In the shared office space, the centre manager attended to administrative work, and the centre's teachers attended to the documentation requirements of their role. In total, there were 10 staff employed at the centre. In the following section, I describe the process I undertook to obtain the research participants' informed consent to participate in this study.

4.8 Informed research participant consent

The centre manager and I organised a convenient time for me to visit the centre to formally introduce myself to the research participants. This occurred on 16 December 2019, in the centre's infant and toddler teaching room. The research participants were the centre's three qualified and registered early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers. In my introductory meeting with the research participants, I described my research and what their involvement in this study would entail. The research participants had already familiarised themselves with the Participant Information Letter and Consent Form, and they immediately provided me with their signed consent to participate in this study.

The centre manager also asked me to email the centre a photograph of myself, and a brief introductory statement, to accompany the Parent/Caregiver (whānau) Information Letters and Consent Forms, which the centre manager undertook to have signed. On receipt

of all the signed Consent Forms, I drew up a fieldwork visit calendar with proposed dates and times to collect ethnographic data, which I emailed to the centre manager to share with the research participants.

The location of my introductory meeting with the research participants in the centre's infant and toddler teaching room also meant I was able to gain a degree of familiarity with the research participant's usual teaching environment prior to the commencement of fieldwork. Accordingly, I was able to envisage how best to place myself in the teaching environment to maintain, as much as possible, the integrity of the natural flow of the research participants' teaching practice.

According to Coffey (1999), "Fieldwork relies upon the establishing and building of relationships with significant others in the field. It is these relationships that give ethnographic research its intensity, its quality and insight into the everyday social world" (p. 56). Coffey also recognises that "Like all human relationships, the relations of the field can be immensely fulfilling, long lasting and intimate" (p. 57).

However, as Coffey (1999) cautions, relationships in the field can also "be fragile and potentially exploitative" (p. 57). As a eudaimonistic researcher, it was my role to ensure that fieldwork relationships in this study reflected the former qualities and not the latter. At no stage in this study did I consciously assume a position of power or authority over the research participants through my role as the researcher, or in my capacity as a more experienced early childhood teacher. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of my eudaimonistic approach towards building trusting and productive fieldwork relationships with the research participants.

4.9 A eudaimonistic approach to fieldwork relationships

I recognised that, epistemologically, this study was reliant on the research participants to provide me with data about love in their teaching practice. However, I was also cognisant of the fact that the research participants' primary focus while I was in their centre was the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible, and not this study.

I also recognised I was asking the research participants to allow me to investigate their teaching practice in intimate detail. I could not expect them to do this if I had not first established myself with them as a trustworthy confidante. Accordingly, I dedicated time, energy, and effort into building rapport with the research participants, not least through being friendly and courteous throughout each visit, and by respecting the research participants as qualified early childhood teachers. I appreciated that this was necessary because, for both researcher and research participants, "Time, space and emotions are all invested in ethnographic fieldwork" (Coffey, 1999, p. 57).

On the first fieldwork visit, I learned from the centre manager that both they and the research participants were partial to sweet treats. For each subsequent fieldwork visit, I took a box of chocolates, or trumpets (an iconic Aotearoa New Zealand ice cream in a cone), not just for the research participants, but for all the centre staff, to share. It was apparent to me that the centre staff were grateful for these small tokens of my appreciation.

As I have noted above, out of consideration for the research participants and the centre manager, I drew up a fieldwork visit calendar so they were aware in advance of the dates and times when I would be visiting the centre to collect ethnographic data. To minimise the possibility of research participant fatigue, during fieldwork visits I endeavoured not to spend any more than three hours in the centre, or to focus exclusively on any one research participant. I also planned to not schedule any fieldwork visits on consecutive days, although this did occur on one occasion due to an unavoidable clash with another of my commitments.

At the conclusion of each fieldwork visit, I obtained the research participants', and the centre manager's, confirmation that it remained suitable and convenient to them for me to make the next fieldwork visit in accordance with the date and time scheduled in the fieldwork visit calendar. On one occasion, this meant deferring a visit because the infant and toddler teaching room's end-of-year celebration with the children and their parent(s)/whānau coincided with that date. In the following section, I discuss this study's data collection and analysis methods.

4.10 Ethnographic data collection and analysis

In this study, I used multiple ethnographic data collection methods to generate and gather rich, holistic, qualitative data to add to the existing body of empirical research on love in early childhood education, specifically in relation to teaching practice with infants and toddlers. In the following sub-section, I explain why I took a 'peripheral-member-researcher' role in the ethnographic process to maintain, as much as possible, the integrity of the research participants' everyday situated context.

4.10.1 Maintaining the integrity of the research participants' everyday context

Ethnographic research is conducted in the research participants' everyday situated context, rather than under researcher-created conditions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Given that a key focus of this study was the research participants' in-the-field interactions with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible through the normal course of their teaching practice, this necessitated my "'being there' and 'in the middle of the action'" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 207).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), "if you want to understand the way people think about their world and how those definitions are formed, you need to get close to them, to hear them talk and observe them in their day-to-day lives" (p. 35). From this, "There is a logical connection between the techniques of participant observation and in-depth interviewing … and inductive reasoning" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 35). As Denscombe (2010) notes, "Going 'into the field' to witness events at first hand in their natural habitat lies at the very heart of what it means to do ethnography" (p. 88).

My role in the research participants' early childhood centre was primarily in the capacity of "peripheral-member-researcher" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 379). In this context, I observed the research participants' teaching interactions with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible but did not directly participate in those interactions to preserve as much as possible the "natural state of affairs" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 88).

As Denscombe (2010) asserts, "In order to produce a pure and detailed description, ethnographers will wish to avoid disrupting the situation by their very presence as observers in the field" (p. 88). Accordingly, to maintain as much as possible the integrity of the natural flow of the research participants' teaching practice, my peripheral-member-researcher role meant I was able to "observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380). Nonetheless, my presence as researcher in the research participants' early childhood centre was overt. Equally, my peripheral-member-researcher role was important to acknowledge because, as Coffey (1999) notes, "we should be cautious of accounts which uncritically render the ethnographer as stranger or as marginal" (p. 22).

Indeed, according to Coffey (1999), "Ethnography is more often conducted by members of a culture or related cultures, than by complete strangers" (p. 22). In this light, as an experienced early childhood teacher I understood that my presence may have caused some disruption to the natural flow of the research participants' teaching practice. I argue however that any disruption I may have caused diminished with each successive fieldwork visit as I became an increasingly familiar presence in the infant and toddler teaching environment. Moreover, the research participants reinforced that I was a *welcomed* presence in the infant and toddler teaching environment when they greeted me by my name and with a smile each time that I arrived at the early childhood centre. In the following sub-section, I describe the phased approach I took to collecting and analysing ethnographic data from the research participants.

4.10.2 Phased approach to collecting and analysing research participant-driven data

In this study, I took an empirical approach to learning about each research participant's world view of love in early childhood education, and investigating whether this world view was reflected in their teaching practice. I collected and analysed research participant-driven data, respectively, in two phases.

Phase one data collection occurred during the fieldwork visits where I gathered data through observation of the research participants' teaching practice, and through brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations with them, if applicable and appropriate. Phase one data analysis was an iterative process that occurred simultaneously with phase one data collection.

Phase two data collection occurred during the individual post-fieldwork semi-structured interviews I conducted with the research participants. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in two parts. The first part consisted of nine predetermined interview questions (refer to Appendix I). The second part consisted of follow-up questions with the research participants to gather more data about observations I had made of their teaching practice during phase one data collection. Phase two data analysis occurred at the conclusion of the semi-structured interviews. In the following sub-sections, I discuss this study's data collection and analysis phases in detail.

4.10.3 Data collection - phase one: fieldwork

Phase one data collection occurred during the eight fieldwork visits I made to the infant and toddler teaching environment. I scheduled the fieldwork visits to ensure I collected a variety of observational data by timing the visits to coincide with a centre opening time, a centre closing time, and periods during the day when, based on my experience as an early childhood teacher, I anticipated the research participants' interactions with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible were most likely to be at their height.

During phase one data collection I gained access to research participant-driven data primarily through my observations of the research participants' teaching practice. According to Adler and Adler (1994), "Qualitative observation is fundamentally naturalistic in essence; it occurs in the natural context of occurrence, among the actors who would naturally be participating in the interaction, and follows the natural stream of everyday life" (p. 378).

In this context, a strength of qualitative observation is that "it enjoys the advantage of drawing the observer into the phenomenological complexity of the world, where connections,

correlations, and causes can be witnessed as and how they unfold" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 378). As Adler and Adler caution however, "One of the chief criticisms levelled against observational research lies in the area of *validity*" (p. 381, emphasis in original). One reason for this is because "Without the benefit of members' [research participants'] analyses, observers are forced to rely more exclusively on their own perceptions" (Adler & Adler, p. 381).

With respect to potential concerns about validity, it is important to note that, in accordance with Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) five features of contemporary ethnographic methodology, while observation of research participants is a primary method for gaining access to rich behaviourally-based data, observation of this nature occurs *together with* brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations with research participants. Accordingly, when appropriate, I engaged the research participants in brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations to collect additional data about certain physical actions and reactions, and/or verbal and non-verbal interactions I had observed. This was necessary to validate my interpretation of those actions, and to counter criticism levelled against purely observational research of the sort which Adler and Adler (1994) identify above.

It is important to emphasise that I only engaged in brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations with the research participants if this was not going to disrupt their interactions with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible. My rationale for adopting this approach was eudaimonistic and threefold: (1) I did not wish to be disrespectful to the research participants by interrupting their teaching practice while they were working; (2) I also did not wish to be disrespectful to the infant or toddler with whom the research participant was working by taking their teacher's attention away from them; and (3) I did not wish to potentially compromise the quality of the data by interrupting or interfering with the research participants' teaching practice. This approach was consistent with "The ethnographer's concern with naturalism [which] derives from the wish to study things in their natural state" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 88).

My intention to maintain, as much as possible, the integrity of the research participants' teaching practice was also consistent with the third of Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) features of contemporary ethnographic methodology, which proposes that data should be derived from the natural flow of events in the research participant's everyday situated environment. If I judged that a brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversation with a research participant was going to be a disruption, then I deferred follow-up interaction about a given observation to the second phase of data collection.

I recorded my observations of the research participants' teaching practice, and my brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations with them, in my fieldwork diary. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), data in ethnographic research "will usually be collected in an unstructured form, by means of fieldnotes written in concretely descriptive terms" (p. 12). Not being sufficiently confident in my typing skills to consider touch-typing the fieldnotes from my observations directly into my laptop, I wrote my fieldnotes longhand into my fieldwork diary as I made my observations. As well as being a practical consideration, this also reflected Reeves et al. (2013), who assert that "Ethnography, through the written word, provides richly described accounts of the social phenomenon being studied" (p. 1368).

My fieldwork diary was a hard-covered A4 100 leaf spiral bound notebook. I chose this design so that I was not reliant on a hard surface in the research participants' teaching environment to write on, and hence I was able to relocate to another area within the environment at a moment's notice with a minimum of fuss as the events that I was observing unfolded.

I predetermined my strategy for how I was going to write my observations into my fieldwork diary as follows. I used the right (recto) pages to write my observations on. I reserved the left (verso) pages for recording my post-fieldwork-visit evaluative comments, and to note where I had made observations about physical actions and reactions, and/or verbal and non-verbal interactions, that I either wanted to give further attention to in subsequent fieldwork visits, or to explore further during phase two data collection (refer to Figure 4.1).

According to Fetterman (1998), a "significant writing challenge lies in taking good fieldnotes" (p. 113). In anticipation of this, I devised several abbreviations of common words I anticipated I would need to write repeatedly in my fieldnotes. I found this helped me to write concise but detailed fieldnotes about events I observed as they occurred. For example, "Tcher" for the research participants; "chd" for child; "chn" for children; "Δ" for change; "ẇ" for with; and "am" for morning (refer to Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1

Fieldwork diary
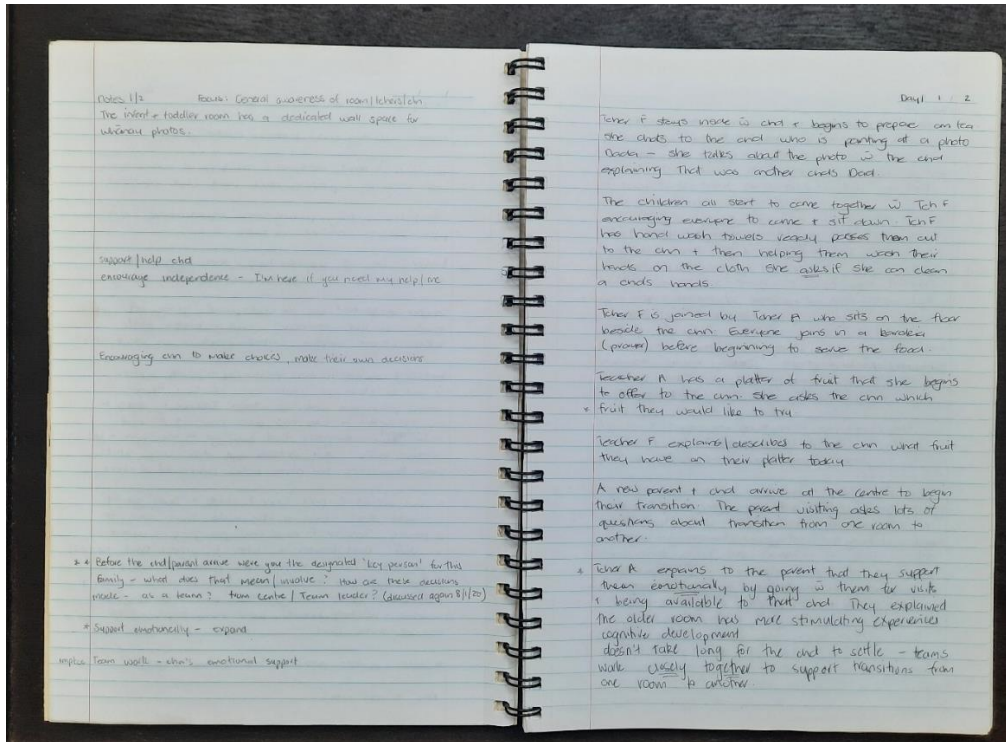
Figure 4.2

Examples of abbreviations used
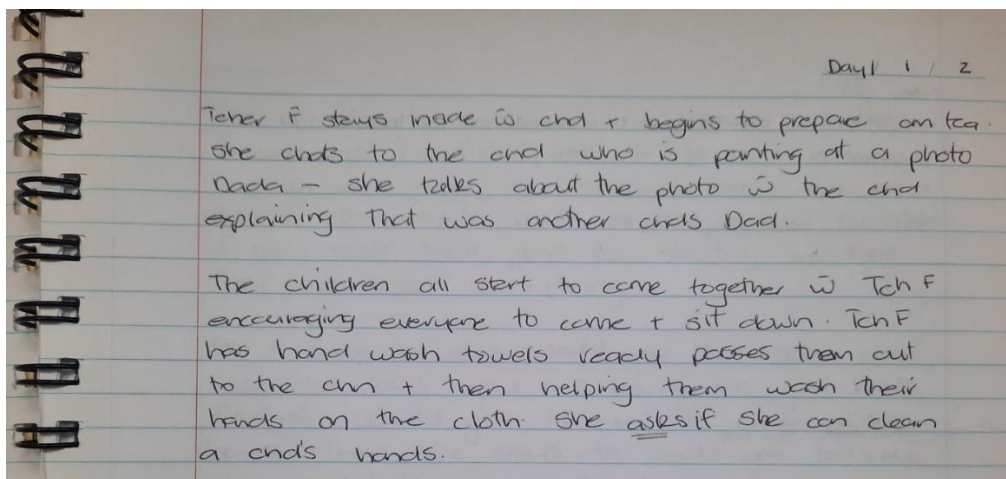
Using abbreviations of this nature was consistent with Fetterman (1998), who advises that "Note taking is the rawest kind of writing. The note taker typically has an audience of one. Thus, although clarity, concision, and completeness are vital in note taking, style is not a primary consideration" (p. 112). "The most important rule … is to write the information down" (Fetterman, p. 114).

I commenced each fieldwork visit by writing the fieldwork visit number (Day 1, Day 2, Day 3 etc.), and the page number associated with each visit, in the top right corner of the applicable recto page in my fieldwork diary (see Figure 4.2). I aimed for tidiness, organisation, and legibility in my handwritten fieldnotes. I was conscious that the quality of the data I collected, and the clarity and conciseness of my handwritten fieldnotes, would have a flow-on effect on the efficiency of my subsequent data analysis and the quality of its outputs. I found this attention to detail made both my immediate post-fieldwork-visit review of my fieldnotes, and my subsequent verbatim transcription of them into Microsoft® Word documents, a relatively straightforward process to complete. I provide more detail about this process in a later sub-section where I discuss my approach to phase two data analysis.

According to Reeves et al. (2013), researcher's written accounts of their fieldwork observations "offer detailed 'thick' descriptions of the people, places, actions and reactions being studied" (p. 1368). My handwritten fieldnotes captured the research participants' interactions with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible, with each other, and with parent(s)/whānau, as applicable. I also wrote the outputs of any brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations I had with the research participants in my fieldwork diary, either as the conversations occurred or as soon after the conversation as possible.

As I have noted above, my introductory meeting with the research participants was in the infant and toddler teaching room, and I had taken advantage of that opportunity to gain a degree of familiarity with the research participants' natural teaching environment to envisage how I might situate myself within the room to conduct my observations. However, I did not have a predetermined idea about which of the research participants I was going to observe first, or of the specific nature of the interactions I would encounter. This is consistent with

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), who note that "The initially exploratory character of ethnographic research means that it will often not be clear where, within a setting, observation should be [*sic*] begin, which actors need to be shadowed, and so on" (p. 12).

In my fieldwork diary, I recorded that phase one data collection commenced at 9:00 a.m., on Monday 23rd December 2019. As it happened, when I entered the infant and toddler teaching room, it was empty. This was because the research participants and the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible were all in the outside area. Before I went through to the outside area to introduce my presence to the research participants, I took a moment to absorb the general ambience of the infant and toddler teaching room. The room was fresh, clean, and tidy. I could hear light jazz music playing quietly through a portable audio device. I observed there was a minimal amount of equipment set out as provocations for the infants and toddlers, meaning the environment did not feel cluttered or overstimulating. As this minimalistic approach was consistent with my own teaching practice, I immediately felt comfortable in the infant and toddler teaching environment. I then joined the research participants in the outside area to commence my first observation of their teaching practice.

During phase one data collection, I watched, listened, and wrote my fieldwork notes in black ballpoint pen on the recto pages of my fieldwork diary. As a research participant interacted with an infant, a toddler, a group of children, another teacher, or parent(s)/whānau, I wrote concise and descriptive fieldnotes about the physical actions and reactions, and/or verbal and non-verbal interactions as I observed them. I also wrote the verbal dialogue I heard as verbatim as possible. As I grew more familiar with the research participants' natural teaching environment and with the observation process, I found that it became progressively easier to write my fieldnotes while remaining cognisant of events as they unfolded.

At the end of each fieldwork visit, I thanked the research participants, and confirmed with them, and the centre manager, that it was still convenient to conduct the next fieldwork visit in accordance with the date and time in the fieldwork visit calendar. As I have noted above, the Participant Information Letter advised the research participants of their right to

withdraw from this study up until the end of the fieldwork phase. At no stage did any of the research participants give me any indication that they wished to exercise this right. Phase one data collection concluded at the end of the eighth fieldwork visit. In the following sub-section, I describe the phase one data analysis process.

4.10.4 Data analysis - phase one

Phase one data analysis commenced when I returned home after the first fieldwork visit. I reviewed the fieldwork notes I had written on the recto pages of my fieldwork diary, based on the observations I had made of the research participants' teaching practice, and the verbal interactions I had heard. I wrote my post-fieldwork notes and evaluative comments on the verso pages of my fieldwork diary in pencil. I also identified observations I wanted to collect more data about on subsequent fieldwork visits, and marked these observations on the recto pages of my fieldwork diary with a pencil asterisk. These typically related to what I had perceived to be the research participants' demonstration of love in their teaching practice, or events and situations I wanted to obtain further data about – for example, the hitting incident that I describe in Chapter 6.

I repeated this process after each fieldwork visit, making phase one data collection and analysis an iterative process. This approach was consistent with Denscombe (2010), who asserts that "rather than analysis being a one-off event taking place at a single point in time, the analysis tends to be an evolving process in which the data collection and data analysis phases occur alongside each other" (p. 272).

In addition to my fieldwork diary, I kept a reflexive diary. Unlike my fieldwork diary which was a physical notebook, my reflexive diary was recorded in a Microsoft® Word document. I typed my thoughts and feelings about each fieldwork visit into my reflexive diary while they were fresh in my memory to capture what went well, what did not go so well, and what (if anything) I needed to do or try to do differently during the next fieldwork visit.

Consistent with Denscombe's (2010) assertion that qualitative data collection and analysis may occur in concert, at the end of the eighth fieldwork visit, phase one data

analysis concluded and my preparation for phase two data collection began. Following the eighth fieldwork visit, in preparation for phase two data collection that was going to be conducted through individual semi-structured interviews with the research participants, I conducted a post-fieldwork review of my fieldwork diary in its entirety.

During this post-fieldwork review, I attached a coloured Post-it® note onto each page of my fieldwork diary where I had previously marked an observation that I wanted to collect more data about, and I designated each of the research participants with a different coloured Post-it® note.

Through the post-fieldwork review of my fieldwork diary, I determined that not all the marked observations needed to be revisited during phase two data collection because the additional data that I had sought had already been collected in a subsequent fieldwork visit. As a result of the post-fieldwork review of my fieldwork diary, I determined there were two, three, and four observations across the three research participants, respectively, that I wanted to discuss further during phase two data collection.

To ensure I would be able to find the observation in question quickly and easily during phase two data collection, I positioned each Post-it® note to ensure the top third protruded above the relevant page in my fieldwork diary (refer to Figure 4.3). In the following sub-section, I discuss the phase two data collection process.

Figure 4.3

Examples of Post-it® note placement
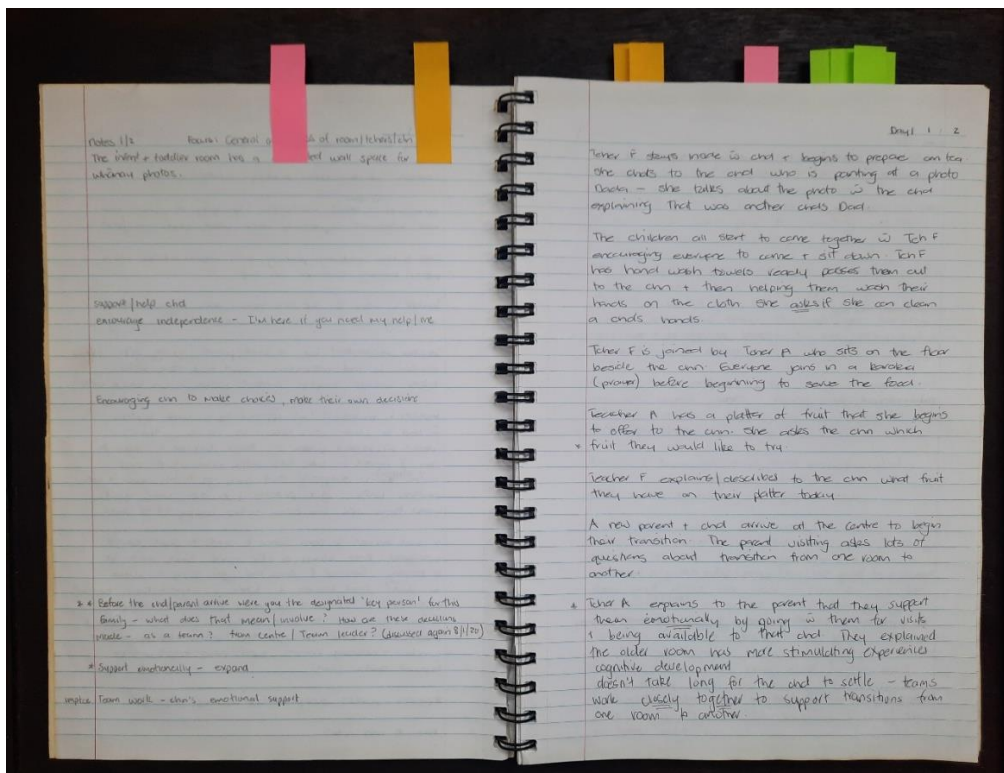
4.10.5 Data collection - phase two: individual semi-structured interviews

Phase two data collection was in the form of semi-structured interviews that I

conducted with the research participants. For context, semi-structured interviews differ from

structured interviews insofar as "Structured interviews involve tight control over the format of

the questions and answers. In essence, the structured interview is like a questionnaire which

is administered face-to-face with a respondent" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 174). The most

significant difference between structured and semi-structured interviews is that, in a semi-

structured interview, while "the interviewer still has a clear list of issues to be addressed and

questions to be answered" (Denscombe, p. 175), the interviewer also has the flexibility "to let

the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the

researcher" (Denscombe, p. 175). In a semi-structured interview, "The answers are open-

ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest"
(Denscombe, p. 175).

While the Participant Information Letter had indicated to the research participants
that their semi-structured interview would be approximately 60 minutes in duration, as it
transpired, each semi-structured interview took approximately half that time. As I have noted
above, I conducted each semi-structured interview with the research participants in two
parts.

The first part of each semi-structured interview consisted of the nine predetermined
interview questions. These predetermined questions were designed to elicit data from the
research participants about their motivation(s) for becoming early childhood teachers; their
philosophies of teaching; the emotions they associated with working with infants and
toddlers; their conceptualisation of love in their teaching practice; and whether the infants
and toddlers for whom they were responsible were able to flourish through the research
participants' teaching practice. The second part of each semi-structured interview consisted
of follow up questions to the research participants about the two, three, and four
observations, respectively, I had identified through my initial phase one data analysis as
content I wanted to discuss further with them.

The research participants and I had mutually arranged for the semi-structured
interviews to take place at their early childhood centre on 24 January 2020, during the early
afternoon when most of the infants and toddlers were sleeping. This enabled each research
participant to leave the infant and toddler teaching environment, in turn, for their semi-
structured interview, without compromising their teaching obligations. I conducted my semi-
structured interviews with each of the research participants in the centre's upstairs shared
office space.

With a view to ensuring each research participant felt as comfortable as possible to
respond to my questions freely and openly during their interview, the research participants
and I agreed to close the door between the shared office space and the staff room to
minimise the possibility of disruption or distraction from other centre staff using the staff

room during the time the interviews were being conducted. The only people present during the semi-structured interviews were myself in my capacity as the researcher, and the research participant being interviewed. This was consistent with Creswell's (2007) advice, which recommends conducting interviews of this nature in "a quiet location free from distractions" (p. 133); and with Denscombe (2010), who advises that "the researcher needs to try to get a *location for the interview* which will not be disturbed, which offers privacy, which has fairly good acoustics and which is reasonably quiet" (p. 182, emphasis in original).

In addition, to create a collegial environment for the semi-structured interview, each research participant and I sat on chairs on adjacent sides of a corner of one of the rectangular tables in the shared office space. Our chairs were angled so the research participant and I were able to make eye contact with each other. The configuration of our chairs in this manner was consistent with Denscombe's (2010) recommendation that in one-to-one interviews "it is important to be able to set up the *seating arrangements* in a way that allows comfortable interaction between the researcher and the interviewee" (p. 182, emphasis in original). This seating arrangement was also consistent with Denscombe's suggestion that "the researcher should try to arrange seating so that the two parties are at a 90 degree angle to each other. This allows for eye contact without the confrontational feeling arising from sitting directly opposite the other person" (p. 182).

Prior to the commencement of each individual semi-structured interview, I revisited the Participant Information Letter with each of the research participants to remind them that I would be digitally recording the audio of their interview, transcribing the recording myself, and providing them with a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy. Each of the research participants confirmed they remained happy to proceed with the semi-structured interview on that basis. This approach to data collection aligned with Creswell's (2007) assertion that audio recording an interview is a necessity to ensure the researcher has accurately captured the information provided by the interviewee.

The digital audio-recording of each semi-structured interview recorded me reading the interview questions to the research participant, and their responses to the nine

predetermined questions designed to collect data about their *understanding* of love in their teaching practice. After reading each question, I allowed the research participant the time they needed to respond to it. If applicable, if I needed more information from a research participant in relation to a question to ensure I was comfortable that I had accurately understood their response, I prompted the research participant with a follow up question. This sometimes required more than one follow up question. Before I proceeded to the next question, I asked the research participant whether they were satisfied with their response and whether they were ready to proceed to the next question. I repeated this process until all nine of the predetermined questions had been addressed.

To commence the second part of the semi-structured interview, I explained to the research participant that I had some additional questions to ask them about observations I had made of their teaching practice during phase one data collection. This was my opportunity to have an in-depth conversation with the research participants about the fieldwork observations that had not been possible during phase one data collection. This approach aligned with the Participant Information Letter, which explained to the research participants that "The purpose of the post-observation interview is to give you the opportunity to express your understanding of the observations I have made of your teaching practice within a semi-structured interview framework" (refer to Appendix D).

I then referred to the Post-it® note-affixed pages in my fieldwork diary relevant to the research participant. I located the marked observation on the applicable page that I wanted to collect more data about. On each occasion, I summarised the observation and asked the research participant to 'tell me more' about it. I allowed them the time they needed to respond. As with the brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations during phase one data collection, it was necessary to gain the research participant's input about the actions I had observed in their teaching practice to validate my interpretation of those actions. Accordingly, if I needed more information from a research participant in relation to an observation to ensure I was comfortable that I had accurately understood their actions, I prompted the research participant with a follow up question. This sometimes required more

than one follow up question. Discussion about the observation continued until the research participant confirmed to me that they had nothing further to add.

To conclude each semi-structured interview, I asked the research participant if they had any final questions, or thoughts, they would like to share with me before I stopped the recording. In all three semi-structured interviews, the research participants advised me they had nothing further to add. On each occasion, I thanked the research participant for their time and for the information they had provided, and the interview concluded. Phase two data collection concluded at the end of the final semi-structured interview.

Following each research participant's semi-structured interview, I presented them with a small gift of hand cream as a token of my appreciation for their contribution to this study. I also undertook to provide each research participant with an emailed copy of their interview transcript to review for accuracy. In the following sub-section, I describe the phase two data analysis process.

4.10.6 Data analysis - phase two

In this sub-section, I discuss the process I followed to analyse the data gathered through the two data collection phases in their entirety. This process was "predominantly concerned with the analysis of talk and text" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 279).

I took a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to my analysis of the data. According to Thomas (2006), inductive data analysis primarily entails the researcher engaging in detailed reading and re-reading of raw data to derive concepts or 'codes' based on the researcher's interpretation of that data. However, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) clarify that, while "Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively" (p. 6), "it is not accurate to describe the [qualitative] analytical process as being completely inductive" (p. 33). This is because before researchers commence their fieldwork, they will already hold ideas about the subject matter they are studying (Bogdan & Biklen). Pragmatically, many qualitative research "projects use both inductive and deductive analysis" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Deductive data analysis in this context refers to an approach that sets out to test

whether the data is consistent with the researcher's prior assumptions, hypotheses, or theories (Thomas). According to Azungah (2018), "The deductive and inductive approaches [in combination] provide a comprehensive approach in analysing qualitative data" (p. 383).

In qualitative research, the researcher's insight is "the key instrument for analysis" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 4). Analysis in this context "involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 159). Qualitative researchers do not act in a manner akin to putting together the pieces of a puzzle into a pattern already known to them (Bogdan & Biklen). Rather, qualitative researchers construct a picture from the data that takes shape as the researcher gathers and examines those data (Bogdan & Biklen). Accordingly, "The process of [qualitative] data analysis is like a funnel: Things are open at the beginning (or top) and more directed and specific at the bottom" (Bogdan & Biklen, pp. 6-7).

I commenced phase two data analysis by transcribing the handwritten notes in my fieldwork diary, verbatim, in typewritten form into Microsoft® Word documents, with a separate document dedicated to each of the eight fieldwork visits. I then transcribed the research participants' digitally audio-recorded responses from their semi-structured interviews, again by typing them, verbatim, each into a dedicated Microsoft® Word document. I found the transcription process was a valuable exercise, not least due to the familiarity with the data that it provided to me, albeit a time-consuming one.

Specifically with reference to the transcription of audio-recorded interview responses, Denscombe (2010) asserts that "the process of transcribing needs to be recognized as a substantial part of the method of interviewing and not to be treated as some trivial chore to be tagged on once the real business of interviewing has been completed" (p. 275). As Denscombe acknowledges, "The process of transcription is certainly laborious. However, it is also a very valuable part of the research, because it brings the researcher 'close to the data'" (p. 275). Moreover, "the end-product of the process provides the researcher with a

form of data that is far easier to analyse than the audio recording in its original state"
(Denscombe, p. 275).

Through the process of reading and re-reading the fieldwork diary, and listening and
re-listening to the digitally audio-recorded interviews, and transcribing those data, I became
increasingly more familiar with the data I had collected from the research participants. As
Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note, it is through the process of becoming familiar with
data that the researcher's interpretation of the research participant's behaviours,
conversations, and interactions begins to evolve. The process of re-reading the fieldwork
diary and re-listening to the interviews was also consistent with Denscombe (2010), who
advocates cross-referencing different data sources "to enable a better understanding of the
data in context" (p. 283). Moreover, "Subsequent re-readings of the data should allow the
researcher to identify themes" (Denscombe, p. 283).

I completed the interview transcription process on 10 March 2020, and sent each
research participant a copy of their interview transcript by email for them to review for
accuracy. Each research participant sent me a return email to confirm they had reviewed the
transcript of their interview and were comfortable it was accurate. I received two confirmation
emails on 11 March 2020, with the third arriving on 14 March 2020. With the research
participants above confirmation, my phase two analysis of the data in its entirety was able to
begin in earnest.

While the data in my fieldwork diary and the audio-recordings of the semi-structured
interviews remained available to me to revisit in their raw form, if necessary, their
transcription into Microsoft® Word documents meant the data for phase two analysis was
primarily word-based in nature. I commenced phase two data analysis by using the 'Find'
functionality in Microsoft® Word to search for words in the transcripts I anticipated may have
been indicative of the research participants' understanding and/or demonstration of love in
their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible.
Examples of the word search included, but was not limited to, 'hug', 'reassure', 'reassuring',
'cuddle', 'settle', 'trust', 'held', 'cry', 'safe', 'secure'.

Primarily however, my phase two analysis of the data required me to repeatedly read the transcriptions in their entirety to interpret the research participants' behaviours or words in the context they were demonstrated or spoken. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) acknowledge the labour-intensive nature of working with unstructured qualitative data, noting that "a considerable amount of effort, and time, will need to go into processing and analysing them" (p. 12). This was nonetheless a valuable exercise because of the increasingly detailed familiarity with the data I gained through the reading and re-reading process.

To endeavour to make phase two data analysis a manageable process, I first analysed the data from the perspective of the ways the research participants had *demonstrated* love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible. I then focused on the ways the research participants had *understood* love in their teaching practice in the same context. I describe this two-part approach to phase two data analysis in more detail in the following two sub-sections.

4.10.6.1 Data analysis - research participants' demonstrations of love in their teaching practice. I commenced my analysis of the data collected from the research participants in their everyday context, pertaining to the ways they demonstrated love in their teaching practice, with an in-depth review of the transcripts from my fieldwork diary, together with the transcripts from the *second* part of the semi-structured interviews.

Initially, I took an inductive approach to analysing these data by identifying the research participants' physical actions and reactions, and/or verbal and non-verbal interactions (behaviours) which may have been indicative of a demonstration of love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers. I used the text highlight functionality in Microsoft® Word to colour-code behaviours, using a different colour to designate a new category of behaviour as I identified it. Where similar behaviours were repeated, I highlighted that text using the same colour I had previously used to designate that category. This approach was consistent with Thomas (2006), who notes that "Inductive coding begins with

close readings of text and consideration of the multiple meanings that are inherent in the text" (p. 241).

According to Thomas (2006), "Among the commonly assumed rules that underlie qualitative coding, two are different from the rules typically used in quantitative coding" (p. 242). The first of these differences is that "one segment of text may be coded into more than one category" (Thomas, p. 242). The second of these differences is that "a considerable amount of the text (e.g., 50% or more) may not be assigned to any category, because much of the text may not be relevant to the evaluation objectives" (Thomas, p. 242). Accordingly, researchers "are free to search for concepts or categories that appear [to be] meaningful" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 378). Qualitative researchers "are not bound, thus, by predetermined categories of measurement or response" (Adler & Adler, p. 378).

Using the colour-coding method described above, I identified 15 behaviours from the transcripts that I deemed potentially indicative of the research participants' demonstration of love in their teaching practice. However, according to Thomas (2006), the optimal number of summary categories to emerge from an inductive coding process should be "between three and eight" (p. 242). Thomas cautions that "Inductive coding that finishes up with many major themes (e.g., more than eight) can be viewed as incomplete" (p. 242). In such circumstances, "some of the categories may need combining, or the evaluator must make hard decisions about which themes or categories are most important" (Thomas, p. 242).

Accordingly, I then reassessed the 15 behaviours initially identified, using a combination of inductive and deductive analysis. My deductive analysis was based on my insider knowledge as an experienced early childhood teacher, together with the insights I had garnered through my literature review and theoretical framework chapters. Through this reassessment process it became apparent to me that some of the behaviours reflected similar constructs.

My next step in the data analysis process was to amalgamate the similar behaviours/constructs "to create a small[er] number of summary categories" (Thomas, 2006, p. 242). This necessitated further in-depth analysis of the transcripts from my fieldwork diary

and the second part of the semi-structured interviews. From my inductive and deductive analysis of these data, I established the following six categories that I determined best reflected how the research participants demonstrated love in their teaching practice: (1) Trusting relationships; (2) Responding sensitively to cues; (3) Commitment and perseverance; (4) Attuned, responsive, relationships; (5) Touch; and (6) Supportive, restorative, relationships.

I argue these findings are consistent with the work of scholars such as Fredrickson (1998), whose broaden-and-build theory identifies the positive emotions that are reflective of a loving early childhood education environment; and with Nussbaum (2001), whose cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions emphasises the crucial role loving early childhood teachers can have in infants' fledgling emotional development and their ongoing flourishing as they progress through toddlerhood. My establishment of the above six categories also reflects research in neuroscience that reinforces the importance of love in the caregiver-infant relationship for healthy brain development in infancy (Esch & Stefano, 2005a), and from paediatrics that highlights the need for children to experience safe, stable, and nurturing relationships if they are to flourish (Garner & Yogman, 2021).

My initial conclusion was that the research participants did indeed demonstrate love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible. In Chapter 6, I present and discuss my findings in support of this claim. In the following sub-section, I describe how I analysed the data to examine the ways the research participants understand love in their teaching practice.

4.10.6.2 Data analysis - research participants' understandings of love in their teaching practice. In this sub-section, I describe how I analysed the data from the *first part* of the semi-structured interviews with the research participants, to examine the ways they understand love in their teaching practice. In contrast to the data that I had collected about how the research participants' demonstrated love in their teaching practice, which was participant-driven and derived from my fieldwork observations, the data collected from the

research participants about the ways they understood love in their teaching practice was initially researcher-led, in accordance with the nine predetermined interview questions.

To examine the research participants' understandings of love in their teaching practice, I initially undertook an in-depth inductive analysis of their responses to the nine predetermined interview questions. From this inductive analysis, I identified the commonalities and/or differences in the research participants' responses to each of these questions, which were designed to obtain information about their motivation(s) for becoming early childhood teachers and their teaching philosophies. I also identified the emotions the research participants associated with early childhood education in general, and working with infants and toddlers in particular, and the self-reported impact of these emotions on their teaching practice. I concluded my initial analysis of these transcripts by identifying how the research participants conceptualised love in their teaching practice, what they understood about how the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible flourished through their teaching practice, and how they fostered that flourishing.

As I have described in the previous sub-section, my deductive analysis of the data was based in part on my insider knowledge as an experienced early childhood teacher, together with the sensitising concepts I had garnered through my review of relevant literature. From my inductive and deductive analysis of the first part of the research participants' semi-structured interview transcripts, I identified three broadly congruent themes in the research participants' motivations for becoming early childhood teachers, and one overriding commonality in their teaching philosophies. This information provided valuable context for my analysis of the research participants' views about the emotions they associated with their teaching practice, and their conceptualisation of love and children's flourishing.

Based on my further inductive and deductive analysis of these data in their entirety, I established the following three categories that I determined best reflected how the research participants understood love in their teaching practice: (1) Responsive, reciprocal, relationships; (2) Safe, settled, stimulating, environments; and (3) Engaged, authentic,

communication. I argue these findings are consistent with Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, which positions love as an intellectual act, together with research into emotional positivity (Fredrickson, 1998), and the nature of effective caregiver praise (Gunderson et al., 2013; Mueller & Dweck,1998). In Chapter 5, I present and discuss my findings in support of this claim.

4.11 Conclusion

From the standpoint of the ontology and epistemology I have described in this chapter, I was predisposed to a research methodology involving interpersonal relationships. Accordingly, ethnography was an appropriate methodology for me to adopt in this study to generate and gather rich, holistic, qualitative data to add to the existing body of empirical research on love in early childhood education.

In my capacity as a eudaimonistic researcher, I argue that the quality of the trusting relationships I established with the research participants, through my considerate and respectful interactions with them, was reflected in the extent to which they welcomed me into their teaching environment and allowed me to collect empirical data through my observations of their teaching practice. This enabled me to gain detailed insights into the ways the research participants demonstrated love in their teaching practice.

As Coffey (1999) asserts, "fieldwork relationships are real in their consequences" (p. 40), and I argue that the positive quality of my fieldwork relationships with the research participants carried through to my semi-structured interviews with them, where they provided at times deeply personal responses to the interview questions. From my inductive and deductive analysis of the data gathered through my fieldwork observations and semi-structured interviews, I was able to gain detailed insights into the ways the research participants both understood and demonstrated love in their teaching practice.

From these insights, I established three categories about the ways the research participants understood love in their teaching practice, and six categories about the ways they demonstrated love in this context. In Chapters 5 and 6, I present these findings,

drawing on the empirical data collected from the research participants, together with the insights garnered through my literature review and theoretical framework chapters.

In Chapter 5, I respond to the first part of the research question: In what ways do early childhood teachers understand love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers? In Chapter 6, I respond to the second part of the question: In what ways do early childhood teachers demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers?

Chapter 5

Research participants' understanding of love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers – findings and discussion

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I have described this study's methodology, and explained why I used ethnography to gather empirical data from the research participants to address the research question. In this chapter, I respond to the first part of the research question, which asked: In what ways do early childhood teachers *understand* love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers? In Chapter 6, I respond to the second part of the question: In what ways do early childhood teachers *demonstrate* love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers?

It is important to clarify that the presentation and discussion of this study's findings across two chapters is purely a structural device, and by doing so I do not imply a binary division between 'mind' and 'body' or suggest that the research participants in this study brought anything other than their 'whole selves' to their work with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible. As I have noted in Chapter 4, I protect this study's three research participants' identities with pseudonyms. In this chapter, and hereafter in this thesis, I refer to the research participants as 'Anna', 'Heni', and 'Fern'.

The findings I discuss in this chapter are based on the data I gathered through the nine predetermined questions that constituted the *first* part of my semi-structured interviews with Anna, Heni, and Fern, and are supported by salient literature. I summarise these findings as follows: (1) Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's understanding of love in their teaching practice was influenced by their own moral and philosophical imperatives, based on their personal upbringings, histories, and experiences, and by their cultural and societal norms; (2) Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's understanding of love in their teaching practice was also founded on their appreciation of the importance of authentic, intentional, responsive, and

respectful relationships with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible; and (3) the inherence of love in Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's teaching practice was motivated by their intention to foster children's flourishing.

These findings are consistent with the arguments, based on my discussion of Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, made in Chapter 3 about a *loving* early childhood teacher's teaching practice: (1) that the love which early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate through their teaching practice is *civic love*, insofar as it is consistent with the actions of a person who has a concern about what is taking place in their community; (2) that civic love, together with an early childhood teacher's virtuous actions, through which an infant or toddler is loved for their own good, is intrinsic to a loving early childhood teacher's teaching practice and is a constituent part of their eudaimonia; and (3) that a eudaimonistic teaching approach aims not only towards infants' or toddlers' flourishing, but ultimately also towards the flourishing of the community and larger society of which those children are members. Examples of how Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's understanding of love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers can be related to Nussbaum's theory are provided throughout this chapter. To commence my discussion of the findings from the nine predetermined questions that constituted the first part of my semi-structured interviews, in the following section I examine Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's motivations for becoming early childhood teachers.

5.2 Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's motivations for becoming early childhood teachers

To provide context for my investigation and analysis of Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's understanding of love in their teaching practice, I first sought to learn about the journey they had each taken to becoming early childhood teachers. From the data Anna, Heni, and Fern provided in their respective semi-structured interviews, I have identified that while they each entered the profession through their own unique journey, their motivations for becoming an early childhood teacher were broadly congruent, and were underpinned by the following three themes: (1) the opportunity to perpetuate a positive early childhood experience; (2) the

opportunity to make a positive difference in children's lives; and (3) the opportunity to work with engaged, supportive, and nurturing teachers, and to pursue a fulfilling career. I address these themes, respectively, in the following sub-sections.

5.2.1 The opportunity to perpetuate a positive early childhood experience

Heni succinctly explained her motivation for becoming an early childhood teacher when she stated, "Actually, I always wanted to become an ECE teacher from when I was young, because I had such a good memory as a child that I had good teachers when I was young". Having made this statement, Heni was comfortable there was nothing further that she wanted to add about her motivation for becoming an early childhood teacher.

Anna recounted that her introduction to early childhood education was through her mother, who was herself an early childhood teacher. Anna explained that, while she herself was a pre-schooler, her mother had worked for Barnardo's New Zealand, and in this capacity had cared for Anna, together with other pre-school children, in their family home. "So, I used to help with the other children actually in our house, so I'm always used to having children around", stated Anna.

Anna further explained that once she had started attending primary school, her mother returned to centre-based early childhood teaching. During the primary school holidays, Anna would spend time at the early childhood centre where her mother worked. Anna stated, "So, I'd just naturally be helping with the children. And I think I learned a lot from observing. That's probably where my natural inclination and interest came from".

I argue that through their exposure to loving early childhood teachers in their respective childhoods, Heni and Anna were motivated to perpetuate their own positive experiences of early childhood education with the children for whom they are responsible in their own teaching practice. In doing so, I argue that through the civic love inherent in their respective teaching practices, Heni, and Anna, sought to create what Gopnik (2009) refers to as a "benign cycle" (p. 176), which I refer to hereafter as a 'virtuous cycle'.

Equally, I contend that Heni and Anna themselves flourished because of their respective early childhood experiences. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the notion of flourishing is a fundamental tenet of Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, which is foundational to this study. In the following sub-section, I present findings from my semi-structured interview with Fern, in which she described how her interaction with a particular child was a life-changing experience and a key contributory factor in her motivation for becoming an early childhood teacher.

5.2.2 The opportunity to make a positive difference in children's lives

Fern's journey to becoming an early childhood teacher differed from Anna's and Heni's, because her motivation for becoming an early childhood teacher came to her in adulthood. Fern became emotional when she reflected on her journey to becoming an early childhood teacher, saying, "Oh, I might cry, I can feel the tears coming". Fern explained she had commenced a Bachelor of Science degree with a view to a career in biology, but had discontinued this pathway when she realised that she was not passionate about the subject. As a result, Fern took a break from tertiary study, and after a brief period in a role providing after-school care for children, was offered a teacher aide position at a kindergarten to provide support to a child who had been physically abused by her mother. Fern described the child as follows:

> She had really high needs, she was born really early, went home healthy, came back to the hospital a little while later with sustained injuries. Mum was going through a really rough time post-birth, so she [the child] was living with a foster family, and I just, like, fell in love with her straight away.

In this statement, I interpret Fern to be articulating that for her, working with this child was a life-changing experience, and that the opportunity to make a positive difference in

children's lives was one of the key motivators for Fern in becoming an early childhood teacher. I argue that this was a manifestation of Fern's civic love.

I also argue that Fern's statement reflects the potentially significant role a loving teacher can have in children's lives, especially those children "who survive under the most difficult of home and life circumstances, usually involving abuse and neglect" (benShea & DiGiulio, 2005, p. 35). According to benShea and DiGiulio:

> A critical factor as to whether or not such children will survive psychologically, emotionally, and even physically is the presence or absence of at least one significant adult; someone – and it takes only one – who thinks the child is special and values the child for being special. (p. 35)

As benShea and DiGiulio (2005) further suggest, "Sometimes this adult is the child's parent, but often it is not. In many cases it is a teacher, a person seen by troubled children as the only adult in the world who understands and accepts them for themselves" (p. 35). Hoveid and Finne (2014) reflect this notion when they argue that "this is the kind of love that entails a selflessness, but at the same time it is the kind of love which is engendered by care at a deeply personal level" (p. 256). According to Hoveid and Finne, "As an educator, a person will invest herself in this kind of love because this is what creates the motivations, the reasons for why she keeps on being engaged as … a teacher" (p. 256). Moreover, in pedagogical relations, one motivation for teachers' engagement in their profession is love "for the children to give them possibilities to flourish through education" (Hoveid and Finne, p. 256).

In the following sub-section, I present findings from my semi-structured interviews with Fern and Anna. Fern and Anna both described how experienced early childhood teachers inspired and encouraged them to pursue a career in early childhood education. Fern also described how she was motivated to become an early childhood teacher through her scholastic nature.

5.2.3 The opportunity to work with engaged, supportive, and nurturing teachers, and to pursue a fulfilling career

As Fried (1995) asserts, "To be a passionate teacher is to be someone in love with a field of knowledge" (p. 1). In this vein, Fern continued to share her experience of working as a teacher aide in a kindergarten:

Just beginning in that kindergarten, and seeing how the teachers were with children, and seeing how – because I was really academic throughout school – and seeing how hard they worked, and how much research they were going into, really drew me into that side of it. And also, just being around children and seeing the difference that teachers can make in their lives was really empowering for me. I thought, okay, I want to do that – I'm going to give that a go. I enrolled in my Bachelor of Education the following semester.

Anna explained that her passion for teaching was further motivated by her exposure in her early teenage years to an early childhood education environment in which the teachers were themselves engaged in professional learning and development opportunities (PD), and where they had openly encouraged Anna's interest in the profession. As Elliot (2007) notes, within an early childhood centre, "There is a tremendous potential for co-workers to create a supportive and nurturing environment for one another" (p. 90). In this context Anna stated, "When I was 14, I got offered an after-school job there [at an early childhood centre] 4:00 to 5:30, and I also got offered to go on PDs. I was really interested in it [early childhood education]".

From Fern's and Anna's vignettes, I argue they both flourished through their engagement with supportive and nurturing teachers at the fledging stage of their respective early childhood teaching careers. Fried (1995) further asserts that a passionate teacher is "deeply stirred by issues and ideas that challenge our world, drawn to the dilemmas and potentials of all the young people that come into class each day–or captivated by all of

these" (p. 1). I argue that Fern reflected Fried's assertions when she stated, "I felt very lucky to have been thrust into a place of, 'what am I going to do with my life', and to have taken that leap, and just happened upon a job that led me into a career that really fulfils me".

I also argue that Fern's comments about finding it personally empowering to engage with children, and to observe the positive influence that teachers can have in the lives of the children for whom they are responsible, is reflective of Määttä and Uusiautti's (2011), proposal that "Pedagogical love is not just about unselfishness, but can also have a clearly selfish intention and desire to prove to oneself and others what can be achieved through teaching" (p. 35). According to Määttä and Uusiautti, "the ability to engage students through the teacher's own pedagogical engagement is a rewarding source of satisfaction for a teacher" (p. 35). In the following sub-section, I briefly summarise Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's collective motivations for becoming early childhood teachers.

5.2.4 Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's motivations for becoming early childhood teachers - summary

Based on the data Anna, Heni, and Fern provided in their respective semi-structured interviews, I suggest their motivations for becoming early childhood teachers stemmed in part from their interactions with engaged early childhood teachers who provided them with support and encouragement, which in turn inspired them to pursue their own careers in early childhood education. I also assert that Anna, Heni, and Fern were motivated to perpetuate a virtuous cycle through the civic love inherent in their teaching practice, by making a positive difference in the lives of the children for whom they are responsible. Having gained an appreciation of Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's motivations for becoming early childhood teachers, I then sought to explore their respective teaching philosophies. I present these findings in the following section.

5.3 Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's teaching philosophies

I have argued in Chapter 4 that an early childhood teacher's world view about love in their teaching practice will be influenced by their moral imperatives, based on their personal upbringing, history, and experiences, and by their cultural and societal norms. This reflects Aslanian (2015), who suggests that "Our conceptualizations of love are … in many ways shaped by our socio-historic situation and our individual life history" (p.159). In this section, I explore how Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's world views and conceptualisations of love are reflected in their teaching philosophies.

While I have identified that Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's teaching philosophies were not identical, I have nonetheless found that they were all broadly comparable insofar as they emphasised the importance of strong mutual relationships with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible. I argue that this finding is reflected in Anna's, Fern's, and Heni's responses in their respective semi-structured interviews:

Anna stated, "[My teaching philosophy is] authentic, respectful, and intentional. I think intentionally … is about letting yourself feel those emotions that the children are experiencing, like you're experiencing [them] with them, that's where the love and the care comes from"; Fern stated, "My teaching philosophy is [about] teaching them [infants and toddlers] about relationships through being in a relationship with them – real authentic relationships"; Heni stated, "I think our [centre] philosophy really links with my philosophy as well. I think the big part is the relationships that I have with children. I really treat them as equal human beings. It's based on the relationship and respect".

Heni's statement is consistent with Liston and Garrison (2004), who observe that "Seeing the students before us as whole human beings … is the kind of understanding that a loving perspective affords [to] teachers" (p. 2). Heni concluded:

You can feel it, the love that we have in here [in the centre], the relationships, the closeness that we have, they [the children] have really big trust in me, and I really trust them as well as an equal human being, and I respect their voices as well.

I argue that Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's expressions about the importance of strong mutual relationships in their teaching philosophies are consistent with the tenets of *Te Whāriki*, which "provides a framework of principles, strands, goals and learning outcomes that foregrounds the mana of the child and the importance of respectful, reciprocal and responsive relationships" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 7). Moreover, Heni reiterated that the predominant emotion she associated with her teaching practice was love, when she stated, "Love is a big emotion that I feel every day. I really genuinely love our children, and I can feel the love that they are giving to us".

Heni also acknowledged the importance of "the relationship[s] that I have with [the children's] parents as well". Heni stated, "I really think of them as an anchor to our children, so I really want to respect them and build that really true relationship [with the children's parents too]". I argue that Heni's appreciation of the importance of establishing a relationship with the parents and whānau of the infants and toddlers for whom she was responsible, evidenced her civic love, and was consistent with Elliot (2007), who asserts that "The caregiver is in a critical position and must be reliable, attuned, and responsive to children, parents, and her workplace" (p. 82). Furthermore, "The caregiver has the responsibility of establishing the relational ground. She is at the center of an enormous, complex web of connections" (Elliot, p. 94).

According to Elliot (2007), an early childhood teachers' teaching "practice calls for more than just a set of behaviours; it calls for a total engagement of heart, mind, and spirit" (p. 82). I contend that it is the total engagement of heart, mind, and spirit that Elliot refers to, which Anna and Fern encapsulate in the following vignettes, where they spoke about their teaching philosophies in their respective semi-structured interviews:

> I love setting up the room [with provocations] that gives me motivation. It also gives the children [motivation] and I think if it can inspire me on the day, then that's what I want children to feed off. I want them to start and get inspired, and I want them to bust down what I've made and create something of their own. (Anna)

Being able to show up as my authentic self in order to show them [the infants and toddlers] it's okay to be a human, and life is actually there to be experienced, and it's beautiful, and wonderful, and also hard, and that's okay, and we can support each other through that. (Fern)

According to Ayers (2010), "teaching is more than transmitting skills; it is a living act, and it involves preference and value, obligation and choice, trust and care, commitment and justification" (p. 32). I argue that Fern and Anna echoed Ayers' view, when they stated, "My teaching philosophy is not about teaching children a set of knowledge that I think they should have, but around giving them the skills through real life experiences to be a happy and functioning person in the world" (Fern); "I think actually the number one [priority] for me is that they [the infants and toddlers] can feel that there is that love there [in the early childhood centre] and that is the best start I think that anyone can give" (Anna).

As Ayers (2010) further asserts, "Good teaching requires most of all a thoughtful, caring teacher committed to the lives of students" (p. 31). "If a person is thoughtful, caring, and committed, mistakes will be made, but they will not be disastrous; [however,] if a person lacks commitment, compassion or thought, outstanding technique and style will never really compensate" (Ayers, p. 31). According to Ayers, "Teaching is primarily a matter of love" (p. 31).

Reflecting what I have referred to in Chapter 1, as 'the complex, composite, and amorphous nature of love', Heni's immediate reaction, when I asked her what she thought about love in the context of her teaching practice, was to state, "You can't really define love … it's just a feeling that you have … you have to see and feel it". I contend that Heni's statement is resonant of Berscheid (2006), who suggests that the meaning of the word love is established by the context in which it is used.

In the context of their infant and toddler teaching environment, both Heni and Fern referred to the importance of creating an environment where civic love is inherent in their teaching practice, not only through their relationships with the infants and toddlers for whom

they were responsible, but also through their relationships with the infants' and toddlers' parents and whānau. This is consistent with the expectation set out in *Te Whāriki*, that "Parents and whānau trust that their ECE service will provide an environment where respectful relationships, encouragement, warmth and acceptance are the norm" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 21). I argue that the above expectation in *Te Whāriki* is reflected in the following acknowledgements from Heni and Fern about their centre's infant and toddler teaching environment:

> I feel like I am really part of their life, [a] big part of their life. I mean they will have parents, grandparents, and me, in our centre family. So that deep relationship that I have with them, I think this is really love. (Heni)

> The way that it feels when people walk in here, and we hear that all the time, that it feels calm and it feels relaxed. When they've spent time here and have become part of our whānau, they really feel that love. (Fern)

Heni's and Fern's acknowledgements of the relationships they have developed with children, parents, and whānau, through their teaching practice are also consistent with the Family and community | Whānau tangata principle of *Te Whāriki*, which states "It is important that kaiako develop meaningful relationships with whānau and that they respect their aspirations for their children" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 20).

Having established Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's motivations for becoming early childhood teachers, and gained an understanding of their respective teaching philosophies, in the following section I expand on these data through a deeper exploration of the ways Anna, Heni, and Fern understood love in their teaching practice.

5.4 Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's understanding of love in their teaching practice

In Chapter 4, I determined that the following three categories best reflected how Anna, Heni, and Fern understood love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible: (1) Responsive, reciprocal, relationships; (2) Safe, settled, stimulating, environments; and (3) Engaged, authentic, communication. In this section, I present my findings in support of these three summary categories. However, just as I have explained in the introduction to this chapter that the presentation and discussion of this study's overall findings across two chapters is purely structural, it is also important to clarify that the presentation and discussion of the findings in support of the three summary categories noted above is not intended to imply that these are discrete constructs.

I argue that Anna, Heni, and Fern understood love in their teaching practice in accordance with their *own* moral imperatives, based on their personal upbringing, history, and experiences, and by their cultural and societal norms. Nonetheless, I have also found that as a cohesive infant and toddler teaching team, their *collective* understanding of love aligned with all four of the curriculum principles in *Te Whāriki*: Family and community | Whānau tangata, Empowerment | Whakamana, Relationships | Ngā hononga, Holistic development | Kotahitanga (Ministry of Education); and with all five of the curriculum strands: Belonging | Mana whenua, Communication | Mana reo, Contribution | Mana tangata, Exploration | Mana aotūroa, and Wellbeing | Mana atua (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Just as the Holistic development | Kotahitanga principle in *Te Whāriki* advises that the dimensions which constitute human development "need to be viewed holistically, as closely interwoven and interdependent" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 19), Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's understanding of love in their teaching practice also needs to be viewed holistically. Examples of Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's understanding of love in their teaching practice are interwoven in the following sub-sections.

5.4.1 Responsive, reciprocal, relationships

Ayers (2010) asserts that "People are called to teaching because they love children … watching them open up and grow and become more able, more competent, more powerful in their worlds" (p. 20). Anna reflected Ayers' assertion through the following aspirational statement that she made with respect to her teaching practice:

I think love is responsive. I think that [love] is really where you are going to connect and see the child and who they really are, and they are going to feel confident enough to come out of their shell to share that with you – and that is probably my most important thing with children, is supporting them to come out of their shell.

I argue that Anna's statement about the positive learning environment she has created through her teaching practice is analogous to the visionary intention of *Te Whāriki*, which the then Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, espoused as follows:

Unique in its bicultural framing, *Te Whāriki* expresses our vision that all children grow up in New Zealand as competent and confident learners, strong in their identity, language and culture. It emphasises our bicultural foundation, our multicultural present and the shared future we are creating. It encourages all children to learn in their own ways, supported by adults who know them well and have their best interests at heart. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 2, emphasis in original)

I interpret Anna's imagery of a child coming 'out of their shell' as having teleological implications insofar as it reflects the good or desirable outcome Anna aspired to achieve for the infants and toddlers for whom she was responsible, through her teaching practice, to foster those children's flourishing. This image is also consistent with my claim in Chapter 2 that love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers. I

contend that the agency of Anna's aspirational 'come out of their shell' statement encapsulated her view about the responsive nature of love.

Based on the data Anna provided through the first part of her semi-structured interview, I suggest Anna understood love as an emotional conduit through which she made authentic, respectful, and intentional connections with the infants and toddlers for whom she was responsible through her teaching practice. I argue that Anna's understanding of love in her teaching practice in this respect is consistent with Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, and with the Relationships | Ngā hononga principle in *Te Whāriki*, which emphasises that "Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relations with people, places and things" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 21).

As I have discussed in Chapter 3, an infant's propensity for self-initiated endeavour is a prerequisite for their healthy emotional development (Nussbaum, 2001). The optimal environment for self-initiated endeavour is one which is relatively stable, but which still provides the infant with space for exploration of their world (Nussbaum). In the context of my discussion with Anna about how she used her understanding of love to foster children's flourishing through her teaching practice, Anna explained, "I think giving space for children to try, actually opens them up to trying harder, or thinking [of] new ways, rather than [me] just saying, 'what would you like me to do' all the time".

Anna continued, "Or, you know if they're having a hard time … just offering those little tools and that thought pathway when they are in that moment. I think it's much more beneficial to them than [me] going and picking them up". Anna concluded, "It's about that give and take, I think. They do have a voice, and it's listened to, and when they ask for support, you give as much as they need". I argue that Anna's recognition of the need, at times, to scaffold children's learning is consistent with the tenets of pedagogical love (Page, 2011, 2018) that I have discussed in Chapter 2.

I also argue that through Anna's expression of her understanding of the need to, at times, give space or be detached from a situation to allow children the opportunity for self-initiated and self-directed experiences, while still being available to them to provide support

and encouragement as required, Anna has provided an example of her cognitive evaluation or appraisal of a teaching situation, which is consistent with Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions. According to Liston (2004), "This spectatorial outlook is key in Nussbaum's approach. It allows a measure of detachment and distance from an event's perceived onslaughts" (p. 114).

The notion of empathy is also an important consideration in Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions. According to Nussbaum empathy "is simply an imaginative reconstruction of another person's experience, whether that experience is happy or sad, pleasant or painful or neutral, and whether the imaginer thinks the other person's situation is good, bad, or indifferent" (p. 302). I argue it is Anna's combination of both detachment and empathy that enables her to make cognitive evaluations or appraisals about whether children may be struggling with a situation, and when it is appropriate for her to offer support to foster children's flourishing. This is consistent with the Empowerment | Whakamana principle in *Te Whāriki*, which identifies that "In an empowering environment, children have agency to create and act on their own ideas, develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them and, increasingly, to make decisions and judgments on matters that relate to them" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 18).

Anna's understanding of how she fosters children's flourishing through her teaching practice is also consistent with the prescription in the Wellbeing | Mana atua strand of *Te Whāriki*, as it relates to teachers' interactions with infants and toddlers, respectively, when it states that "Kaiako empower infants to discover their own limits by allowing them the time and space to learn for themselves and not intervening unnecessarily" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 28); and that "There are opportunities for toddlers to be independent in a supportive and encouraging environment. Toddlers' communication and increasing independence is responded to and supported" (Ministry of Education, p. 28).

Moreover, when Anna acknowledged that she understood there were times when the children for whom she was responsible may indicate their need for her support, and that those times it was appropriate for her to provide sufficient intervention to enable a child to

continue with whatever endeavour they were engaged in but without disempowering them, I contend Anna demonstrated what Dalli et al. (2011) refer to as "a 'serve-and-return' dynamic that allows reciprocity in interaction" (p. 61). As Dalli et al. note, "pedagogy with under-two-year-olds is realised in the establishment of attuned interaction between children and their caregivers who are present, supportive and responsive to the interactional cues of the infant and toddler" (p. 3).

I argue that emotional positivity is also an important consideration in the development of an early childhood teacher's responsive, reciprocal, relationships with infants and toddlers. I have discussed emotional positivity in the context of Fredrickson's (1998) broaden-and-build theory in Chapter 2. According to Fredrickson, "love experiences are made up of many positive emotions, including interest, joy and contentment" (p. 8).

I contend that the essence of the loving infant and toddler teaching environment that Anna, Heni, and Fern have collectively created was effectively encapsulated by Fern, when she stated, "I feel very fortunate to be able to say that I associate it [my teaching practice] with joy, and love, and affection; happiness". I also contend that Fern's self-perception of her emotions is consistent with Elliot's (2007) assertion that an early childhood teacher "must observe and understand her own emotions as well as try to understand and respond to the emotions of babies, parents, and fellow staff" (p. 94). This notion is also reflected in the Family and community | Whānau tangata principle of *Te Whāriki*, which states that "The wellbeing of each child is interdependent with the wellbeing of their kaiako, parents and whānau" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 20).

In my view, Fern's self-assessment of her teaching practice is also reflective of Goldstein (1998), who asserts that "A passionate teacher teaches with joy, from the heart" (p. 259). In Goldstein's view, "We have nothing to lose by teaching with love. And we - - and the children we teach - - have everything to gain" (p. 264).

5.4.2 Safe, settled, stimulating, environments

Heni's understanding of the importance of settling an infant or toddler into an early childhood education environment before they can flourish was established when she asserted that "They have to settle well; they have to feel a sense of belonging. They have to feel that they are safe in here [in the centre], so that they can begin to explore and be more inquisitive". Heni's understanding in this regard is consistent with *He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting social and emotional competence in early learning*, which identifies that when children are in the care of adults who love and accept them, "They can practise their developing social skills, take risks, and test boundaries, knowing that the responses from adults will be consistently calm and caring" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 23). Heni continued,

> So, 'settling' is something that is really a big part for the infants and toddlers; and next is, I think, following their dispositions and interests. So, setting up the environment according to their interest or disposition is a big part of our [Heni's, Fern's, and Anna's collective] philosophy as well.

Heni described a collaborative approach in the early childhood centre's infant and toddler teaching environment in which "we [Heni, Anna, and Fern] try to do a monthly meeting [where] we share what we think about their [the infant's and toddler's] interests, disposition[s], or virtues that they have, and we try to change our provocations according to that". I argue that having constructive, supportive, and proactive dialogue of this nature within a teaching team is a key contributory factor as to whether the infants and toddlers in an early childhood centre environment will flourish. However, in my experience, such an environment can only eventuate if the teachers, both individually and collectively, are committed to achieving that end, and this takes time, dedication, effort, and skill.

Heni's understanding of how she fosters children's flourishing through her teaching practice is consistent with the Belonging | Mana whenua strand of *Te Whāriki*, which

prescribes that "ECE settings are safe and secure places where each child is treated with respect and diversity is valued" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 31). In this context, "All children need to know that they are accepted for who they are and that they can make a difference. Feeling that they belong contributes to their wellbeing and gives them the confidence to try new experiences" (Ministry of Education, p. 31).

Heni's understanding of how she fosters children's flourishing through her teaching practice is also consistent with the Exploration | Mana aotūroa strand of *Te Whāriki*, which "is about supporting infants, toddlers and young children to explore, learn from, respect and make sense of the world. Their exploration involves all aspects of the environment: natural, social, physical, spiritual and human-made" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 46).

With a view to providing a safe and settled teaching environment for infants' and toddlers', the early childhood centre also employed a key teacher strategy, whereby Anna, Heni, and Fern were each allocated the main responsibility for attending to the wellbeing of a particular infant or toddler. In the event the key teacher was not available, another member of the infant and toddler teaching team would step in to fulfil the key teacher role. Fern expressed to me that in her opinion, "the key teacher role is really important" because "it provides a sense of security for the child while they're settling". Moreover, the familiarity that a key teacher provides for the infant(s) and toddler(s) for whom they have taken the main responsibility in the centre, and the depth of the relationship that they develop with those children as a result, means "less uncertainty or anxiety for the child" (Fern).

I argue that Heni's and Fern's understanding of the importance of an environment where infants are settled and feel safe and secure, which Heni understood also needed to be set up to support and encourage their interests or dispositions, aligns with Gerhardt's (2004) assertion that "the success of their [infants'] growth and genetic development depends on the amount of good experiences the individual has. Lots of positive experiences early on produce brains with more neuronal connections – more richly networked brains" (pp. 42-43).

5.4.3 Engaged, authentic, communication

Fern's understanding of how she fosters children's flourishing through her teaching

practice centred on her "authenticity with children"; "engaging in those moments and being

present"; "And communicating with children … (for example) 'I really liked the way you

showed such and such [another child] that book', things like that".

I contend that Fern's approach to fostering infant's flourishing is reflective of the

Contribution | Mana tangata, and Communication | Mana reo, strands of *Te Whāriki*,

respectively, where: "Kaiako talk with infants about what they, and other children, are doing

and encourage the infant's interest in, and interaction with, other children" (p. 38); and,

"Kaiako read books, tell stories and talk with infants. Many opportunities are provided to

have fun with sounds and language. Language is used to soothe and comfort" (Ministry of

Education, 2017, p. 43).

Fern's commitment to being authentically engaged with the children for whom she

was responsible is also consistent with *Te Whāriki*, which identifies the important role kaiako

have "in encouraging and supporting all children to participate in and contribute to a wide

range of enriching experiences" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 18). According to *Te*

Whāriki, participation in these experiences "expand[s] the children's competence and

confidence" (Ministry of Education, p. 18).

Moreover, the encouraging, and supportive communication Fern employed in using

positive language to reinforce constructive interactions between children is conducive to an

environment that fosters children's flourishing. Gunderson et al. (2013) describe language of

this nature as "process praise" (p. 1526).

Process praise is language which praises a child for their effort, "e.g., "you worked

hard"" (Gunderson et al., 2013, p. 1526), whereas phrases such as "you're so smart"

(Gunderson et al., p. 1531) characterise person praise. According to Gunderson et al.,

process praise is found to have a greater effect on children's motivation to engage in

challenging tasks, and their ability to generate strategies for improvement, than does "person

praise" (p. 1526).

From their studies comparing children whose good performance on a task was attributed to their intelligence ('you're so smart'), versus their effort ('you worked hard'), Mueller and Dweck (1998) found that intelligence-attributed performance may result in children who "read low intelligence from poor performance and thus make ability attributions not only for their successes but also for their failures" (p. 34). I interpret Mueller and Dweck's finding in this regard to mean that children who receive a preponderance of person praise may engage in self-talk such as, 'When I can do it, that is because I am smart; but when I cannot do it, that is because I am dumb'.

In contrast, "effort-related praise may lead children to focus on the process of their work and the possibilities for learning and improvement that hard work may offer" (Mueller & Dweck, 1998, p. 34). According to Mueller and Dweck, "Because of this emphasis on their efforts, children may feel able to focus on the development of their skills through the mastery of new material" (p. 34). I interpret Mueller and Dweck's claim in this regard to mean that children who receive a preponderance of process praise may engage in self-talk such as, 'I can do it because I try hard; and if I cannot do it, that is okay, I just need to try a bit harder'.

The process praise that Fern espouses in her teaching practice is also consistent with the tenets of *Te Whāriki*, which prescribes that "Kaiako use proactive strategies that encourage children's social participation" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 40). This is also consistent with *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, which advocates for children to engage in positive self-talk as they "work towards social and learning goals" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 40).

In the preceding sub-sections, I have discussed the key findings from the first part of my semi-structured interviews with Anna, Heni, and Fern. I conclude this chapter with an overview of how Anna, Heni, and Fern understood love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible.

5.5 Conclusion

The first part of my research question asks: In what ways do early childhood teachers *understand* love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers? To address this part of the research question, in this chapter I have presented claims based on the data that Anna, Heni, and Fern have provided through the first part of their semi-structured interviews.

In summary, I claim that Anna, Heni, and Fern collectively understood the notion of civic love, which I argue was inherent in their teaching practice, in the following ways: (1) their appreciation of the need for authentic, intentional, responsive, and respectful relationships with children, and with those children's parents and whānau; (2) through their acknowledgement of the need to provide children with a safe, stimulating, and nurturing learning environment; and (3) through their motivation to make a positive difference in the lives of children by fostering children's flourishing within the learning environment.

From my findings and discussion in this chapter about the ways that Anna, Heni, and Fern understood love in their teaching practice, I argue it is accurate to define each of them as a loving early childhood teacher. I test this claim in Chapter 6 through my discussion of how Anna, Heni, and Fern *demonstrated* love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible.

Chapter 6

Research participants' demonstration of love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers – findings and discussion

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, I outlined Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions as this study's theoretical framework. I discussed how Nussbaum's theory posits that emotions "always involve appraisal or evaluation" (p. 23), both from the perspective of how the agent thinks about the object, and from the perspective of how important or salient the object is to the agent in the agent's "own scheme of goals or projects" (p. 49). According to Nussbaum, the eudaimonistic nature of the emotions suggests they are related to a concern for the object's flourishing. Importantly for Nussbaum, however, it is only the agent's virtuous actions, together with the agent's friendship or personal or civic love for the object through which the object is loved for their own good, which can be considered as constituent elements of the agent's eudaimonia.

Extrapolating the tenets from Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions into early childhood teachers' teaching practice, I argue that a loving early childhood teacher understands that a goal of their teaching practice is to foster children's flourishing. Based on this goal, a loving early childhood teacher makes an ongoing series of cognitive evaluations about the children for whom they are responsible. Based on their cognitive evaluations, a loving early childhood teacher makes decisions about appropriate actions to take in their teaching practice. Based on their cognitive decision-making, a loving early childhood teacher also demonstrates civic love though their teaching practice in a manner consistent with the flourishing of those children. Note, I appreciate this extrapolation reflects an ideal, and it may not hold true in the teaching practice of all early childhood teachers. However, in the context of this study, I argue that Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's

teaching practice is consistent with my suggested extrapolation of Nussbaum's theory to early childhood education.

The claims in this chapter are based on the data that I obtained from Anna, Heni, and Fern, through my fieldwork observations of their teaching practice in their centre's infant and toddler teaching environment, together with the questions which constituted the *second* part of my semi-structured interviews with them. The second part of my semi-structured interviews with Anna, Heni, and Fern consisted of follow up questions to gain a greater understanding about specific observations that I had made of their teaching practice. This was my opportunity to have in-depth conversations with Anna, Heni, and Fern about specific observations; conversations that I had deemed not appropriate during fieldwork due to the potential disruption to their teaching practice.

I summarise my claims in this chapter as follows: (1) The love Anna, Heni, and Fern demonstrated through their teaching practice was manifested through their interactions with the children including, but not limited to, holding, hugging, kissing, carrying, gazing, talking, humming, smiling, singing, and utterances. I also found that the opportunities for Anna, Heni, and Fern to engage in interactions of this nature were presented to them primarily through routine centre activities including, but not limited to, settling, feeding, nappy changing, arrivals and departures from the centre, and the transitions between these routines; (2) Anna, Heni, and Fern demonstrated love in their teaching practice through their attuned, respectful, trusting, supportive, restorative, and responsive relationships with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible, together with their commitment and their perseverance; and (3) The love Anna, Heni, and Fern demonstrated through their teaching practice aimed to foster the flourishing of the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible.

In this chapter, I test these claims to address the second part of my research question, which asked: In what ways do early childhood teachers *demonstrate* love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers? To commence my discussion of these findings, in the following section I explore how Anna, Heni, and Fern demonstrated love through their

teaching practice during routine centre activities, and during the process of transitioning children between those routines.

6.2 Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's demonstration of love in their teaching practice during routine centre activities, and transitions between routines

In the daily life of an early childhood centre, routines, and the transitions between those routines, serve to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the centre. They also present the opportunity for complex teacher-child interactions and were the primary source of my fieldwork observations of Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's teaching practice.

According to Recchia et al. (2018), "It is in the actual practice of caring and the reciprocal exchanges that take place within daily caregiving routines, that we find opportunities for deep connections with babies" (p. 154). Moreover, "In Infant and Toddler early childhood services, it is estimated that up to 80% of the day can be dedicated to routine and transition times" (Fewster, 2010, p. 42). Nuttall et al. (2018) also stress routines such as sleeping, for example, "are the backbone of childcare practice" (p. 87).

I discuss my findings about the ways Anna, Heni, and Fern demonstrated love in their teaching practice during routine centre activities, and transitions between routines, in the following sub-sections, in accordance with the categories I identified in Chapter 4: Trusting relationships; Responding sensitively to cues; Commitment and perseverance; Attuned, responsive, relationships; Touch; and Supportive, restorative, relationships. In the next sub-section, I commence this discussion with a presentation of my fieldwork observations of Anna as she demonstrated love in her teaching practice through her development of a trusting relationship with an infant in the centre's infant and toddler teaching environment.

6.2.1 Trusting relationships

The following series of observations followed Anna's teaching practice as she attempted to settle Sarah, aged 13 months, to sleep at the early childhood centre. Sarah had

previously fallen asleep at the centre but this would be the first time doing so in the absence of her mother.

Bussey and Richardson (2020) emphasise the importance of early childhood teachers establishing trusting relationships with infants and toddlers to ensure that "sleep and rest routines are a time of relaxation rather than tension" (p. 16). As Manning-Morton and Thorp (2015) note, "Falling asleep in another's presence requires trust" (p. 48). Moreover, Montagu (1971) identifies that it is *how* an infant is held by a caregiver that is a key determinant in the development of a trusting relationship. According to Montagu, "It is the messages the infant picks up … from the manner in which it is held, rather than mere pressure on the skin, that tells the infant what the holder "feels" about it" (p. 91). Consequently, I argue that an infant or toddler can only establish a completely trusting relationship with an early childhood teacher if they perceive that the early childhood teacher who is holding them is acting in a manner consistent with their flourishing.

Anna was Sarah's allocated key teacher in the centre's infant and toddler teaching environment, and was actively involved in Sarah's induction to the centre. On a previous visit to the centre, Sarah had been settled to sleep by her mother, with Anna observing.

The following observations of Anna's teaching practice commenced with Sarah's mother leaving the infant and toddler room for approximately thirty minutes to allow Anna the opportunity to try to settle Sarah to sleep without Sarah's mother being present. The 'sleep sack' referred to in this observation was a sleeping bag which fitted over Sarah's shoulders while still allowing Sarah's arms to be free (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1

Sleep sack

As the process of Anna attempting to settle Sarah to sleep commenced, Sarah was crying. Holding Sarah to her hip, Anna went into the nappy change room to get Sarah's comfort object and sleep sack from Sarah's day bag of belongings. During this process, Anna was calmly talking to Sarah with step-by-step verbal cues about the actions that Anna was taking, e.g., "Let's go and get your cuddly".

Commentary of this nature, where a teacher provides verbal cues to a child regarding the actions the teacher is taking, creates a predictable environment for the child as a transition is occurring and as the subsequent routine unfolds. Having prepared a bottle of warm milk for Sarah to drink, Anna sat down holding Sarah in her arms, then rocked Sarah slowly and gently from side to side. Anna continued this rocking motion, firstly while Sarah began to drink from her bottle, and after Sarah had fallen asleep while still being held in Anna's arms.

The infant and toddler teaching room door then slammed shut, waking Sarah. However, Sarah remained calm, and gazed up at Anna as Anna continued to rock her, smiling at Sarah at the same time. Sarah reached up and touched Anna on her nose. Anna acknowledged Sarah's touch, saying, "That's my nose".

Anna was unable to settle Sarah back to sleep by the time that Sarah's mother returned to the infant and toddler room. Nonetheless, I argue that this was an important interaction towards establishing a trusting relationship between Anna and Sarah, which would be integral to Sarah's successful transition into the centre's infant and toddler teaching environment.

I then observed Anna talking with Sarah's mother about what had happened while she had been away. As *Te Whāriki* notes, "Many children first experience ECE settings as infants; this is a significant transition for them, their parents and whānau" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 13), so "It is essential that kaiako work in close partnership with parents and whānau to support the transition of infants into the ECE setting" (p. 14). This reflects Elliot (2007), who stresses the importance of "a [teacher's] commitment to developing in-depth relationships with a baby and that baby's family" (p. 38).

In her discussion with Sarah's mother, Anna offered to try to settle Sarah to sleep again with her mother present. During this conversation, Anna explained to Sarah's mother, "I wasn't sure where her [Sarah's] emotions are at". Sarah's mother and Anna then discussed Sarah's different cry sounds, which Anna acknowledged she "hadn't figured out" yet. As Elliot (2007) asserts, "Caregivers must respond sensitively to each baby, getting to know that particular baby's signals and cues" (p. 31). In the following sub-section, I present findings from my semi-structured interview with Anna, which explored in greater depth how, in her teaching practice, she responded sensitively to infants' and toddlers' cues.

6.2.2 Responding sensitively to cues

In my semi-structured interview with Anna, at the conclusion of my fieldwork observations of Anna's teaching practice, I asked Anna a follow up question to gather more data about Anna's comments in her conversation with Sarah's mother about not being able to differentiate between Sarah's cry sounds. Anna explained that, in her experience, children she had previously worked with signalled their feelings of hunger or tiredness with different cry sounds. However, as Sarah was still new to the centre, Anna explained she had not yet had the opportunity to learn Sarah's different cues:

> I think she [Sarah] was quite overtired actually, and she was sick that week as well, so I wasn't sure if it [Sarah's crying] was 'I'm scared Mum's gone', or 'this is a new room and I'm really, really tired', or 'I'm scared, and I don't feel comfortable with you'.

Anna's recognition that Sarah may have been feeling frightened in the absence of her mother reflects *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, which explains that, as infants develop, they "become aware that their favourite people still exist when they are out of sight. Naturally this can create anxiety; they can become upset when whānau members leave and can reject people beyond the close circle of the whānau" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 51). Anna

demonstrated her appreciation of scenarios of this nature when she asserted that "we have to be really careful with their [infant's] emotions because actually it can be traumatic for them". Anna also explained that, once she had become more familiar with an infant, she was better able to gauge their emotions through their cries:

> It's like a voice, if they could talk, they would talk in different tones. Same with the cry, it has a different tone. So, 'I'm hungry' might be more broken, maybe it just happens every five minutes in their play, and you are thinking 'something's nagging at you, and I think it's your tummy'. You know you can kind of gauge what it is, but that comes from noticing their routines, and habits, and their non-verbal cues are quite hard to pick up on. You really need to know the child.

As Elliot (2007) acknowledges, it takes time for a teacher to build a meaningful relationship with a baby, and vice versa. According to Elliot, "Knowing how closely to hold someone, recognizing a tone of voice, anticipating what someone's next move might be is a process that evolves over time for both baby and caregiver" (p. 73). Elliot asserts that "This type of knowledge of another person is expected or hoped for in personal relationships, but successful caring for infants and toddlers *demands* this type of knowledge from paid workers" (p. 73, emphasis in original). In this context, Elliot concludes that "Caregivers are asked to enter an intimate space, to actively seek a warm, close relationship with the babies for whom they care" (p. 73).

In my semi-structured interview with Anna, Anna compared the way she had responded to Sarah when she attempted to settle Sarah to sleep for the first time without Sarah's mother being present, with an experience she had not enjoyed at a previous centre where she had worked:

> In my other centre, we had, like, a whole bunch of children. I think it was a rainy day, and everyone was tidying up and there was a two-year-old in the room of

up to fives [five-year-old children] and there were probably, like, forty children in our room and they were just screaming like that the whole time. I actually was told by a teacher to go and get everyone to tidy up, which I had started doing, just going softly through the room, but actually I dropped everything and took him [the two-year-old] outside in the rain and found a quiet space because, actually, you know you have to have trust, you have to have the safety. That always comes first. For Sarah, I wasn't sure if it was a safety thing, and I had to make sure that went first.

In the above vignette, I argue that Anna demonstrated "the distinction between evaluative judgements that persist through situations of numerous kinds, and judgements that arise in the context of some particular situation" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 69). I also argue that Anna's description of her actions at the previous centre, were an example of Anna not being prepared to accept an environment where her background and situational emotion-judgements (Nussbaum) were in conflict.

Anna expressed her unequivocal view that "It's not healthy for children to go home having been upset all day". For Anna, such an environment was unhealthy for both the children *and* their teachers because, in her view, "It kind of just eats away at you". Anna continued, "You know day after day like I just keep failing to meet these children's needs. So, those were my reasons why I left [the previous centre]. I needed to move on and find somewhere where I really did fit".

When Anna defied the instruction to tidy a room, instead of attending to an upset child, I suggest this was a demonstration of Anna's background and situational emotion-judgements in simultaneous action. Anna's background emotion-judgement in this example was consistent with her teaching philosophy, described in Chapter 5, where Anna's empathy with children's emotions was a constituent part of the love in her teaching practice. Anna was also demonstrating her situational emotion-judgement of not being prepared to tolerate a situation she felt was detrimental to the well-being of a two-year-old child.

Nussbaum (2001) highlights the restorative role of a caregiver in supporting a child to return to a state of emotional and physical equilibrium. For Anna, the child's well-being in the above vignette, and the restoration of that well-being, overrode the directive she had been given to tidy a room. I argue that in taking this course of action, and by subsequently ending her employment at a centre where the environment conflicted with her teaching philosophy, Anna demonstrated adherence to her personal values, and to a boundary she would not allow to be crossed in her teaching practice, either for herself, or for the children for whom she was responsible. I also argue that Anna's decision to end her employment was a powerful manifestation of Anna's understanding and demonstration of the love in her teaching practice acting in concert.

In the following sub-section, I present my continuing fieldwork observations of Anna's teaching practice, as she demonstrated her commitment and perseverance to the transition process of settling Sarah to sleep.

6.2.3 Commitment and perseverance

Returning to the narrative of Anna's attempts to settle Sarah to sleep, the observations detailed below occurred the following Monday, which was the morning of Sarah's official start date at the centre. This was Anna's first opportunity to try to settle Sarah to sleep without the possibility of any parental involvement. After Anna had changed Sarah's nappy, and prepared Sarah's bottle of milk, Anna took Sarah into one of the sleep rooms where she had previously prepared Sarah's cot. I did not accompany Anna and Sarah into the sleep room on this occasion because I did not want to be a distraction in a potentially significant interaction between Anna and Sarah as they continued to build a trusting relationship with each other. However, from my position in the infant and toddler teaching room I was able to hear some of Anna's verbal interactions with Sarah, and make periodic observations of Anna and Sarah through a window in the sleep room door. I observed Anna sitting on a chair in the sleep room, holding Sarah in her arms, with Sarah drinking from her bottle. Anna was gazing down at Sarah, singing the children's song, 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little

Star' to her. Below, I include the timeline I recorded in my fieldwork diary during my observations, which I argue serves to highlight Anna's commitment and perseverance to the process of settling Sarah to sleep in her cot:

- 9:45 a.m. Sarah is asleep in Anna's arms. Anna tries to transfer Sarah into her cot. Moments later, Sarah awakes and I hear her crying. Anna begins singing again and Sarah's crying stops.

- 9:50 a.m. Sarah starts to cry again; it is a louder cry than the previous time. This time the crying lasts for several minutes. Anna continues singing until Sarah stops crying and falls asleep again in her arms (at 9:53 a.m.).

- *During the period from 9:53 a.m. to 10:05 a.m., I was unable to observe specifically what interactions were taking place between Anna and Sarah.*

- 10:05 a.m. Another cry comes from the sleep room.

- 10:09 a.m. The sleep room door opens. Anna comes out. She smiles, and says, "Sarah's asleep, yay". Anna raises her hands above her head in an expression of both relief and achievement. Smiling, Anna says, "She wanted to sleep in my arms, Mum will be so pleased she is asleep". Fern asks Anna, "Would you like me to text Mum so that you can go and have a break; drink some coffee or something". Anna breathes out, "Yes please". Anna is still smiling as she puts a piece of paper away. As Anna leaves the infant and toddler room, she turns to the rest of us, still smiling, and says, "See you soon".

As Elliot (2007) notes, "Working with babies and toddlers is exhausting, exhilarating, and complex. A busy job, it requires both physical and mental stamina. A variety of rituals and routines structure the day, though surprises are frequent and guaranteed to disrupt any routine" (p. 72). From my observations of Anna's teaching practice in her interactions with

Sarah, it was apparent that for those twenty-four minutes, Anna was solely invested in evaluating Sarah's physical and emotional well-being as she attempted to settle Sarah to sleep. I argue that, in this interaction with Sarah, Anna was demonstrating the emotional dexterity required of early childhood teachers on a daily basis (Andrew, 2013), together with the persistent perseverance and interest that Määttä and Uusiautti (2011) describe as being fundamental to teaching with love in order for children to flourish.

When Anna returned to the infant and toddler teaching room, I took advantage of a quiet moment to ask Anna about what had happened in the 9:53 a.m. to 10:05 a.m. period when I was unable to observe what was happening in the sleep room. I asked Anna how she had managed to settle Sarah to sleep in her cot, and Anna explained, "I have my own little ways depending on the child. With Sarah, she just wanted to be held, so I held her close. We are building a relationship of trust. She needs to know I am here for her". Anna also added, "I could see it in her [Sarah's] face that she was tired". As Nussbaum (2001) notes, "Through an identification with the infant, the caretaker or caretakers know what it [the infant] needs, and supply those things: not only food, but also sensitive interaction and comfort" (p. 186).

I contend that Anna's actions in settling Sarah to sleep in her cot for the first time at the centre, without Sarah's mother being present, reflect Elliot's (2007) acknowledgement of the commitment of "time and energy" (p. 73) required by teachers who work with babies. Elliot asserts that "A caregiver uses sensitive observational skills to learn a baby's signals of hunger or fatigue. Recognizing the cue indicating that a baby wants her bottle or her blanket takes careful attention to, knowledge of, and experience with that specific baby" (p. 73).

Elliot (2007) also notes that "In healthy situations outside the home environment, baby and caregiver interact with an intimate trust and knowledge of the other where the baby can relax knowing that the caregiver will respond sensitively to her messages" (p. 73). In this context, I argue that through Anna's commitment of time and energy to the process of settling Sarah to sleep, she was demonstrating the love intrinsic to her teaching practice to foster Sarah's flourishing.

In the following sub-section, I present my fieldwork observations of Heni's teaching practice as she demonstrated her attuned and responsive relationships with an infant and a toddler, together with data from a brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversation I had with Heni. This is followed by findings from my semi-structured interview with Fern, which explored how she demonstrated her attuned and responsive relationships with infants and toddlers. The sub-section concludes with my fieldwork observations of Fern's teaching practice with a toddler during an arrival to the centre, then with an infant during a departure from the centre.

6.2.4 Attuned, responsive, relationships

The following observations focus on Heni, the key teacher in the infant and toddler teaching environment for both Mia, aged 14 months, and Daisy, aged 22 months. Bussey and Richardson (2020) identify the importance of "Providing each child with a primary [key] educator or caregiver, with support from a secondary educator" (p. 10). In Bussey and Richardson's view, arrangements of this nature enable the same teachers to "engage in routine experiences with a small group of children as much as possible" (p .10). As a result, "children learn what to expect from educators, and vice versa" (Bussey & Richardson, p.10).

This observation commenced with Heni working in the centre's shared outside area with Mia. Heni asked Mia, "Are you feeling tired?" Heni then explained to Mia, "Let's go and check what time you woke up". Each child's sleep event in the infant and toddler room was recorded on a 'sleep chart' by the teachers, together with information provided by the parent(s)/whānau about the time the child had woken that morning. Heni carried Mia into the infant and toddler teaching room to find this information, and confirmed to Mia, "You woke at 7:30. Let's go and change your nappy". Heni then carried Mia into the nappy change room. Heni continued talking to Mia while she changed Mia's nappy, concluding, "There we go, thank you very much".

Heni then carried Mia from the nappy change room into the infant and toddler teaching room, which was on the way to one of the sleep rooms. In the infant and toddler

teaching room, Fern sought Heni's support because Daisy was resisting Fern's attempts to put Daisy's sunhat on her. Daisy began to cry, and Heni, while still holding Mia against her hip with one arm, squatted down beside Daisy. I noted that Heni ensured she was at approximately eye level with Daisy, and that she was speaking to Daisy in a kind, unhurried, and reassuring tone of voice as she explained to Daisy why it was important for her to wear her sunhat: "You have to wear your sunhat Daisy, because it's hot". With her free hand, Heni then took Daisy's sunhat and put it onto Daisy's head. Daisy stopped crying and went back outside with Fern. Heni then took Mia into the sleep room.

After Heni had settled Mia to sleep, I took advantage of a quiet moment in the infant and toddler teaching room to engage Heni in a brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversation about the sunhat interaction with Daisy. Heni explained that during the summer months it was a centre requirement for children to wear a sunhat outside, otherwise they would be required to stay inside. Heni also commented that "Daisy is going through a stage, it's a bit like that". I subsequently followed up on this interaction in more detail in my semi-structured interview with Heni to understand more about this comment. Heni explained that, at the time, both Daisy and Mia were going through what Heni referred to as "that phase that everything has to be me" (i.e., they only wanted to be attended to by Heni). Heni then provided the following illustrations of her interactions with Daisy, and Mia, respectively:

> So, Daisy, if someone else puts her hat on she'll just take it off, and if I just put
> it on, she'll be fine with that. Probably that relationship that we have [is] that she
> wants me to do everything, and she is a little protesting with other teachers as
> well, that 'I want Heni'. They go through phases like that, and once they pass
> that phase, they will be okay.

Regarding Mia, Heni explained that, "If you are really attuned to that child, just by the look of her [Mia], I can feel that she is tired". As Dalli et al. (2011) assert, "high quality early childhood settings for under-two-year-olds should be places where children encounter adults

who are skilled in establishing and maintaining attuned interactions" (p. 149). In Dalli et al.'s view, "With under-two-year-olds, such attunement is achieved in relationships that are facilitated through a sophisticated reading of children's body cues, such as movement, gestures, vocalisations and subtle changes in any of these" (p. 149). Consistent with Heni's emphasis on the importance of the trusting relationships that are fundamental to her teaching philosophy (see Chapter 5), I argue that through Heni's attunement to Daisy and Mia, she is demonstrating the love intrinsic to her teaching practice to foster Daisy's and Mia's flourishing.

In my semi-structured interview with Fern, Fern echoed Dalli et al's (2011) views when she stated, "It's knowing each child on an individual level, and knowing that they are all going to be different, and responding to them in a way that works for them, and is appropriate for them". Fern also acknowledged the importance of having key teachers allocated to the infants and toddlers at their centre, stating "Yes, I obviously think the key teacher role is really important … especially when they [the children] first start [at the centre] … you know just consistency with those care moments … when it's the same person it's the same routine and the same rituals".

Fern also noted there will inevitably be times in a child's day when their key teacher is not available. Fern explained that when this occurred, she tried to alleviate a child's uncertainty or anxiety: "What I would be doing is explaining to the child at each step during those care moments what is happening … and why it's happening", because "every teacher will do things slightly different. We all have different languages that we use and different motions; we might change a nappy in a slightly different way". I argue Fern's approach in these circumstances is consistent with *Te Whāriki*, which stresses the importance of teachers building "relationships of trust" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 30), and of respecting "children's rights by acknowledging feelings and individuality, explaining procedures, taking children's fears and concerns seriously, and responding sensitively" (Ministry of Education, p. 30).

As I have noted above, Fewster (2010) acknowledges the significant amount of time dedicated to routines and transitions in early childhood centres that respond to the needs of infants and toddlers. In my capacity as an experienced early childhood teacher, I recognise that the transition between the presence and absence of a child's parent(s)/whānau is a pivotal moment in the success or otherwise of an infant's or toddler's day at a centre. The following two observations are of Fern's teaching practice: firstly, with Eric (aged two) as he begins his day at the centre; then with Mia (aged 14 months) as her day at the centre comes to an end.

It is a Monday morning, and Eric has been brought to the centre by his father. While Eric gets settled into his day at the centre by playing on the equipment in the shared outside area, Fern takes advantage of a brief opportunity to talk with Eric's father about what had happened in Eric's and his family's weekend, and to establish what time Eric woke that morning so she could record this information on the sleep chart. *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* acknowledges that "Whānau are the experts on their children" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 14), and stresses the importance of "getting to know and engaging positively with whānau and valuing their knowledge and expertise" (Ministry of Education, p. 14). According to *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, interactions of this nature are important to "ensure continuity between home and the early learning setting" (Ministry of Education, p. 14).

When Eric's father announced that it was time for him to leave the centre to go to work, Fern ensured that Eric, who was still busy playing on the equipment in the shared outside area, was aware his father was about to leave, by asking Eric, "Are you going to wave to Dad?" I noted that Fern was watching Eric's face to gauge whether he was upset that his father was about to leave the centre. When Fern realised Eric *was* beginning to get upset, she asked him, "Are you okay?" Fern again asked Eric if he would like to wave goodbye to his father. As Bussey and Richardson (2020) assert, "educators must ensure that routines are attuned, calm and connected, and children's cues and signals are acknowledged, understood and responded to" (p. 10). Holding Eric's hand, Fern walked with Eric to the window in the over two-year-old teaching room. Still holding hands, Eric and Fern

waved goodbye to Eric's father with their free hands as he drove away from the centre. Fern then walked with Eric back into the infant and toddler teaching room to engage Eric in a new activity.

In the above observations of Fern's teaching practice, I argue that Fern's actions in watching Eric's face to gauge whether he was getting upset because his father was leaving the centre, demonstrated that Fern was attuned to Eric's emotional state in that moment. I suggest that when Fern asked Eric if he was okay, and if he wanted to wave goodbye to his father, Fern's actions were an embodiment of Gerhardt's (2011) view that "If caregivers are well attuned to the child, [then] they will be able to acknowledge the child's current emotional state and [will also be able] to symbolise it accurately in words" (pp. 51-52).

I also contend that Fern's responsiveness to Eric's emotional state, particularly given the importance of this transition in the success or otherwise of Eric's day at the centre, was consistent with the Wellbeing | Mana atua strand of *Te Whāriki*, which stresses the necessity of "Safe, stable and responsive environments [that] support the development of self-worth, identity, confidence and enjoyment, together with emotional regulation and self-control" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 26).

The following observation occurred on a Wednesday evening as the centre was closing for the day, and reflected how it was not always possible for the key teacher to be involved in every interaction with their allocated children. Heni, Mia's key teacher, had already gone home. Mia was the last child in the infant and toddler teaching room for the day. Fern was responsible for Mia until her parent(s)/whānau arrived at the centre to take Mia home.

Fern offered Mia a drink of water, and then sat with Mia, reading her a story. Mia helped Fern to turn the pages in the story book. As the anticipated time for Mia's departure from the centre approached, Fern asked Mia, "Do you want to put your shoes on?". In response, Mia raised her foot, and Fern confirmed, "Oh, you *do* want your shoes on". Fern then sat beside Mia and asked, "Can I help put your socks on?". Mia lifted her foot again, and Fern put a sock onto Mia's foot for her. Fern then offered to put Mia's other sock onto

her other foot, but Mia again lifted the foot which already had a sock on it up to Fern. Fern and Mia giggled together, and Fern said to Mia, "You're funny". The infant and toddler teaching room door opened, and Mia's aunt came into the room to collect Mia. *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* stresses the critical importance of positively focused "reporting to whānau at the end of the day" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 40), and Fern engaged Mia's aunt in conversation to update her about Mia's sleeping, eating, drinking and bowel motions during Mia's day at the centre. Mia's aunt picked Mia up, collected Mia's day bag, and said "thank you" and "goodbye" to Fern as she departed from the centre with Mia.

I argue that through Fern's attuned, sensitive, and responsive interactions with both Eric and Mia, she demonstrated the love intrinsic to her teaching practice to foster their flourishing. I also note that the original text of *Te Whāriki* stipulates that a programme catering for infants must provide, "sociable, loving, and physically responsive adults who can tune in to an infant's needs" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). I contend that Fern demonstrated these attributes through her interactions with Mia, as Fern and Mia waited for Mia's aunt to arrive at the centre to take Mia home. Equally, when Fern engaged with Mia through their shared enjoyment of both the story book and the process of putting Mia's socks on, Fern's actions were consistent with Gerhardt's (2011) view that for an adult to have the capacity to provide emotional support to infants, they must be "…attuned and available, and committed to providing continuity of care for the infant" (p. 207). As Dalli et al. (2011) assert, "Early childhood settings for under-two-year-olds should be places where children experience sensitive, responsive caregiving that is attuned to their subtle cues, including their temperamental and age characteristics" (p. 147).

In my observations of Fern's teaching practice, when Fern provided comfort to Eric by holding his hand, and deepened her emotional connection with Mia through the joy of putting Mia's sock onto her foot, Fern not only demonstrated her attuned and responsive relationships with Eric and Mia, she also demonstrated her understanding that "Touch matters" (Carlson, 2005, p. 79). I explore the importance of touch in an early childhood teacher's teaching practice, in more detail, in the following sub-section.

6.2.5 Touch

Nussbaum (2001) argues that the nature of a caregiver's holding of an infant for whom they are responsible characterises their loving relationship with that infant. In this sub-section, I discuss the subtle interplay associated with this aspect of a loving early childhood teacher's teaching practice, by drawing on data from my semi-structured interviews with Fern and Heni, respectively, and through my fieldwork observations of Heni's teaching practice.

In relation to the importance of appropriate touch in a teacher's interactions with infants, Elliot (2007) stresses that "Babies need touch and we need to touch them" (p. 107). From my semi-structured interview with Fern, she confirmed that at their centre "kissing babies, or tickling them, or picking them up, and giving them cuddles when they are upset" was the norm "right throughout our whole [centre] community". I argue that Fern's view about the normality of appropriate physical interaction between teachers and children is resonant of Montagu (1971), who asserts that "What the child requires if it is to prosper … is to be handled, and carried, and caressed, and cuddled, and cooed to, even if it isn't breast fed" (p. 84).

According to Carlson (2005), "Humans need nurturing touch for optimum emotional, physical, and cognitive development and health - especially in infancy. Daily touch plays a significant role in early brain development. Babies can actually die from lack of loving touch" (p. 79). Carlson's comment is reflective of Montagu (1971), who asserts that "Extreme sensory deprivation in other respects, such as light and sound, can be survived, as long as the sensory experiences at the skin are maintained" (p. 84). Montagu elaborates on this assertion thus:

> It is the handling, the carrying, the caressing, and the cuddling that we would here
>
> emphasize, for it would seem that even in the absence of a great deal else, these are
>
> the reassuringly basic experiences the infant must enjoy if it is to survive in some
>
> semblance of health. (p. 79)

Gerhardt (2011) echoes Montagu's (1971) argument by suggesting that "Being lovingly held is the greatest spur to development, more so even than breast-feeding" (p. 40). According to Cekaite and Bergnehr (2018), "in preschool practices, intimacy and deference to the bodily integrity of the young child matter in providing embodied care, because touch, especially affectionate touch, derives its positive value from being used in social relations that are built on trust" (p. 953). Cekaite and Bergnehr's view also reflects Montagu (1971), who asserts that "Among the most important of the newborn infant's needs are the signals it receives through the skin, its first medium of communication with the outside world" (p. 50). This is because "The sense most closely associated with the skin, [is] the sense of touch" (Montagu, p.1). As Elliot (2007) identifies for early childhood teachers who work with babies, "Touch is the only directly reciprocal sense that we have, the sense that when we touch someone, we know they feel it and we feel it" (p. 107).

I argue that, like Fern, Heni understands the importance of touch in an infant and toddler teacher's teaching practice, particularly the importance of *reciprocity* of touch in the teacher-child relationship. As Heni explained in my semi-structured interview with her, "I mean, as soon as I walk in the room, they [the infants and toddlers] just welcome me with a smile and hugs and everything".

A core facet of Heni's teaching philosophy is the creation of a teaching environment where children feel safe and settled, as a foundation for mutually respectful relationships (see Chapter 5). I argue that an exemplification of whether a teacher has built a safe, secure, trusting, and respectful relationship with a child is the willingness of that child to proactively reach out to the teacher for physical interaction. I provide the following two brief observations of Heni's teaching practice from my fieldwork diary to demonstrate the congruence between Heni's understanding and demonstration of this aspect of the love that is inherent in her teaching practice:

Daisy [aged 22 months] comes outside, calling Heni's name. Heni looks up and greets Daisy. Daisy runs into Heni's arms for a cuddle. Heni picks Daisy up and hugs her.

Heni comes out of the sleep room, and Mia [aged 14 months] crawls to her immediately, making a little noise, and smiling up at Heni. Excited to see Heni, Mia reaches up with outstretched hands. Heni leans down and picks Mia up and cuddles her.

I contend that these observations, where Daisy and Mia have proactively initiated a physical interaction with Heni, reflect the loving relationships Heni establishes with infants and toddlers through her teaching practice. In relation to infants, *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* notes they "learn to express their readiness for social communication and interactions with smiles, by mimicking sounds and expressions, by turning towards people, and by extending their arms to be picked up or hugged" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 51).

According to Cekaite and Bergnehr (2018), "reciprocal interpersonal touch constitutes a foundational form of affective interpersonal intimacy that is an important condition for children's socioemotional development" (p. 954). Further, reciprocal interpersonal touch engenders a "sense of trust, and that facilitates children's participation in everyday practices and education" (Cekaite & Bergnehr, p. 954). In my semi-structured interview with Heni, I asked her to tell me more about the physical interaction she demonstrated in her teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom she was responsible. Heni responded:

I think that's a part of love. I think it's just me that I am [a] very kind of physical person. Some teachers … in other places, they are not comfortable about hugging and kissing and stuff like that, but I feel like that is part of our love languages as well.

I was intrigued to hear Heni's reference to *love languages* in relation to the physicality inherent in her teaching practice, as this was not terminology that was introduced by me through the course of my semi-structured interview with Heni. When I asked Heni to tell me more about her conception of love languages, she explained:

> I think everybody has their own love language around here. Especially with infants and toddlers. They [infants and toddlers] can't really do the verbal language, so I think … a little bit of physical love language is kind of important. I guess that they actually feel that they are loved [as a result of that]. [For example] Reading a book … they can actually sit on you and read a book. [Though] I don't think this is really about reading a book itself. I think it's more [about the] physical [interaction] that you share with a child.

I argue Heni recognised that having a child sit on her lap while she read a book to them was about her relationship with the child, and not about the story in the book per se. I also argue this reflects the subtlety of the connection and communication required in a loving teacher-child relationship. As Elliot (2007) notes, "Connection can elude the visible, and a great deal of communication may be nonverbal. While these qualities are not often quantifiable, they have a deeply felt veracity" (p. 85).

Another aspect of the subtle interplay between an early childhood teacher and the children for whom they are responsible are interactions through which the infant's or toddler's physical and emotional well-being is restored to a state of equilibrium. In the following sub-section, I explore supportive, restorative, teacher-child relationships.

6.2.6 Supportive, restorative, relationships

Nussbaum (2001) recognises the restorative role that a caregiver/agent can have in the life of an infant, noting that "from the first there are agencies in the environment that minister to its [the infant's] needs, supplying what it cannot supply for itself" (p. 182). *Te*

Whāriki also recognises that as children develop from infancy into toddlerhood, toddlers also need external support as they learn "to self-regulate, amidst feelings that are sometimes intense and unpredictable" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 14). During this developmental period "Kaiako support [toddlers'] self-regulation by staying calm and offering them choices" (Ministry of Education, p. 14).

The following observations focus on Anna's restorative actions following a situation in which Lucy, aged 21 months, hits Bella, aged 20 months. These data of Anna's teaching practice are taken from my fieldwork observations; a brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversation; and semi-structured interview:

> Bella starts crying because she has jammed her finger between two tables. Anna crouches down beside Bella and cuddles her. Lucy is standing beside Bella. Lucy stretches out her hand and hits Bella on the head. Anna says to Lucy, "Please don't hit Bella, Bella is sad. You can sit down and we can all read". Lucy sits down beside Anna. Bella continues to cry. Anna asks Bella, "Do you need to go to bed Bella?"; "Let's go and change your nappy". Anna and Bella move off to the nappy change room, leaving Lucy with Heni.

A little while later, I took advantage of a quiet moment in the infant and toddler teaching room to engage Anna in a brief follow up conversation about the hitting incident between Lucy and Bella. Anna explained:

> It's a new thing for Lucy, it's the first time, I haven't seen this before. Often the children do this when their friends are crying, or making a loud noise, and they want it to stop. We just support the child in this situation. We might work with them more if it continues.

During my brief follow up conversation with Anna, she also explained that as a teaching team, she, Heni, and Fern are always looking at the infant and toddler teaching environment to see if there is anything present or absent which may contribute to incidents of this nature; for example, whether sufficient provocations for the children had been provided, or whether, throughout the course of the day, the children had relocated the equipment into a small space, causing congestion. Anna concluded, "But it wasn't too bad, and it's the first time I've seen it" [Lucy hitting another child]. I revisited the hitting incident with Anna during her semi-structured interview because I wanted to ensure that I fully understood Anna's interpretation about what had happened. Reflecting again on the incident. Anna explained:

> That was the first time I have ever seen Lucy do that. Often, in my experience, when babies are loud, often babies get overwhelmed with that, and they want them [the other baby] to be quiet, so they give them a push to say 'hey shoosh!' They don't understand why crying happens. To them, it's nice and peaceful, and then suddenly there is this loud noise. They are, like, 'how can I control this?' They want to take it [the loud noise] away. It's almost a frustration thing, the language barrier.

I also wanted to learn more about the calm and measured language and manner with which Anna had responded to Lucy immediately following the hitting incident. Anna explained that she was role modelling appropriate language and tone to Lucy and Bella, even though they were still in a predominantly pre-linguistic stage in their development. In this context:

> You just try and pick up the cues for them, so that they learn to look at their friends faces, especially when they are playing together and there is a little bit of rough play, because we can't gauge what they are comfortable with. We

would hope that they look at each other's faces and respond as we would to them. (Anna)

I argue that Anna's recognition of the need to role model appropriate language with pre-linguistic children reflects my argument in Chapter 3 about the intellectual challenge faced by early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers, and the additional layer of complexity and subtlety this challenge brings to their role. Anna continued by explaining to me that she had just returned to the centre from a period of extended leave, meaning that she did not have recent experience of working with Lucy when the hitting incident occurred. Because of this, Anna confirmed she had also spoken with Fern to establish whether there had been any recent hitting behaviour by Lucy with other children. Anna recalled from her conversation with Fern that Lucy "has been a little bit more hands on lately". Anna explained to me that she and Fern had discussed "watching out for that [Lucy hitting] so that we can be there for them before it happens, hopefully".

I argue Anna's actions in consulting with Fern about Lucy's behaviour, with a view to developing strategies to help Lucy to learn how to enter into and sustain relationships with other children, is conducive to Lucy's flourishing, and also to the flourishing of the other children in the infant and toddler teaching environment. Anna's approach is consistent with Fredrickson (2013a), who proposes that teachers are well positioned to "provide scaffolding to support positive connections between and among young people" (p. 192). As Anna observed, "It's those caregiving moments that we do actually support them with, it's a process".

Anna then provided me with examples of phrases she might use to communicate with children when one child hurts another: "'It really hurt your friend; can you see they're upset?'; 'What can you do to make her better?'; 'Shall we give her a cuddle?'; and 'Would you like to hold the face cloth [cold cloth, compress, ice pack] on?'". Anna's constructive approach in situations of this nature is consistent with *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, which advises that:

Consequences can be appropriate when a child hurts another, but they should be educative and natural – for example, listening to how the hurt child is feeling, or fetching a comfort item such as a toy or blanket to help them feel better. (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 63)

I argue that in the immediate aftermath of the hitting incident, when Anna asked Lucy not to hit Bella because Bella was upset, and then invited Lucy to sit with her and Bella while they read a book, Anna's response was consistent with *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, which also advises that when children's behaviour is "inappropriate for the context" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 37), kaiako are encouraged to "provide appropriate guidance and support for the child and those around them" (Ministry of Education, p. 37).

I also argue that Anna's support and guidance to Lucy following the hitting incident was appropriate. I observed Anna immediately address Lucy's behaviour by naming the action; she spoke to Lucy in a calm manner, and with a respectful tone; she prefaced her instruction to Lucy not to repeat the hitting behaviour with politeness; and she used her judgement to determine whether the appropriate next step would be to remove Lucy from the situation – a legitimate strategy in some circumstances – or whether, as she did on this occasion, to include Lucy in the restoration of Bella's well-being. In taking this approach, I contend that Anna acted in a manner conducive to an environment in which both Bella and Lucy could continue to flourish. I also contend this incident reflected what Goldstein (1998) refers to as "the complexity and intellectual challenge of work with young children" (p. 244).

When Anna articulated to Lucy the inappropriateness of her actions in hitting Bella, Anna described to Lucy how it appeared that Bella was feeling as a result of being hit. As *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* recommends, and Anna demonstrated, "Any discussion should be brief and to the point, and it shouldn't leave any child feeling alienated or unwanted by the community" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 63). Under the heading, "Helping Children Solve Social Problems During Peer Conflict" (Ministry of Education, p. 62), *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*

also stresses the importance of maintaining a child's self-talk of "We are still loved, included, and accepted [even] when we make a mistake" (Ministry of Education, p. 63).

When a teacher models appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, this is an important mechanism in supporting children to learn how to enter into, and sustain, empathetic relationships with others. Under the heading "Supporting Children To Care For And Empathise With Others" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 58), *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* recognises that "Empathy emerges as a result of caring relationships and interactions … [with] loving adults" (Ministry of Education, p. 58). I contend that through Anna's immediate verbal response to Lucy after the hitting incident, Anna demonstrated love in her teaching practice by modelling behaviour intended to foster Lucy's and Bella's development of empathy. I further contend that Anna was modelling how to break a vicious cycle (of hitting) and how to create a virtuous cycle (of healing).

As Gopnik (2009) observes, "Vicious or benign [virtuous] cycles are the rule in development" (p. 176), and "Babies learn about the world based on what they see their parents do" (p. 176). I argue that Gopnik's observation in relation to the role *parents* have in modelling appropriate behaviours to their babies is equally applicable to early childhood teachers' who work with infants and toddlers; as is Montagu's (1971) assertion that "To be tender, loving, and caring, human beings must be tenderly loved and cared for in their earliest years, from the moment they are born" (p. 121). I argue that Gopnik's (2009) observation and Montagu's (1971) assertion both reinforce the potentially pivotal role that a loving early childhood teacher can have in the development of infants' and toddlers' emotional well-being, and hence in their ability to flourish.

6.3 Conclusion

The second part of my research question asked: In what ways do early childhood teachers *demonstrate* love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers? At the conclusion of Chapter 5, I argued, based on their respective understandings of love in their teaching practice, that it was accurate to define Anna, Heni, and Fern as loving early

childhood teachers. In this chapter, I have tested and confirmed this argument through my analysis of Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's demonstration of love in their teaching practice.

Based on my analysis of the data obtained through fieldwork observations of Anna's, Heni's, and Fern's teaching practice, brief, informal, in-the-field follow up conversations, and formal semi-structured interviews, I argue that Anna, Heni, and Fern demonstrated love in their teaching practice through their attuned, respectful, trusting, supportive, restorative, and responsive relationships with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible. I also found that Anna, Heni, and Fern demonstrated love in their teaching practice through their sensitive responses to infants' and toddlers' cues, and their appropriate physical interactions with those children. In conclusion, I argue that Anna, Heni, and Fern are loving early childhood teachers whose teaching practice is characterised by their consistent commitment and perseverance to the goal of fostering children's flourishing. In Chapter 7, I conclude this thesis by drawing together my claims and key findings.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Through my exploration of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice with infants and toddlers, I have claimed that the quality of an infant's or toddler's interpersonal relationships with their responsive caregivers during the first 1000 days of their life is a significant determinant of their health, wellbeing, and lifelong outcomes (Moore et al., 2017). I have also claimed that children need to experience an environment consisting of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships if they are to flourish (Garner & Yogman, 2021). Early childhood education is one such environment.

Goldstein (1997), whose work has been foundational to this study, has determined that the essence of early childhood education is love, a position with which I concur. Goldstein was the first academic I encountered who recognised that, while early childhood teachers commonly reference love in relation to their teaching practice, discussion about love in contemporary early childhood education discourse is nonetheless rare (Aslanian, 2015; Goldstein, 1997, 1998; Page 2011; White & Gradovski, 2018). In this context, Page (2011) argues that the implicit danger in allowing love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice to remain under-articulated and under-researched is to infer that love should not have a place in teachers' teaching practice at all. This in turn may call the legitimacy of love in teachers' teaching practice into question. In my view, the lack of coherence about love as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice in contemporary early childhood education discourse must continue to be challenged.

This study has explored the teaching practice of three qualified and registered early childhood centre-based teachers in an Aotearoa New Zealand context. Through my ethnographic exploration of the research participants' teaching practice, I have sought to

gather empirical data about the ways early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers.

In this chapter, I summarise the central claims of this study, recognise the limitations of this study, and identify the contribution this study makes to early childhood education discourse about love in teachers' teaching practice. Directions for future research are also suggested.

7.2 Central claims of this study

7.2.1 Love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers, but contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice

Simply put, human beings are "designed to thrive on love" (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 33). Infants are born into the world as trusting, open, and craving relationships with loving adults (Fredrickson). Based on research in psychology, neuroscience, and paediatrics I have identified a consistent narrative that emphasises the crucial nature of loving caregiver-child relationships if infants and toddlers are to flourish. However, I have also identified that in an early childhood education context, this narrative has not been universally translated into discourse about teachers' teaching practice.

From a psychological perspective, developmental science shows that loving infant-caregiver relationships are "absolutely vital to normal human development" (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 33). In contrast, "Love's absence, research shows, can compromise nearly all aspects of children's development—their cognitive and social abilities, [and] their health" (Fredrickson, p. 33). According to Fredrickson, the greatest emotion human beings need to experience if they are to flourish, is love. These findings are reinforced from neuroscientific and paediatric perspectives, which also identify that receiving love from a responsive caregiver immediately from birth, together with the provision of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships, has vital implications for children's cognitive, emotional, physical, and social

development, and profoundly influences their capacity to flourish (Esch & Stefano, 2005a; Garner & Yogman, 2021; Hambrick et al., 2021; Talay-Ongan, 2000; Twardosz, 2012). I argue that findings of this nature highlight the potentially pivotal role that early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers can have in the lives of the children for whom they are responsible through their teaching practice.

As I have noted in Chapter 1, I contributed to feedback on the original 1996 version of the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education). Based on the research findings from my Master of Education study (Hughes, 2013), I also provided feedback on the 2017 revision of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education) in support of recognising love as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice – a position supported by many of my peers in the feedback forum at the time. My position in this regard was consistent with Goldstein (1997), who asserts that "Love for children is both an emotional and an intellectual act, and as such forms a firm foundation on which to base an early childhood curriculum" (p. 28).

However, while findings about the relationship between love and the flourishing of infants and toddlers are available to be drawn upon by the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education community, all wording which denoted love in teachers' teaching practice in *Te Whāriki* was intentionally removed when the 1996 version was revised in 2017 (Zhang, 2019). In this context, White and Gradovski (2018) argue that love is seldom discussed as being central to learning in early childhood education discourse, and Warren (2021) refers to the "problematic nature of love in early childhood teaching" (p. 566). While Delaune and Surtees (2023) recognise that *Te Whāriki* does make a tangential reference to love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice, with infants specifically, they argue this reference must be made unambiguous, and that it must also be made with respect to all children in early childhood education. The situation as it currently stands, however, is that a clear association of love with early childhood teachers' teaching practice in *Te Whāriki* is missing (Delaune & Surtees). I argue that situations of this nature serve to perpetuate the

lack of clarity and guidance available to early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand seeking to understand how, or even whether, to incorporate love into their teaching practice.

Encouragingly, Finland provides an example of an education system that has determined "love cannot be ignored when reflecting good teacherhood—regardless of educational level" (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, p. 30). From the Finnish educational perspective, pedagogical love "is a working method that involves persistent interest and perseverance to support pupils' development for the sake of themselves and the whole society … [and] is the fundamental principle and method for good teacherhood" (Määttä & Uusiautti, p. 35). In this context "love emerges through teachers' emotions, learned models, moral attitude, and actions" (Määttä & Uusiautti, p. 36). I reflect this position when I suggest that an early childhood teacher's understanding of love in their teaching practice will be influenced by their own moral and philosophical imperatives, based on their personal upbringings, histories, and experiences, and by their cultural and societal norms. Accordingly, I argue that if, as appears to be the situation in Finland, love is universally recognised in Aotearoa New Zealand as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice, then love in this context will not be seen as problematic, and love in teachers' teaching practice will be acknowledged in *Te Whāriki*. In the following sub-section, I summarise the key elements of this study's theoretical framework as it relates to early childhood teachers' teaching practice.

7.2.2 Nussbaum's cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions provides a robust foundation from which early childhood teachers can credibly talk about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice

Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions draws upon the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia, which posits that the emotions appear to be concerned with a person's flourishing. According to Nussbaum, it is only a person's virtuous actions, together with their mutual relationships of friendship, personal love, or civic love, in which the object of a person's emotion is loved for their own good, which can be considered as integral

to a person's eudaimonia. Nussbaum also proposes that experiences of the emotions are cognitively-laden, intellectual acts.

According to Nussbaum (2001), how a person experiences an emotion in a particular situation is predicated upon their judgement about the underlying importance of the object of their emotion in their world. In Nussbaum's theory, the person, or agent, experiencing an emotion will hold a range of fundamental expectations and beliefs about the object of their emotion, which will persist at an unconscious or background level until such time as they encounter a specific situation that brings the importance of the object back into their conscious focus. According to Nussbaum, love is always the central form of a background emotion.

In the agent-object relationship, which is the focus of this study, the agent is a loving early childhood teacher and the object is a flourishing infant or toddler. I argue that this means an early childhood teacher can evaluate their teaching practice as loving if it contributes to children's flourishing.

It is also important to recognise that while love is an emotion, it is also a relationship (Nussbaum, 2001). If to be civic reflects the actions of someone concerned about their community, then I argue that the love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice in their relationship with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible, is *civic* love.

From the claims I present in Chapter 6, I extrapolate Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions into early childhood teachers' teaching practice as follows: (1) A loving early childhood teacher understands that a goal of their teaching practice is to foster children's flourishing. (2) Based on this goal, a loving early childhood teacher makes an ongoing series of cognitive evaluations about the children for whom they are responsible. (3) Based on their cognitive evaluations, a loving early childhood teacher makes decisions about appropriate actions to take in their teaching practice. (4) Based on their cognitive decision-making, a loving early childhood teacher demonstrates civic love though their teaching practice in a manner consistent with the flourishing of those children. In summation therefore, a flourishing infant or toddler is integral to an early childhood teacher's civic love.

A key focus in Nussbaum's (2001) theory is emotions and infancy. For Nussbaum, the link between the emotions developed in infancy through an infant's relationships with loving caregivers, and the emotions subsequently experienced in adulthood, is undeniable. According to Nussbaum, human emotions begin to develop in infancy through the quality of infants' cognitive relationships with the caregivers who are responsible for them. From this, the emotions a person experiences in adulthood are predicated upon the extent to which they have experienced loving relationships with the caregivers who are responsible for their flourishing during their early childhood (Nussbaum). As Moore et. al. (2017) assert, if the *caregiver's* relationship with an infant is inappropriate or unreliable, this will have an adverse effect on the infant's development. I argue that insights of this nature reinforce the potentially pivotal role an early childhood teacher, through the civic love in their teaching practice, can have in fostering the flourishing of society's youngest citizens, and ultimately the flourishing of the community and larger society of which those children are members.

Accordingly, I argue that Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions provides a robust foundation upon which early childhood teachers can credibly: (1) articulate that love in their teaching practice aims towards the flourishing of the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible; (2) present counterarguments to views of love that seek to trivialise the intellectuality of teachers' teaching practice; and (3) engage in dialogue about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice. In the following sub-section, I summarise my key findings about the ways early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible.

7.2.3 Loving early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers through civic love

This qualitative study took an ethnographic approach as its methodology to gather those data that the central claims in this sub-section are based upon. Through my fieldwork observations of the research participants' teaching practice, brief, informal, in-the-field follow

up conversations, and subsequent semi-structured interviews, I have been able to gather rich, holistic, qualitative data to add to the existing body of empirical research about the ways early childhood teachers understand and demonstrate love in their teaching practice.

As I have set out in Chapter 1, a key purpose of this study was to provide information about a topic with which the early childhood community in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to struggle. Another key purpose was to provide a credible basis upon which early childhood teachers could engage in discourse about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.

The separation of the findings in this thesis into two chapters was a purely structural device, and in this sub-section, I combine my overall summary of my central claims to reinforce my assertion that I do not suggest there is a binary division between an early childhood teacher's mind and their body. In this study, the research participants brought their whole selves to their work with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible. I summarise my central claims about the ways the research participants in this study understood and demonstrated love in their teaching practice as follows.

I found that the research participants' understanding and demonstration of love in their teaching practice was evident through routine centre activities including, but not limited to, settling, feeding, nappy changing, arrivals and departures from the centre, and the transitions between these routines. In this context, the love that the research participants demonstrated through their teaching practice was manifested through interactions with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible including, but not limited to, holding, hugging, kissing, carrying, gazing, talking, humming, smiling, singing, and utterances.

While at first glance, these actions may appear to be relatively mundane, I have argued that early childhood teachers' observable teaching practice is based on a series of *cognitive* acts, following Nussbaum (2001). I have also argued that it is important to acknowledge the intellectual challenge embraced by early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers, not least because some of their interactions are with pre-linguistic

children. This aspect of working with infants and toddlers adds an additional layer of both complexity and subtlety to the role of early childhood teachers who work with this age group.

As I have stated in Chapter 1, it was not my intention in this thesis to propose one, all-encompassing, or definitive definition of love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice. This is because a loving early childhood teacher's civic love will be influenced by their individual moral and philosophical imperatives, based on their personal upbringings, histories, and experiences, and by their cultural and societal norms.

Based on the empirical data gathered from the research participants, I have argued that they collectively understood and demonstrated civic love, in their teaching practice with the infants and toddlers for whom they were responsible, in the following ways: restorative actions, and appropriate physical interactions; the provision of a safe, stimulating, and nurturing learning environment; a motivation to foster children's flourishing; and authentic, intentional, responsive, attuned, trusting, supportive, and respectful relationships with those children, and with their parents and whānau. Accordingly, I argue that a loving early childhood teacher will represent these characteristics of civic love in their teaching practice.

In summary, I argue that it is accurate to define the research participants in this study, Anna, Heni, and Fern, as loving early childhood teachers. In the following section, with the benefit of hindsight, I recognise the limitations of this study.

7.3 Limitations of this study

When I commenced this doctoral thesis in 2015 nobody had heard of COVID-19, and I did not conceive that our world and my study could have been impacted by a global pandemic. It was my good fortune to have completed my fieldwork observations before prolonged periods of lockdown and social distancing. However, the restrictions imposed by the pandemic meant I did not have the opportunity to conduct follow-up fieldwork observations of my research participants' teaching practice, if the need had arisen.

Furthermore, when I applied for ethics approval to undertake this study, I had not considered conducting fieldwork observations of early childhood teachers' teaching practice

at multiple early childhood education centres. Although this might have strengthened the development of claims in this study, my own time limitations meant I was only able to conduct ethnographic fieldwork during the 2019/2020 Aotearoa New Zealand summer school holiday period when the early childhood centre I manage was closed. As it happened, the COVID-19 pandemic would most likely have rendered fieldwork observations of early childhood teachers' teaching practice at a second centre impossible.

I also recognise, on reflection, that some of the predetermined semi-structured interview questions, intended to elicit data about the ways the research participants *understood* love in their teaching practice, were possibly worded in ways that led the research participants into providing responses more akin to the ways they *demonstrated* love in their teaching practice. While the research participants still provided clear and at times deeply personal insights into the ways they understood love in their teaching practice, the wording of some of the predetermined semi-structured interview questions made my subsequent analysis of this data a more challenging task than it may otherwise have been.

The most significant limitation to this study however, was the relative paucity of literature pertaining to love in an early childhood education context available to be drawn upon for inclusion in this study. I intend this study to contribute materially to this literature. In the following section, I consider this study's contribution to early childhood education discourse about love in teachers' teaching practice.

7.4 Contribution this study makes to early childhood education discourse about love in teachers' teaching practice

In this study I have identified that, while love is a contributory factor in human flourishing, particularly for infants and toddlers, contemporary early childhood education discourse lacks coherence about love in teachers' teaching practice. As a result, love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is a topic some early childhood education scholars and teachers alike continue to struggle with.

In accordance with the central claims summarised in this chapter, this study has contributed to discourse about love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice by drawing upon Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions to make the following claims: (1) Love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is civic love, insofar as it is consistent with the actions of a person who has a concern about what is taking place in their community. (2) A loving early childhood teacher understands that a goal of their teaching practice is to foster children's flourishing. (3) Based on this goal, a loving early childhood teacher makes an ongoing series of cognitive evaluations about the children for whom they are responsible. (4) Based on their cognitive evaluations, a loving early childhood teacher makes decisions about appropriate actions to take in their teaching practice. (5) Based on their cognitive decision-making, a loving early childhood teacher demonstrates civic love though their teaching practice in a manner consistent with the flourishing of those children.

In accordance with the above claims, I further claim that early childhood teachers can credibly: (1) articulate that love in their teaching practice aims towards the flourishing of the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible; (2) present counterarguments to views of love that seek to trivialise the intellectuality of their teaching practice with phraseology such as that lovey dovey stuff; and (3) engage in dialogue about love as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.

When love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is not seen as problematic, then love in teachers' teaching practice will also be appropriately acknowledged in *Te Whāriki*. The ultimate contribution of this study to discourse about love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice will have been made when love is universally recognised as a legitimate and integral facet of teachers' teaching practice. In the following section, I suggest potential directions for future research.

7.5 Directions for future research

I estimate that there is much ground to be covered before love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice is universally recognised as legitimate and integral. Towards this

outcome however, I make the following suggestions for future researchers, including myself, to consider.

I found that Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions provided a robust and credible theoretical basis for the study of love in teachers' teaching practice. While other researchers may also wish to use Nussbaum's theory as they conduct their own studies into love as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice, they may also consider Fredrickson's (1998) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, together with Fredrickson's (2013a) work, *Love 2.0*, as their study's theoretical basis.

Whereas I conducted this study using a qualitative ethnographic approach to generate and gather rich, holistic, empirical data, future researchers may consider whether the usage of large-scale questionnaire surveys and/or small-scale interview surveys (Denscombe, 2010) may also be an appropriate approach. A quantitative study could gather data from early childhood teachers and/or parents and whānau about whether they consider love to be a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice. Such data could provide impetus for the inclusion of love in the 'Responsibilities of kaiako' section of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) specifically, and for wider references to love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice being made throughout the curriculum.

In this study, I have drawn upon research from the field of neuroscience to highlight that infancy and toddlerhood is a critical period of human brain development, and to claim that early childhood teachers have a vital role in determining the health, wellbeing, and lifelong outcomes of the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible through the quality of their relationships with those children. *Te Whāriki* also acknowledges that "neuroscientific research is providing evidence for how human development takes place over the course of life, beginning before birth and accelerating rapidly in the early years" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 62). Future researchers may also wish to examine emerging findings from neuroscience about the effect of love on health and wellbeing consequences in infancy and toddlerhood, and whether these findings can be further incorporated into *Te Whāriki*.

I have proposed that the notion of civic love is consistent with the actions of a person who has a concern about what is taking place in their community, and I have inextricably linked civic love with a loving early childhood teachers' teaching practice. Future researchers may wish to explore whether the notion of civic love is applicable to other vocations; for example, first responders, and medical practitioners.

A final suggestion for future research is a comparative study of early childhood education curriculum documents from a range of countries to determine commonalities and/or differences in the acceptance of love as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice. An extension of this research could then be to correlate the extent to which love is accepted as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice with wellbeing metrics in global surveys such as the Gallup World Poll. In the following section, I conclude this thesis with my final reflections.

7.6 Final reflections

My journey through this doctoral thesis has proven to be equal parts challenging and rewarding. Nussbaum's (2001) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions has been more than merely foundational to this study; it has given this research the explanatory depth that I acknowledge my previous research lacked. I know I have grown both professionally and personally from this experience.

My intention throughout this endeavour has been to champion love in early childhood teachers' teaching practice. I now feel significantly more confident to engage in discourse about love as a legitimate and integral facet of my own teaching practice, and I hope that through this research other early childhood teachers will feel similarly empowered.

Through my proposition that civic love is reflective of the actions of a person who has a concern about what is taking place in their community, and that a flourishing child is integral to an early childhood teacher's civic love, I have sought to provide early childhood education teachers and scholars alike with a conceptualisation of love that all parties can agree upon as having a legitimate and integral place in early childhood teachers' teaching

practice. Such agreement would also address the current lack of coherence in contemporary early childhood education discourse about this topic. When love is universally recognised as a legitimate and integral facet of early childhood teachers' teaching practice, early childhood teachers can also be recognised for the positive contribution they make to the flourishing of the infants and toddlers for whom they are responsible, and for their contribution to the flourishing of the community and larger society of which they, and those infants and toddlers, are members.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Australian Catholic University Human Resources Ethics Committee approval confirmation email.

From: Kylie Pashley <Kylie.Pashley@acu.edu.au> on behalf of Res Ethics Res.Ethics@acu.edu.au
Sent: Thursday, 14 November 2019 4:53 pm
To: Joce Nuttall Joce.Nuttall@acu.edu.au; Rachel Hughes rachel.hughes2@myacu.edu.au
Cc: Res Ethics Res.Ethics@acu.edu.au
Subject: 2019-167H Ethics application approved!

Dear Applicant,

Chief Investigator: Professor Joce Nuttall
Student Researcher: Rachel Hughes
Ethics Register Number: 2019-167H
Project Title: An exploration of love in the practice of infant and toddler teachers.
Date Approved: 14/11/2019
End Date: 30/11/2020

This is to certify that the above human ethics application has been reviewed by the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee (ACU HREC). The application has been approved for the period given above.

Continued approval of this research project is contingent upon the submission of an annual progress report which is due on/before each anniversary of the project approval. A final report is due upon completion of the project. A report proforma can be downloaded from the ACU Research Ethics website.

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that all conditions of approval are adhered to and that any modifications to the protocol, including changes to personnel, are approved prior to implementation. In addition, the ACU HREC must be notified of any reportable matters including, but not limited to, incidents, complaints and unexpected issues.

Researchers are also responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Research Code of Conduct.

Any queries relating to this application should be directed to the Ethics Secretariat (res.ethics@acu.edu.au). Please quote your ethics approval number in all communications with us.

We wish you every success with your research.

Kind regards,

Kylie Pashley
On behalf of ACU HREC Chair, Assoc Prof. Michael Baker

Senior Research Ethics Officer | Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) Australian Catholic University
T: +61 2 9739 2646 E: res.ethics@acu.edu.au

Appendix B: Script for telephone recruitment

Introducing myself

Kia ora, my name is Rachel Hughes.

I am the Head Teacher at All Saints Early Learning Centre in Ponsonby. I am also a doctoral student at Australian Catholic University based in Melbourne. I am looking for an early childhood centre and a small group of infant and toddler teachers to be involved in my research project.

Is this something you would be interested in being part of? [The content below will be covered if the Centre Manager/Owner expresses interest in my research project.]

A brief summary of the research focus

The research project sets out to explore the ways early childhood teachers perceive and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers in order for infants and toddlers to flourish.

My project focuses on teachers' day-to-day practice which will require me to spend some time observing your teachers' practice and following up with an interview to give them the opportunity to express their understanding of the observations I have made of their teaching practice.

The data gathered through this project will support teachers, and others involved in early childhood education, to develop their understanding of love in early childhood teaching practice.

The group of participants I are looking for

I am looking for a small group of qualified and registered teachers who work with infants and toddlers. They need to be willing to have me observe their practice and then interview them at a convenient time for us both.

An offer to visit the centre to discuss the project

Could I arrange a time to visit your centre to discuss my project either at a staff meeting or another suitable gathering where I can answer any questions?

Thank you for your time today, and I look forward to visiting your centre, and meeting with your teachers.

Appendix C: Information letter to Centre Manager/Owner

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER
For the Centre Manager/Owner

PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of love in the practice of infant and toddler teachers.
APPLICATION NUMBER: (2019- 0614)
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Joce Nuttall
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Rachel Hughes
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Dear Centre Manager/Owner,

I am asking for your permission for access to infant and toddler teachers in your early childhood centre.

I have also provided a copy of the Consent Form for you to complete if you are interested in participating in my research project.

What is the project about?

This research project explores the ways in which early childhood teachers perceive and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers, in order for infants and toddlers to flourish.

This research is important because the first three years of life are critical to the development of children's social and emotional well-being, later academic prospects, and self-regulation. Research evidence shows that children in Aotearoa New Zealand, are entering early childhood education at increasingly younger ages.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Rachel Hughes for the completion of my Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Australian Catholic University, under the principal supervision of Professor Joce Nuttall, and the co-supervision of Reverend Dr James McEvoy.

I have been involved in early childhood education for thirty years as a teacher, centre manager, and lecturer, mostly in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Education, and more recently a Master of Education from the University of Auckland. In each study, I have furthered my research interest in love in teachers practice in early childhood education.

Professor Nuttall is an experienced early childhood educator and teacher educator, with over thirty years' experience in early childhood education teaching and research in Australia and New Zealand. Her expertise is in the professional practice and continuing learning of early childhood teachers.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

I do not anticipate there being any risks associated with your teachers' participation in this project beyond the experience of daily working life. However, I recognise that confidentiality may be a slight risk, given the collegial nature of the early childhood education community in Aotearoa New Zealand. To address this as a potential issue, your teachers will have the opportunity to have their identity protected through the use of a pseudonym. Your early childhood centre, and the infants and toddlers your teachers work with, will be de-identified.

I acknowledge that my presence will inevitably cause some disruption to your teachers' normal teaching practice, and I will make every endeavour to minimise the disruption by respecting that their primary obligation is to the infants and toddlers in their care.

What will I be asked to do? / How much time will the project take?

I am asking for your permission for access to infant and toddler teachers in your early childhood centre.

With your permission, I will visit the centre on up to ten occasions across a three-month period, including time for individual interviews with each of the infant and toddler teachers.

Please note, I will also be seeking separate and individual permission from the parents and/or caregivers of the infants and toddlers at your centre before this project can proceed.

What are the benefits of the research project?

This research is intended to have relevance for initial teacher education, and ongoing professional learning and development of early childhood education teachers.

Can your teachers withdraw from the project?

Your teachers' participation in this project is completely voluntary. They are not under any obligation to participate. If they agree to participate, they have the right to withdraw from the project and to withdraw any information they have provided as part of the project, up until the end of the fieldwork phase of my research.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Upon completion of the project, my doctoral thesis will be published. I will also publish the findings in early childhood journals, and I will share my insights at conferences.

Any research data collected for the project may also be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify the early childhood centre or the teachers in any way.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

On completion of the project, if you are interested, I will send you a link to where you can access a digital copy of the research in its entirety.

If they wish, the first presentation of my results will be made to your teachers' during a staff meeting or similar.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions in relation to the project, please contact me directly at the phone number or email address provided below:

Researcher: Rachel Hughes
Phone: 021 149 4227
Email: rachel.hughes2@myacu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2019- 0614). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics and Integrity Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics and Integrity
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519
Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?

If you want to participate in this project, please confirm that to me via the phone or email details provided above.

Once you have confirmed you want to participate in this project, we can organise the initial meeting where I can collect your completed Consent Form – please feel free to keep a copy for your records.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Hughes

Appendix D: Information letter to Research Participant

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER
For the Early Childhood Teacher

PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of love in the practice of infant and toddler teachers.
APPLICATION NUMBER: (2019- 0614)
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Joce Nuttall
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Rachel Hughes
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

I have provided a copy of the Consent Form for you to complete if you are interested in participating in my research project.

What is the project about?

This research project explores the ways in which early childhood teachers perceive and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers, in order for infants and toddlers to flourish.

This research is important because the first three years of life are critical to the development of children's social and emotional well-being, later academic prospects, and self-regulation. Research evidence shows that children in Aotearoa New Zealand, are entering early childhood education at increasingly younger ages.

My aim is to generate qualitative data from your teaching practice to add to the existing - but limited - body of empirical research on love in early childhood education.

The data obtained through this project will support teachers, and others involved in early childhood education, to develop their understanding of love in early childhood teaching practice.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Rachel Hughes for the completion of my Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Australian Catholic University, under the principal supervision of Professor Joce Nuttall, and the co-supervision of Reverend Dr James McEvoy.

I have been involved in early childhood education for thirty years as a teacher, centre manager, and lecturer, mostly in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Education, and more recently a Master of Education from the University of Auckland. In each study, I have furthered my research interest in love in teachers practice in early childhood education.

Professor Nuttall is an experienced early childhood educator and teacher educator, with over thirty years' experience in early childhood education teaching and research in Australia and New Zealand. Her expertise is in the professional practice and continuing learning of early childhood teachers.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

I do not anticipate there being any risks associated with your participation in this project beyond the experience of normal daily working life. However, I recognise that there is a small risk to confidentiality given the collegial nature of the early childhood education community in Aotearoa New Zealand. To address this as a potential issue, you will have your identity protected through the use of a pseudonym. Your early childhood centre, and the infants and toddlers you work with, will also be thoroughly de-identified.

Please note, I will also be seeking separate and individual permission from the parents and/or caregivers of the infants and toddlers at your centre before this project can proceed.

What will I be asked to do? / How much time will the project take?

If you agree to be involved in this project, this will involve:

1. An informal introductory group meeting;
2. Observation of your teaching practice on up to ten occasions across a three-month period;
3. A post-observation interview of approximately sixty minutes.

During my observations I will write field notes about what I observe. I may also engage with you in short informal discussions to clarify what I have observed.

The purpose of the post-observation interview is to give you the opportunity to express your understanding of the observations I have made of your teaching practice within a semi-structured interview framework.

I will digitally record the audio of the interview and transcribe the recordings myself. You will be offered a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy prior to the analysis phase of my research.

What are the benefits of the research project?

This research is intended to have relevance for initial teacher education, and ongoing professional learning and development of early childhood education teachers.

- This is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts, beliefs and values about how you perceive and demonstrate love in your teaching practice with infants and toddlers, in order for infants and toddlers to flourish;
- The project will provide multiple opportunities for you to reflect on your teaching practice, and to identify opportunities for self-development;
- This is also an opportunity for you to support research that has the potential to create effective change for children, teachers, and teacher education in the early childhood sector.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the project and to

withdraw any information you have provided as part of the project, up until the end of the fieldwork phase of my research.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Upon completion of the project, my doctoral thesis will be published. I will also publish the findings in early childhood journals, and I will share my insights at conferences.

Any research data collected for the project may also be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify you in any way.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

On completion of the project, if you are interested, I will send you a link to where you can access a digital copy of the research in its entirety.

If you wish, the first presentation of my results will be made to you during a staff meeting or similar.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions in relation to the project, please contact me directly at the phone number or email address provided below:

Researcher: Rachel Hughes
Phone: 021 149 4227
Email: rachel.hughes2@myacu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2019- 0614). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics and Integrity Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

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Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?

If you want to participate in this project, please confirm that to me via the phone or email details provided above.

Once you have confirmed you want to participate in this project, we can organise the initial meeting where I can collect your completed Consent Form – please feel free to keep a copy for your records.

Thank you for agreeing to be involved in research, which will have benefits for initial teacher education, and the ongoing professional learning and development of early childhood teachers.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Hughes

Appendix E: Information letter to Parent/Caregiver

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER
For the Parent and/or Caregiver

PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of love in the practice of infant and toddler teachers.
APPLICATION NUMBER: (2019- 0614)
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Joce Nuttall
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Rachel Hughes
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Dear Parent(s) and/or Caregiver(s),

My name is Rachel Hughes. I have been involved in early childhood education for thirty years as a teacher, centre manager, and lecturer, mostly in Aotearoa New Zealand. My research interest is love in teachers' practice with infants and toddlers in early childhood education.

I have sought and obtained permission to conduct research with the infant and toddler teachers in your child's early childhood centre for the data collection phase of my Doctor of Philosophy in Education. I am undertaking this research through Australian Catholic University, under the principal supervision of Professor Joce Nuttall, and the co-supervision of Reverend Dr James McEvoy.

I will be visiting the centre on up to ten occasions across three months to observe the teaching practice of those teachers who have agreed to participate in this project.

My research focus is on the teachers' day-to-day practice. This means that, from time to time, your child's interactions with their teachers may be included in observations. I am therefore asking for your consent for your child to be a 'bystander participant' in this project. The centre, teachers, and all children observed during the study will be de-identified.

What is the project about?

This research project explores the ways in which early childhood teachers perceive and demonstrate love in their teaching practice with infants and toddlers, in order for infants and toddlers to flourish.

This research is important because the first three years of life are critical to the development of children's social and emotional well-being, later academic prospects, and self-regulation. Research evidence shows that children in Aotearoa New Zealand, are entering early childhood education at increasingly younger ages.

What are the benefits of the research project?

This research is intended to have relevance for initial teacher education, and ongoing professional learning and development of early childhood education teachers.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Upon completion of the project, my doctoral thesis will be published. I will also publish the findings in early childhood journals, and I will share my insights at conferences.

Any research data collected for the project may also be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify your child in any way.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

On completion of the project, if you are interested, I will send you a link to where you can access a digital copy of the research in its entirety.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions in relation to the project, please contact me directly at the phone number or email address provided below:

Researcher: Rachel Hughes
Phone: 021 149 4227
Email: rachel.hughes2@myacu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2019- 0614). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics and Integrity Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

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Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?

If you agree to your child being involved in the project, please complete the Consent Forms provided, and return one to the teachers for me to collect – feel free to keep the other copy for your records.

Thank you for supporting my project.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Hughes

Appendix F: Consent form to Centre Manager/Owner

CONSENT FORM
Copy for Centre Manager/Owner

PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of love in the practice of infant and toddler teachers.

APPLICATION NUMBER: (2019- 0614)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Joce Nuttall

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Rachel Hughes

I, *.. (the Centre Manager/Owner)* have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided in the Participant Information Letter. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to give my consent for access to the early childhood centre, and the teachers, to participate in the project outlined in the Participant Information Letter.

NAME OF CENTRE MANAGER/OWNER/LICENSEE: ....

SIGNATURE: ....

DATE: ....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):....................................

DATE: ....

(and, if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:...

DATE: ....

Appendix G: Consent form to Research Participant

PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of love in the practice of infant and toddler teachers.

APPLICATION NUMBER: (2019- 0614)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Joce Nuttall

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Rachel Hughes

I, ... *(the research participant)* have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided in the Participant Information Letter. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I give my consent to participate in an informal introductory group meeting, observations of my teaching practice on up to ten occasions across a three-month period, and a post-observation interview of approximately sixty minutes. I understand that I can withdraw from the project and withdraw any information I have provided as part of the project, up until the end of the fieldwork phase of the research. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published and may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ....

SIGNATURE: ....
DATE: ....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):.....................................
DATE: ....

(and, if applicable)
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:..
DATE: ....

Appendix H: Consent form to Parent/Caregiver

PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of love in the practice of infant and toddler teachers.

APPLICATION NUMBER: (2019- 0614)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Joce Nuttall

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Rachel Hughes

I, *.. (the Parent/Caregiver)* have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided in the Participant Information Letter. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I give consent for my child to participate in the project as a by-stander participant while data for the project is being collected in my child's early childhood centre. I understand that data collected for the project may be published, and may be provided to other researchers, in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/CAREGIVER: ....

SIGNATURE: ....
DATE: ....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):....................................
DATE: ....

(and, if applicable)
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:...
DATE: ....

Appendix I: Semi-structured interview questions

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Take me back to when you decided to become an early childhood teacher, and walk me briefly through your journey up until today.
   Key information I am seeking to achieve, and will ask for further clarification on if applicable:
   - Motivation for becoming an early childhood teacher;
   - Qualifications (including tertiary institution);
   - Years of teaching experience;
   - Current position/Title

2. Tell me about your philosophy of teaching.

3. What emotions do you associate with early childhood education generally, and working with infants and toddlers in particular?
   Additional prompt if participant describes an event that happened when they were working with an infant or toddler: "that is a great example, what can you recall about the emotions you were experiencing when that happened?

4. Thinking about the emotions we have just discussed, what impact do you think your response to these emotions has (had, have) on your teaching practice?

5. As you know I am interested in the concept of love in the practices of early childhood teachers who work with infants and toddlers. Thinking about you, and your practice, tell me what you think about love in this context?

The theoretical framework I am using in this study is the philosophical works of Martha Nussbaum. At the very heart of Nussbaum's approach to love is the understanding that love wants the "flourishing" of the other.

6. What does it look like when the infants and toddlers in your care flourish/are flourishing?

7. Thinking about your practice, how do you foster that flourishing?

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your work with infants and toddlers that you think might be important for my research or that I should have asked you?

9. Is there anything you would like to ask me about the research?