

**The Appropriation of Children's Sexual Subjectivities:
Some Implications for Teachers and their Practice in the
Early Childhood Education Context**

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Abstract

This study set out to investigate early childhood teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context. Research was carried out using qualitative methods and data were gathered from semi-structured interviews conducted with three early childhood teachers in the Auckland region.

The research findings expose the complexities which underpin teachers' understandings of sexuality. Their beliefs and attitudes were contingent on a number of factors, namely location and exposure, which informed their conceptualisation of sexuality matters in the early childhood education context. This study concludes that early childhood sexuality is an area which requires further development and research, so as to better inform and support teachers and their practice surrounding sexuality in early childhood spaces.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the study and provides reason for undertaking research on the topic of sexuality in early childhood spaces. It will set the context for the study and brief the reader on the research directions. A foundation will be laid to stimulate discussions surrounding sexuality in the early childhood education context.

Sexuality in early childhood has generally been regarded as taboo (Robinson, 2005; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006). It is a topic which evokes controversy (Davies & Robinson, 2010) and therefore requires an investigation into its contested nature. The early childhood years are considered to be a time of innocence and purity (Kehily, 2009; Robinson, 2013). In this sense, placing sexuality alongside early childhood challenges common constructions of childhood already established in society; particularly when sexuality is considered to be the domain of an adult's world (Robinson, 2013). The complexities that arise from tackling a controversial topic are many. The prospect of confronting such complexities does not discourage an investigation, but rather sparks curiosity and drives the research itself. An investigation and a deeper understanding of the topic should expose the complexities associated with sexuality in the early childhood education context.

Personal interests in the study

Having completed my bachelor's degree in early childhood education, I was simply left with a desire to know more. Sexuality was an aspect not often spoken about in the early childhood context and this aroused interest in the topic. I found myself questioning the absence of sexuality matters in curriculum and became aware of the manner in which it tended to be dismissed in practice. The practicum's I undertook as part of my teacher education placed me in situations in which I was much more inclined to notice the silencing of children's sexual subjectivities in the everyday workings of early childhood education. In a bid to make sense of such dismissals in both theory and practice, I decided to embark on a journey into the unknown -- a

research project aimed at highlighting the beliefs and attitudes which underpin sexuality matters in early childhood spaces.

Aims and layout of the study

I have undertaken a study to illuminate issues of sexuality in early childhood spaces as a platform to underpin further research. The study draws from the voices of early childhood teachers as a means to gain the insight needed to expose the complexities associated with sexuality in the early childhood education context.

Chapter Two of this study reviews literature connected to sexuality and early childhood. It lays the foundation for the reader in terms of current understandings of sexuality in early childhood spaces. It also informs the subsequent methodological decisions required in carrying out the research. The methodology, which is detailed in Chapter Three, uses qualitative methods as it relates to the subjective nature of sexuality identified from the literature. Three early childhood teachers in the Auckland region were interviewed to gain the insight needed to illuminate the complexities associated with sexuality understandings. As a result, Chapter Four highlights the findings to come from their beliefs and attitudes about this topic. The findings inform the discussion, detailed in Chapter Five. The final chapter of this study concludes with implications for teachers and their practice surrounding sexuality in the early childhood education context. As such, Chapter Six opens the space for further research to be undertaken on this topic.

Summary

The placement of sexuality and early childhood education, together, is complex. The dismissal of sexuality matters in the lives of young children establishes the grounds for research to be carried out. As a result, I have undertaken an investigation into early childhood teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context. The following chapters will delineate the process and outcomes from this study.

Chapter 2: Review of the literature

Introduction

This section aims to highlight commonly discussed themes which are found in much of the literature on sexuality in early childhood settings. By doing so, it is hoped that a solid foundation will be laid which will encourage further debate on this topic consistent with current issues relating to sexuality matters. Where there is a lack of research undertaken in Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood contexts, literature relevant to primary and secondary schooling levels will be drawn from and relevant Australian literature also.

Significant themes identified from the literature will then be discussed, these being: 'children as innocent and sexually immature'; 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice' [DAP]; 'heteronormativity' and finally 'moral panic'. Associated concepts and theoretical perspectives will then be introduced in light of all identified themes, as they more broadly relate to sexuality matters in the early childhood context.

Literature Review

Sexuality in early childhood spaces has generally been considered taboo (Robinson 2005; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006), controversial (Davies & Robinson, 2010) and problematic (Tobin, 1997). In order to more fully explain this phenomenon, authors have attempted to define some of the prevailing belief systems which shape our attitudes and control our responses towards sexuality matters in early childhood education.

Children as innocent and sexually immature

Common constructions of childhood are grounded in the notions that children are both innocent and sexually immature. Drawing from the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), childhood is romanticised as a time of innocence and purity, in need of protection from the corruption of the outside world (Kehily, 2009). Arguably still an ideal upheld in Western culture, the notion of innocence is reflected in various

literary works on sexuality in early childhood settings. For example, Flanagan's (2011) article on children's sexual development lays claim to dispositions of innocence and immaturity as dominating current understandings of childhood within social and educational systems. In a similar respect, and perhaps more fitting with Rousseau's understanding of childhood, Surtees (2006) identifies a sort of urgency in protecting children's sexual innocence from the harsh realities of a violent and ugly world. The notion of children as innocent is still prevalent in educational institutions today, despite contemporary interrogations into the validity of such childhood constructions from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As such, teachers persist in preserving children's purity (Surtees, 2006). Robinson (2013) proposes that our desire to protect the innocent and pure child stems from Christian morals and values. Within religious discourse, childhood masturbation is viewed as immoral (Robinson, 2013) and further discouraged as a means to protect "the sinless condition of the child" (Surtees, 2006, p. 15). From this, constructions of childhood innocence and sexual immaturity are mobilised to uphold the pure and sinless child in the eyes of Christianity. The overarching view of the innocent and sexually immature child, "too young to deal with such adult issues" (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006, p. 151), may then find its justification in Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Having held an arguably dominant place in early childhood education (Fleer, 1995; Surtees, 2008), since its prevalence, Developmentally Appropriate Practice has been critiqued for applying a hegemonic understanding of childhood to the lives of young children (Davies & Robinson, 2010; Robinson, 2008; Surtees, 2005) rendering childhood to a set of predetermined ideals. While educationists question the viability of Developmentally Appropriate Practice, research is indicative of teachers drawing heavily on its theoretical stance, particularly when controversial topics like sexuality are of concern. In partial support of this, a recent study undertaken in Australia aimed at identifying the tension between providing children with knowledge about sexuality and 'appropriate' parenting conduct highlighted a common query raised by those parents within the early childhood context; "what age is 'too young' to address sexual matters with my children?" (Davies & Robinson, 2010, p. 253). The emphasis on 'too young' suggests that Developmentally Appropriate Practice is at the forefront in making decisions about childhood subjectivities. Interestingly though, the same

study exposes children as not only having knowledge of sexuality matters, but also as being capable of constructing meanings about and around sexuality.

Further to this, a three year study targeted at pre-service teachers, undertaken in Aotearoa/New Zealand within the formal schooling sector, identified shifts in thinking around appropriate sexuality education (Sinkinson, 2009). Such shifts were promoted where teachers in training had initially understood sex education to encompass a purely biological and functional stance, with some participants espousing very little support for its inclusion into early childhood settings: “I wouldn’t really want my brothers and sisters to be really learning all that kind of stuff about males / females too early. I don’t know, I didn’t grow up like that” (cited in Sinkinson, 2009, p. 427). Although by the end of the study, attitudes had shifted to a more holistic approach to sexuality education. Relational and emotional understandings of sexuality beyond biology were incorporated with a view that “...ideally, sexuality education would be introduced from an early age - even at early childhood education levels...” (Sinkinson, 2009, p. 433). This gives credence to the notion that sexuality is socially constructed (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006; Robinson, 2013; Surtees, 2006 & 2008) and not merely a product of the ‘adult world’. Despite this reasoning, it is interesting to note that the Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996) makes virtually no reference to sexuality, acting instead to silence the sexual subjectivities of young children in accordance with what is considered developmentally appropriate. A discussion surrounding the context within which *Te Whāriki* is set also neglects to include its relevance (see for example Nuttall, 2003 & 2013), implying sexuality matters to be irrelevant within an early childhood setting. In her critique of *Te Whāriki*’s ‘woven mat’ metaphor, Surtees (2003) cleverly argues that through excluding sexuality from the curriculum, normative structures are implied, otherwise they would be given recognition. The theme of heteronormativity emerges from implied normality in the early childhood setting.

Heteronormativity

A powerful discourse running through societal constructions of sexuality, heteronormativity “positions heterosexuality as an institutionalised, superior and privileged standard...” (Surtees, 2008, p. 1). As a concept, heteronormativity deems

heterosexuality as the normal and natural way of being (Gunn, 2011; Robinson, 2005; Surtees, 2008). In her discussion on heteronormativity drawn from a study conducted in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Gunn (2011) delineates its pervasiveness in early childhood education; acting as an imposition onto the culture and livelihood of those within the early childhood setting. Constituents of heteronormativity reside closely with one another through constructions of gender, sexualities and family structures (Gunn, 2011; Robinson, 2005).

Relative to family structures, heteronormativity functions to serve and perpetuate the normal and therefore privileged makeup within family formations. The 'nuclear' family in this instance is the superior way of functioning in Western society (Gunn, 2011; Robinson, 2013; Surtees, 2006) being valued for its reproductive functions (Foucault, 1978) as both parents are of the opposite sex, that is, heterosexual. In Australia, Robinson (2005) points out the assumption often made on early childhood settings enrolment forms which presumes children come from heterosexual families. With this in mind, one can more easily identify the elusive nature of heteronormativity in action. For example, in Gunn's (2011) recollection of her study in Aotearoa/New Zealand (see for example Gunn, 2008), it became apparent how children perpetuate heteronormativity through the curriculum with the example of a young boy who becomes upset at the prospect of not being able to fulfil the role of groom between two people in a role-play marriage. Specific to *Te Whāriki*, Surtees (2003 & 2008) argues that the concept of heteronormativity is reinforced through the emergent curriculum. Much the same as in the episode mentioned above, *Te Whāriki* is a holistic document, enabling children to act on heteronormative ideals with teachers generally following espoused interests of those children (Surtees, 2003 & 2008).

It is though the surveillance of normality which acts as an instrument of control (Foucault, 1979) that maintains heteronormative ideals. Those who fall outside of the 'norm' are marginalised (Surtees, 2008). Similarly, those who threaten heteronormativity strike fear (Robinson, 2005) and panic in the social order of things. Surtees (2003) identifies that surveillance is often employed by adults to ensure children's sexual behaviour does not transgress the 'norm'. The social order implies normality and is "...built on a foundation of widespread preexisting anxieties, fears and prejudices" (Tobin, 1997, p. 8) which are conceptualised through moral panics.

Moral Panic

In much the same way that surveillance works to maintain heteronormative ideals, so too does it function as an “instrument of power and control” (Surtees, 2008, p. 3) when the sexual safety of children is of concern (Jones, 2003a). Due to children’s perceived innocence and vulnerability, teachers working in their care are subsequently placed in the realm of risk where their actions are subject to the perceived prospect of sexual abuse. As an outcome of possible risk, a “code of conduct for physical contact” (Jones, 2003a, p. 106) was developed for primary teachers, in a study of 55 primary teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand (see for example Jones, 2003a). The code is suggestive of *all* touch being potentially dangerous with a near elimination of touch in its entirety as a result. The avoidance of physical contact is to ensure reduced risk to both children and teachers (Jones, 2003a). Importantly, it is surveillance which functions to fuel the anxiety experienced by teachers in a risk society. Teachers’ actions are under constant scrutiny when they are in a position of responsibility for the most innocent and vulnerable members of society. The avoidance of touch therefore reduces risk associated with the prospect of sexual abuse.

Moral panic brings to light tensions between ‘touch’ and ‘safe practice’ by teachers. Tobin (1997) relates ‘touch’ to pleasure and desire which have been practically eradicated from the early childhood context since the surge of moral panic. It has also been used as a political weapon to maintain the heteronormative structures in society (Robinson, 2008). Within Aotearoa/New Zealand, this panic was struck since the advent of a more conscientious society surrounding child sexual abuse (Farquhar, 2001). It was perhaps further perpetuated with the highly politicised case of the 1992 Christchurch Civic Crèche ordeal where four women and one man were accused of sexually abusing children in their care. All women were discharged, but Peter Ellis was sentenced to ten years imprisonment irrespective of failing to supply the courts with relevant evidence (Jones, 2003b). Openly identifying as non-heterosexual, Peter Ellis was seen to deviate from the ‘norm’ under the surveillance of society at large and therefore became a product of moral panic. Consequently, early childhood communities throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand responded with a hasty move towards ensuring centres were ‘safe’ for children. Booklets were made and policies developed around touching children along with altered architecture of

early childhood centres; making visible every aspect of potentially dangerous and risky activity by removing walls and adding glass instead to children's toilets and changing tables (Jones, 2003b). Here, surveillance is optimised to reduce risk in response to an anxious society -- maintaining the sexual safety of children in an era of moral panic.

Having discussed the most significant themes highlighted from the literature, a review of some associated concepts and theoretical perspectives will now be introduced as they relate to sexuality matters in the early childhood education context.

Associated Concepts

Difficult Knowledge

Drawn from the work of Deborah Britzman, difficult knowledge refers to knowledge which is critical for educators to engage in 'affective pedagogy' (cited in Robinson, 2013, p. 22). It is argued to be the key to learning where "resistance to knowledge is critical to informing pedagogies" (Robinson, 2013, p. 23). The sorts of topics which are often resisted against in early childhood educational contexts are those considered unsuitable to discuss with children, such as cognitively and emotionally trying subjects (Robinson, 2013). Under the guise of difficult knowledge, sexuality may be deemed irrelevant to children's lives due to their perceived innocence and sexual immaturity in the matter. Teachers may therefore resist in approaching sexuality matters with children as it is considered difficult and inappropriate to their lives.

Hierarchy of Difference

The hierarchy of difference is a concept which was developed from the examination of everyday practices associated with diversity and difference in the early childhood education context (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006). Simply put, the hierarchy of difference references how individuals may "prefer certain areas of identity" (Robinson, 2013, p. 25) such as sexuality. It "reflects the comfort / discomfort, tolerance / intolerance, and / or the level of commitment individuals have to engaging personally and professionally with certain areas of cultural diversity and difference"

(Robinson, 2013, p. 25). A number of factors contribute to the way teachers may respond to sexuality matters, such as experience with diversity, religious and cultural ties (Robinson, 2013). Such aspects can be viewed to inform the ways in which individuals construct their preferred identity in society more broadly.

Theoretical Perspectives

Social Constructionism

Common theoretical perspectives are used based on much of the literature when discussing sexuality in early childhood settings. Given that understandings of sexuality are socially constructed (Davies & Robinson, 2010; Flanagan, 2010; Surtees, 2003, 2005 & 2008), social constructionism firmly holds its place in attempting to make sense of the constructed nature of society. Burr (1995) asserts that social constructionism does not lay claim to objective facts but rather cautions us to be sceptical about how we perceive our world to be. As a contested understanding in itself, sexuality can therefore be explored using a social constructionist framework where historically and culturally specific categories are drawn on to make sense of our world (Burr, 1995). In this sense, understandings of sexuality would be culturally, socially and historically situated. Sexuality is therefore contingent on diverse perspectives and not necessarily subject to universal truths.

Poststructuralism

As a perspective, poststructuralism can be viewed as a response to the rigidity of structuralist thought (Williams, 2005). The idea behind poststructuralism incorporates a scepticism of 'objective truth' (Allen, 2005, p. 16), or 'secure knowledge' (Williams, 2005, p. 1) often linked to structuralism (Williams, 2005). In other words, poststructuralism can be compatible with the construction of sexuality understandings where sexuality does not lay claim to universal truths. Similarly, it "highlights the need to acknowledge the differences and heterogeneity that exists between individuals, groups and subject positions" (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006, p. 25). In this regard, multiple understandings of sexuality are made possible through a poststructural lens.

Queer Theory

Stemming from poststructuralism, queer theory is particularly useful in highlighting “the impossibility of any ‘natural’ sexuality” (Jagose, 1996, p. 3) further “reinforcing understandings of childhood as fluid and unstable” (Robinson, 2013, p. 5). With the view that childhood subjectivities and understandings of sexuality are not inherently fixed, queer theory provides a space to actively deconstruct hegemonic discourses such as heteronormativity within which we operate (Robinson, 2005 & 2013). This deconstruction then allows for the reconstruction of multiple identities. Looking through a ‘queer lens’ will therefore enable teachers to engage with new possibilities of ‘doing’ sexualities within the early childhood setting (Surtees, 2008). Queer theory is therefore helpful for teachers to utilise beyond the constraints of otherwise fixed understandings of sexuality.

Summary

An examination of the literature has identified the multi-faceted understandings of sexuality in society. As a controversial topic in itself, sexuality can be viewed as even more difficult to conceptualise when it is placed within the early childhood context -- children’s perceived innocence and sexual immaturity challenge the inclusion of sexuality matters in their lives. Due to the expressed controversy on the topic, early childhood teachers may find it difficult to approach sexuality matters with children and families. This is one rationale for stimulating further debate on this topic. The need to better clarify teachers’ perceptions on the matter is therefore evident; illuminating issues from which to work in future research. The question posed in this study is: “What are early childhood teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context?” As a basis from which to work, it is intended that teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality will provide a better understanding of the relationship between sexuality matters and early childhood education in order to better support teacher practice in a problematic topic.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods employed in carrying out research informed by the findings from the literature review in Chapter Two. I will begin by laying a foundation of what is considered to be fundamental in setting the direction to implement relevant methods used to answer the study's research question. I will discuss the involvement of participants, settings and artefacts in the study, with a section on ethics towards the end. It is intended that the reader should be well informed of all decisions made in carrying out this research.

Research Design

In order to proceed in formulating a suitable method to work from, I saw that it was necessary to establish what exactly I wanted to know. Having outlined in Chapter Two a research question to direct the flow of study, I am left wondering about how I might unearth the crux of this research. Pertinent to this is a query of what it means to *be*; the nature of reality, acquisition of knowledge, our relationships with participants, settings and artefacts. These questions relate to ontological and epistemological decision making which essentially drive the research process (Mutch, 2005) and will subsequently inform the methodology (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2009).

On reviewing the literature in Chapter Two, I gained a sense of the research approach that best resonated with this study. As expressed already, sexuality is subject to multiple understandings, a concept which resonates with a subjective world view of reality (Anderson, 1998; Mutch, 2005 & 2013). Consequently, I must acknowledge that within the frame of this study, objective truths become side-lined; instead giving credence to experiential understandings of life (Henn et al, 2009; Moore, 2007). With this in mind, I am readily able to adopt a poststructuralist perspective as it incorporates scepticism of 'objective truth' and 'scientific rationality' (Allen, 2005, p. 16). In a similar way, a constructionist way of knowing does not

presume to measure reality but rather seeks to make sense of "qualities peculiar to the human consciousness" (Henn et al, 2009, p. 15). Holding such views should allow me to explore teacher subjectivities and gain rich insight into their beliefs and attitudes. For these reasons, I am immediately drawn to the qualitative paradigm which signals an inquiry into the meaning underlying all gathered data (Merriam, 1998). This is in contrast to a quantitative approach which rather focuses on numerical information through a positivist stance and deductive logic (Mutch, 2013). These fundamental constituents are, to an extent directive of and lay the foundation for, an exploratory qualitative research design.

As a relatively small project, the scope of data should remain succinct; and while the research question might at first glance signal a broad topic, it is the application of a case-study which can keep it tight. Qualitative case-study research has a common definition which categorises it as a *bounded* system, generating rich, in-depth data (Creswell, 1998; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 1998) from fewer participants than that of quantitative research. While there is confusion over what is considered to be *binding* (Glesne, 2011), for the sake of clarity I will consider the collection of beliefs and attitudes in relation to sexuality as a single case, *bound* by the early childhood education context.

Methods

In this section, I will begin with a consideration of possible limitations to research before launching into the crux of the method. In doing this, it is hoped that a better context is set for the reader and practical constraints identified, which will better guide the overall layout of the study.

Contextual Limitations

I saw that it was necessary to establish the permissible grounds within which the study is placed, to better inform the subsequent methodological decisions. Glesne (2011) highlights the importance of doing this, as it sets the scene for the reader and provides them with a relevant frame to interpret those decisions accordingly. In a similar light, Davidson and Tolich (2003) caution researchers of time frame and word length constraints as it affects the scope of research. With this in mind, I became

conscious of the breadth this study warranted and so proceeded to think about how I might approach a relatively small project, with practical limitations of both time and size. The decisions I made are as follows.

Sample selection

Employing a single qualitative case study allowed me to gain in-depth analyses from fewer participants. As a consequence, I queried just how 'few' would be sufficient for this project. As already mentioned, practical constraints such as time and size are of considerable relevance here and this is perhaps a starting point for evaluating the number of participants used. Mutch (2006) explicates how rigour and scrutiny are used to draw insightful analyses from as few as three participants. Concerns mount, however, when sample size is reduced in qualitative research. The inability to draw generalisations from a single case with fewer participants is sometimes viewed as a limitation to research (Merriam, 1998), particularly when compared with a quantitative paradigm which generalisations are often made due to vast sample sizes (Yin, 2009). The qualitative approach, however, reminds me that the point is to "provide perspective rather than truth" (Patton, 1990, p. 491) where rich descriptions are drawn from a smaller sample. I decided to follow along the lines of Mutch (2006) and start with a base number of three participants. In order to yield the most data from a small sample, I needed to ensure that participants would be well placed so as to elicit the information required to generate a pool of ideas from which to work; that is, early childhood teachers who have been employed within the early childhood education context for some time. Purposive sampling would help me achieve this. Burns (2000) states the benefits of purposive sampling as it serves a purpose to gain an understanding of a particularly chosen phenomenon; in this study that is attitudes towards sexuality. Similarly, Merriam (1998) suggests using purposive sampling when the researcher wants to "gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which most can be learned" (p. 61). In light of this, my selection depended on teachers' ability to articulate themselves well from the relative early childhood centres. From here, I decided to contact early childhood teachers with whom I had an association either through work in past practicum's or university study and who I believed would be able to express their views openly and willingly. As a result, three teachers, from two different early childhood centres around Auckland, expressed interest in the project and agreed to be involved.

Data collection

My aim here was to elicit authentic data from the participants in a way that would fuse with the focus of the study. With a relatively small sample size, I saw that it was best to undertake individual interviews with each of the teachers. Generally, there are three methods of one-on-one interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured (see for example Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 1998). Patton (2002) highlights how interviewing can be poorly done and my status as a novice interviewer was cause for concern in this respect. My intention was to create a sense of ease during the interviews; a little structure to securely rest on without compromising the authenticity of responses. With this in mind, I settled with a semi-structured format. Glesne (2011) considers semi-structured interviews as a means to be prepared with certain things you want to know, at the same time having the flexibility to probe deeper into points of interest.

Feeling satisfied that the semi-structured interview was an appropriate method to employ, I proceeded to script a draft interview guide with possible lines of probing from which to work. Initially, I undertook a pilot interview with a fellow early childhood researcher to ensure my questions were well framed to engage the focus of the study. The pilot interview served me well and highlighted areas for development. Firstly, I recognised that I needed to reframe some of the questions in order to really induce some 'meaty' responses. Maxwell (1996) states that the development of an interview guide "requires creativity and insight, rather than a mechanical translation of the research questions" (p. 74); and it was here that I found my questions to be too prescriptive of my overarching focus. After some minor adjustments, I was left with an all-encompassing final interview guide (see appendix 1) which I saw to be helpful in gaining the insight that I needed. Participants would, however, be provided with an interview guide prior to the commencement of the interview (see appendix 2) which would be different from the formalised one I would use myself. I wanted to do this to ensure teachers felt ready and able to discuss sexuality matters within the early childhood context at the time of interviews without leading with the exact questions being asked. It was hoped that in doing so, responses would not be scripted but rather free-flowing and authentic.

Finally, I decided to make a record of interviews using an audio recorder. This strategy is perhaps most commonly used (Merriam, 1998) and serves to ensure that “everything said is preserved for analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 87). Similarly, Henn, Weinstein and Foard (2006) outline the benefits of using audio recorders as it offers “a more complete representation of what was said” (p. 192). The audio recordings would then be used to draw up transcripts in written form to begin analysing data. Henn et al. (2006) make reference to transcription methods enabling a more accurate portrayal between the spoken word and what is being transcribed. I therefore aimed at using both the audio recorder and transcriptions as a means to analysing data more accurately.

Data Analysis

Much of the literature in early childhood sexuality matters is constructed around discourse analysis (see for example Gunn, 2008; Surtees, 2006). While this method could have been applicable, I wanted to use a different approach which I thought would support the aims of my particular study in a more suitable way. I glanced back to what I set out to achieve which was to gain insight from teachers’ beliefs and attitudes surrounding sexuality in the early childhood education context. With this in mind, I saw the need to employ a method of analysis which would essentially highlight core issues arising from the participants responses. One such way that would suit my aim is thematic analysis. This method of analysis is referred to by most as searching for core themes throughout data (Glesne, 2011; Mutch 2013) and relies heavily on a coding strategy. Part of this process required me to delve deeper and deeper into text, searching for core meaning. It allowed me to "explore how categorizations or thematic ideas represented by the codes vary from case to case, from setting to setting or from incident to incident" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 48).

This type of search, for deeply embedded core meanings, is a form of rigour used in analysing data and lends itself to a constant comparative approach when comparing incidents and themes. Taken from LeCompte's and Preissle's seven step strategy (cited in Mutch 2013), I began the process by first highlighting every item of interest, one at a time, from the transcripts, which caught my attention (see appendix 3). I then set about comparing and contrasting these points of interest between transcripts, with the relevant literature firmly set in my mind. Finding commonalities

and contradictions in text helped to establish the bigger picture; that is, significant patterns and the emergence of categories. Having coded particular points of interest into their respective categories, I was better equipped to start forming linkages between guiding literature and everyday practices in the early childhood education context. Finding relationships in text is part of the constant comparative model drawing from LeCompte and Preissle (cited in Mutch, 2013) and perhaps works to clarify the bigger picture in a more robust way. Creswell (1998) highlights how the constant comparative method is useful in 'saturating' data until no further information can be obtained; and it was at this point that I came to the final stages of analysis. Mutch (2013) phrases this stage as arriving at a "tentative explanation or theory" (p. 164). Having sufficiently coded all data through the constant comparative method, I arrived at an all encompassing conceptualisation which lent itself to the 'explanation' as mentioned above. Satisfied that I had adequately 'saturated' data, I concluded the analysis with three overarching themes; *Location*, *Exposure* and *Conceptualisation*. These themes gave voice to the data gathered and are discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Ethics

This section will detail some of the ethical concerns under consideration that are specific to this research project. Such concerns stem from an increased emphasis on ordinary citizens as opposed to the research establishment itself (Barnes, 1979); and given the sensitive nature of this project, including people as the primary source of data, it seems paramount to consider how best to protect them from any possible negative side effects while remaining able to report such findings. As Punch (1998) says, "The questions involved confront us with fundamental dilemmas, such as the protection of the subjects versus the freedoms to conduct research and publish research findings." (Punch, 1998, p. 167). From this, I will address first the accessibility of literature from interested parties and then continue through with the role that both the participants and I have in the research process, all within an ethical framework.

Access to reviewed literature

On reviewing the literature used in Chapter Two, I had identified a gap in the research base surrounding sexuality matters in early childhood settings. As a result, it became difficult to locate primary data sources which were of specific relevance to my topic. I queried this issue with my supervisor and was delighted to be granted access to another student's thesis that had previously explored similar content in Aotearoa/New Zealand (see for example Surtees, 2006). Silverman (2005) welcomes this sort of data gathering for analysis as an effective means of sharing useful information between interested parties. To ensure, however, that such a reading of this thesis was definitely within ethical bounds, I sought to make contact with this past student and express my gratitude for her permission to access her thesis. Not only was my approach to communicate welcomed and reciprocated, but having been granted access to such a useful research project, I was made privy to new avenues being opened up to me for further literature to be sourced.

Trustworthiness

To ensure both the process and findings were trustworthy, I wished to start by remaining reflexive throughout the entire journey. To do this, I first had to position myself as a researcher within the study; 'who am I and how will this affect the interplay between me and the research?' It became important to acknowledge my attributes and subjectivities as they can have an influence over the research process (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Being aware of 'who I am', and how my values and assumptions interact with the research will reduce the risk of misinterpretation (Henn et al, 2009). This is a reflexive tool used to limit the effect of researcher responses to the participants on an unconscious level, making data collection more authentic to the participants and not subject to co-construction between myself (the researcher) and the teachers (researched) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Participants

Before embarking on the interviews themselves, I had to ensure that all the correct procedures were carried out, namely, in terms of informed consent from the participants and relative gatekeepers of those early childhood centres. Gaining formal consent is a fundamental aspect to ethically sound research practice (Henn et al, 2006) and serves as a platform for participants to show their willingness to be

involved in the research based on relevant information provided to them about the research itself. An important component to informed consent is the provision of participant withdrawal or declination from the research (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Glesne, 2011; Henn et al, 2006) which perhaps frames the teachers as empowered subjects within the process (Glesne, 2011); an aspect which contributes to the placement of citizens above the research establishment in this project. From this, consent forms were distributed to interested parties for their consideration and formal involvement (see appendices 4 to 11). Teachers and their managers or head teachers signed all the necessary documents and I began my journey into the unknown.

After the interviews were conducted, I wanted to give participants the opportunity to revise the content of their interviews once transcripts had been completed. I genuinely felt it was my duty as an ethical researcher to provide participants with the opportunity to 'clear up' any possible misunderstandings. Merriam (1998) refers to this simple strategy as 'member checks' which ultimately seeks to validate data; results are deemed plausible (or not) from those teachers from whom it was derived. I found this to be particularly useful in contributing to the trustworthiness of findings as it limited the potential for misinterpretation of data (Henn et al, 2009). Again, this placed emphasis on a citizenry focus as opposed to the research establishment itself (Barnes, 1979) which I felt was an important component to sound ethical practice within this particular research project.

Summary

The methodological approach to this study was grounded in the constructed nature of this topic. From there, matters of sample selection, data gathering strategies and ethical considerations were all undertaken in a manner consistent with the aims of the research and the relevant theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter highlights the significant findings to come from this study, which set out to understand early childhood teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context. This was achieved through the use of a methodology. The data were gathered and analysed using qualitative methods detailed in Chapter Three. At this point, it is my aim to present the preliminary findings based on data collected within the study. I will do this by providing an overview of all extrapolated themes from the interviews with three teachers. The themes are, as they have been identified in relation to the research topic, *Location*, *Exposure* and *Conceptualisation*. These will be outlined in chronological order. It is important to note that the themes identified seek to expose the complexities which underpin the multi-faceted understandings of sexuality in the early childhood context.

Location

The *location* sets the context for the ways in which teachers come to view sexuality. It became clear that their understandings were built on an awareness of cultural, ethnic, religious and community based categories. These aspects extended to a debate between public and/or private responsibilities within the realm of sexuality in early childhood education where participants struggled with concepts and ideas relative to such spaces. Together, these *locations* lay the foundation for beliefs and attitudes which permeate the early childhood scene surrounding sexuality matters.

All participants made reference to the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the people to whom they were referring. Comments were often made in relation to a constructed understanding of sexuality within diverse groups of people, in some way. Simply put, *“a lot of it has to do with the way our society views sex and sexuality”* (Melanie, [pseudonym used]). More specifically, Krystle and Amie [pseudonyms used] highlighted possible tensions between people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds when relaying episodes around sexuality. For example, Krystle

identified an instance where one of her colleagues reacted in a very different way from herself when talking about sexuality in the early childhood context: *“it obviously really shocked her...because she comes from a very traditional, very Maori family”*. Again, expressing that *“it’s a cultural thing”* (Krystle). Similarly, Amie referred to possible discomfort experienced by an Indian Muslim family in her centre when discussing masturbation: *“they were really upset that we had used that word...But I think there were cultural issues there too”*.

Less prominent throughout all three participants’ responses were references to the religious and community based categories. Notably, tensions arose when Melanie and Krystle discussed sexuality matters in relation to such categories. Melanie was the only teacher who directly referred to religion in her comments, often drawing from her personal experience growing up in a Christian environment. For example, Melanie was told in church that *“masturbation is wrong. It is a sin. Never masturbate”* (quoting from a sermon); further referring to the *“demonisation of sexuality”* within Christianity. Interestingly, Amie, who never explicitly mentioned religion as a determinant of sexuality understandings, articulated how masturbation was *“something that you don’t do”* in relation to growing up in her family context. This comment perhaps blends with Christian values surrounding sexuality and further highlights how sexuality understandings are *location* specific. In terms of community, however, Krystle in her opening remarks placed *“sexuality of the community”* alongside sexuality of the children and teachers. This statement highlighted how Krystle was aware that understandings of sexuality were contingent on different categories. Later in the interview, Krystle unpacked the ‘sexuality of the community’ and expressed concern for children within: *“what does worry me in this particular community is that nothing’s ever explained”*.

The Public/Private Debate

Debates between the public and private realm of sexuality emerged to form a separate *location*, from the combination of cultural, ethnic, religious and community based categories. It was discovered that the tensions between sexuality as a public or private responsibility worked on three levels.

The first level was relatively straightforward inasmuch as two of the three participants made the distinction between the centre (public) and home (private). This was in accordance with appropriate sexual behaviour in children. Both Amie and Melanie, who are from the same centre, spoke about situations where they told the children involved, or parents of those children, that certain behaviours are best kept outside of the centre environment. For example, Amie responded to one of the children who was exposing themselves and masturbating in the playground by saying: *“that’s not appropriate here...you don’t do that at pre-school”*. Similarly, Melanie found herself in a position which required conversing with parents whose children demonstrated sexualised behaviour, saying to them: *“you need to tell your kids you can’t do this at pre-school”*. Both of these instances refer to the public/private *location* of what is considered appropriate behaviour between the centre and elsewhere.

The second level of the public/private debate highlights the responsibility between teachers (public) and parents (private) as far as sexuality education is concerned within the early childhood context. In particular, Melanie struggled with whether or not sexuality education should be a teacher’s or parents’ responsibility. Despite her unwillingness, Melanie surrendered responsibility to the parental (private) realm, based on the society in which we live. Melanie explicitly states, *“right now in the society we live in, I feel like it’s [sexuality] part of the belief structure. And as part of the belief structure, it’s the parents’ responsibility”*.

The third level extends a little wider and refers to broader social implications such as media and policy (public) and elsewhere. Melanie spoke directly about the media’s role in educating children about sexuality and expressed grave concern for *“dangerous parenting...if you’re leaving them to learn about sex and sexuality from the media. They’re getting a very warped idea of what is healthy and what is normal”*. This comment of Melanie’s highlights how different media may construct understandings of sexuality. It also raises a tension; Melanie’s struggle to situate sexuality education exposes a conflict between sexuality education being a parent’s responsibility and the prospect of ‘dangerous parenting’. In terms of policy, however, participants struggled to locate any formal mention of sexuality within the early childhood context, instead extrapolating it to relate to child abuse policy (Krystle) or nappy changing policy (Amie and Melanie).

Exposure

The second major theme to emerge from this study was the notion of *exposure*. An individual's access and experience shapes their conception of sexuality matters. Different mediums through which teachers engaged with ideas surrounding sexuality in the early childhood context were identified. The first medium was taken in an official capacity to encompass 'curriculum', 'policy initiatives' and 'teacher education'. The second medium focused on the 'experiential' value of an individual's understanding of sexuality. Together, these mediums comprised the level of *exposure* to sexuality matters which, in turn, was mediated by *location*.

Curriculum

There was a shared concern between all three participants over the lack of acknowledgment of sexuality matters in curriculum. Both Amie and Melanie, who are from the same centre, expressed this concern in much the same way as one another when the search for guidance became paramount. For example, Melanie states on a number of occasions her desire for recognition of sexuality in the curriculum to better inform practice: *"I don't think it's a particularly helpful document for teachers and their practice around sexuality... There really aren't any guidelines for teachers who might not know where to go"*. Consequently, Melanie felt her practice surrounding sexuality matters was backward, explaining that curriculum should inform practice but in the case of sexuality, it is reversed. This conception resonated with Amie's view when she says *"sexuality seems to be something that you deal with. It's the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff kind of thing"*. Krystle expressed her concern in a different way, relating it to the 'holistic child'. Krystle stated that: *"if we're going to look at the holistic child, which is what Te Whāriki is about, then you need to look at the spiritual elements of a child and the sexual elements of a child; but we don't...it just never gets talked about; certainly not in an official capacity"*.

Policy Initiatives

In terms of policy initiatives, participants once again struggled to locate any formal mention of sexuality within policy. Instead, Krystle and Melanie made reference to child abuse policies, as linking with sexual abuse. Many of the dilemmas Krystle discussed in our interview were those surrounding sexual abuse. This is perhaps an

example of the level of *exposure* being mediated by *location*, given that Krystle's particular community in which she works seemed to encounter higher levels of sexual abuse when compared with the discussions from the community in which both Amie and Melanie work. Nevertheless, Krystle mentioned that *"there's no reference to sex at all in any of our policies except for child abuse policies...but they're not helpful in terms of knowing what abuse looks like"*. Coincidentally, and while Melanie never elaborated on personal accounts of sexual abuse, a similar assertion was made that teachers are not trained to see the signs of sexual abuse. Melanie stated that *"they don't know who they are supposed to contact. They don't know the procedures and I actually think teachers should be informed about keeping children sexually safe"*. At this point it became clear that the absence of sexuality in both curriculum and policy made it difficult for teachers to know what to do under various circumstances.

Teacher Education

Some teachers in this study experienced uncertainty around their practice due to the exclusion of sexuality matters in teacher education. It was found that a lack of teacher education made sexuality matters in early childhood education inaccessible to their practice. It is important to note that Krystle has been working in the field for 17 years and so her absence from this discussion was likely because her education took place a longer time ago. Melanie and Amie, however, are both provisionally registered teachers, having more recently completed their tertiary studies. Melanie comes from a background in sexuality and gender rights activism and has had greater exposure to sexuality matters. In saying this, she struggled with the lack of education surrounding sexuality in her tertiary studies and idealised that sexuality was instead *"more of a knowledge based thing"* and *"part of education"*. When referring to children experimenting with 'I'll show you mine, if you show me yours' (exposing their body parts to one another) in the centre in which she works, Melanie insisted that *"it's quite normal. But for a lot of teachers, they don't know that because the reading isn't part of what you do in your studies"*. This lack of inclusion of sexuality in teacher education is perhaps further highlighted through Amie's personal uncertainty of how to respond to some sexuality matters with children when they arise; *"Was I dealing with this situation correctly? Did I say enough?"*. Amie also

expressed a personal quest for knowledge not supported in teacher education, saying *“I’m still trying to figure out for myself, are children sexual?”*

Experience

The second medium through which teachers engage with ideas surrounding sexuality, relates to an individual's exposure to sexuality matters more personally. Attention is given to a participant's experience, which influences their conception of sexuality within the early childhood context. All three participants engaged with this medium in much the same way bringing to the fore some core beliefs permeating the early childhood scene. Krystle identifies the *“huge, huge gulf of knowledge”* that exists between different people's experience of sexuality in the world. Krystle later acknowledged that her acceptance for diversity likely stemmed from her exposure to having gay and lesbian friends and concluded that *“My lived experience is very much more open around sexuality and diversity”*. Her experience of sexuality was compared with her colleague's, coming from a different cultural background. Krystle remarked that *“it's not homophobia with hatred. It's homophobia with ignorance”* when those colleagues would talk about lesbian couples kissing, in a gossipy way. Amie relayed a similar scenario where some colleagues expressed discomfort when discussing dating between same-sex couples as opposed to heterosexual couples. Melanie, however, talks about experience in the world of sexuality impacting teacher practice: *“your own experience colour what you think is normal...the teachers who are quite heteronormative reinforcing parents tend to be very heteronormative reinforcing teachers”*. Despite the prevalence of heteronormative and/or homophobic responses among staff, all three participants wished for a more neutral and accepting approach to diversity. Most eloquently put, *“whoever you like, you like”* was Krystle's view of acceptance and diversity.

Conceptualisation

The final major theme to emerge from this study is around the *conceptualisation* of child versus adult. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood context is conceptualised through a separation between a child's world and an adult's world. This *conceptualisation* was informed by *exposure*; although not always in the most direct of ways. A combination of explicit and implicit messages

illuminated silences in text, which later conceptualised sexuality understandings. Here, a Venn diagram is used to explore the relationship between a child's world of sexuality and an adult's world and helps to highlight the ways in which the separation is manifested.

Teachers' conceptualisation of sexuality

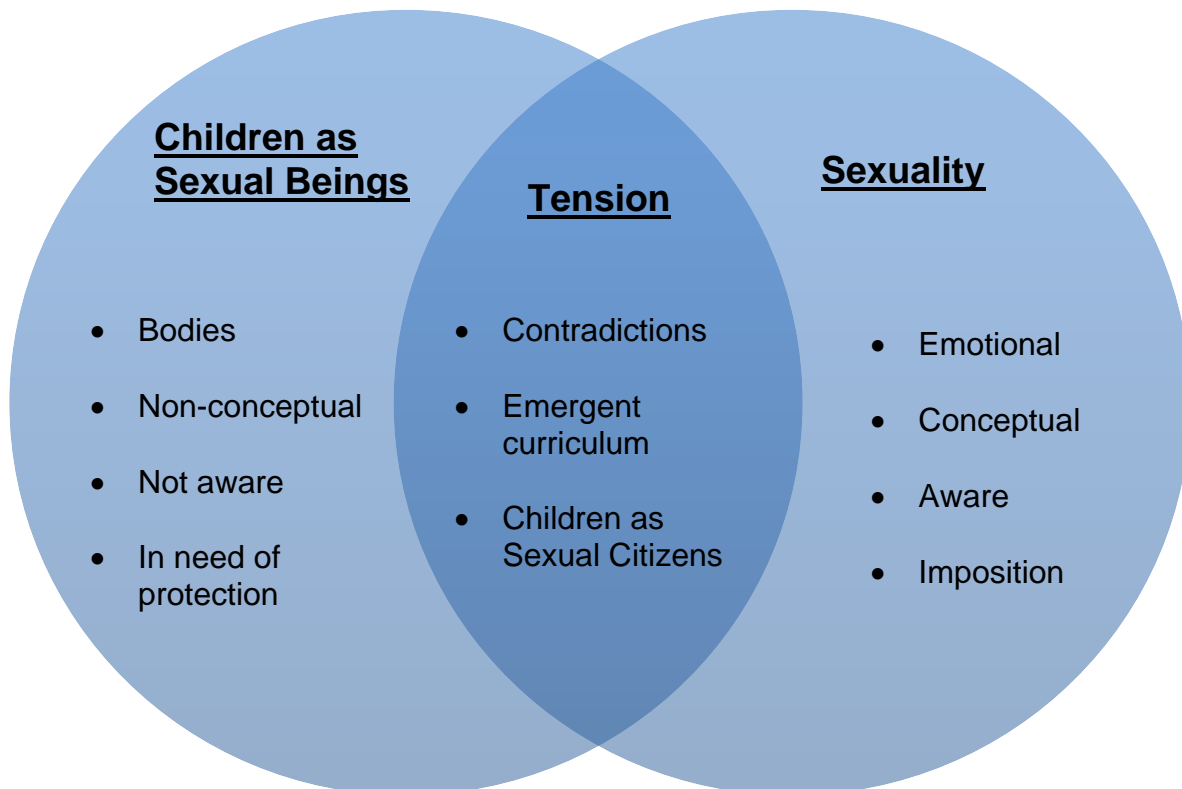


Figure 1.

Further support for this conceptualisation is drawn from the way in which the teachers, in their own way, explicated the separation. For example, Krystle plainly stated *“there’s a separation between if you’re talking about the spectrum and if you’re talking about children as sexual beings”*. Similarly, Melanie said *“there’s a difference between sexuality and sexualised behaviour”*. Finally, Amie attempted to explain what she meant by the separation and said *“there’s a difference between children being sexual, which I think they are innately or it’s something they grow to be, and then sexualising; I think there’s a difference”*. The hidden messages in text

affirmed these statements and helped to label the child's world as 'children as sexual beings' and the adult's world as 'sexuality'.

Children as sexual beings

All participants referred to the child's world of sexuality as extending primarily to their bodies and behaviours. This was evidenced through multiple recounts of children experimenting with body parts. The typical 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours' scenario became commonplace throughout many of the episodes discussed by teachers, particularly Amie and Melanie, who work at the same centre. Melanie clearly sums up their version of 'children as sexual beings' in her statement:

"The whole 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours' to me is not part of sexuality. It is sexual. It's obviously sexualised behaviour. So in that sense it's got something to do with sexuality. But to me it's not any sort of indication of where they're going to go from now. It's part of what I consider "normal" development and experimentation..."

Interestingly, despite Melanie's consideration of what constitutes normal development, precautions were taken in the centre in which she works in response to children's curiosity with body parts. After staff had discovered children were taking photos of their genitals, all private spaces were removed so children were within view at all times, in all areas of the centre. The removal of hidden spaces to ensure children were not privy to sexualised behaviour is perhaps mobilised because "*it's that fear of saying children are sexual*" (Amie).

Sexuality

The adult's world of sexuality came about in opposition to the child's world, as illustrated by the diagram. For example, children experimented a lot with body parts but were often viewed by teachers as having no conceptual understanding of their actions. When relaying a story about children and touching, Melanie simply stated "*they don't know what that means*". Her comment implies that adults attach emotional and conceptual understandings to sexualised actions, of which, in contrast, children are perhaps incapable. Krystle spoke about bodies in a different way -- in terms of their protection. Krystle referred to child abuse policy as part of keeping children's bodies safe from sexual abuse, which the participants generally viewed as an imposition most typically from adults. In light of keeping children's

bodies safe, Melanie expressed concern over her role as an early childhood teacher and said that *“even as a women, there is always the thought of avoiding situations where you might be accused of something inappropriate”*. Amie engaged all components to the opposition (see figure 1) when she described an encounter at the centre in which she works. Children were found kissing and this proved difficult for her, *“because I’m not sure if I’m putting my own sexuality onto it. My views of what a kiss means”* (Amie).

Tension

The space between the child’s world and the adult’s world of sexuality is significant. It emerged where contradictions within the separation were evident, and a tension surfaced. The emergence of tensions was twofold: first, where children engaged in ‘sexuality’ typical to the adult world and second, where teachers expressed a desire to break down the barrier between the separation. Krystle provided an example of children engaging in ‘sexuality’ and outlined that *“There have been children who I have definitely felt were on the sexuality spectrum already and that actually informed my teaching them”*. This quote identified a contradiction with the separation, suggesting children may become part of the adult world of ‘sexuality’. It also showed the willingness of some teachers to break down the boundary between the separation, and acknowledge children as sexual citizens beyond just their bodies. Krystle also explained how children’s role play now extends to *“mummies and mummies and daddies and daddies”* which highlights children’s awareness of diverse family structures as typical in the adult world of ‘sexuality’.

A combination of Melanie and Krystle’s views brought about a tension when relating their comments to children in need of protection. For example, Melanie asserts that *“it is quite normal in our society and it is considered a parent’s right in a way to shield their child from sexual knowledge”*. Krystle responded to this sort of situation in our interview and said: *“the problem is, that when kids do see stuff, that’s fine as long as there’s knowledge imparted to them and sort of talking about what they’ve seen. But that just doesn’t happen because sexuality and sex is not discussed”*. Notably, Krystle originally said that her lived experience is much more open around sexuality. Her willingness to impart knowledge in this respect, is not only an example of a teacher’s desire to break the boundary between a child’s world and an adult’s world

of sexuality but it also demonstrates how the level of *exposure* may inform an individual's *conceptualisation*. For Krystle, her lived experience guides her views on sexuality matters.

Summary

In this study text derived from teacher interviews, has been analysed rigorously to delve into the world(s) of sexuality within the early childhood setting. Teachers provided their insight on the matter and this informed the emergence of themes pertinent to this study. It was found that teachers' understanding of sexuality was contingent on a number of factors. *Location* set the context for understandings and influenced the level of *exposure* to sexuality matters. From this, a *conceptualisation* was formed to make sense of teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings with reference to early childhood teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood context. The study found that the way in which teachers conceptualised their understandings of sexuality was indicative of historical and concrete locations and their greater exposure to sexuality matters. Three themes were identified in the findings and will be discussed in relation to literature relevant to this study. The themes are: *Location*, *Exposure* and *Conceptualisation*.

Location

Teachers in this current study exhibited an awareness of the historically understood constructions of sexuality. Tensions arose between different constructions of sexuality which were contingent on different *locations*. Four significant categories were identified; culture, ethnicity, religion and community. These categories lay the historical locations from which sexuality understandings evolve and extend to a debate between public and/or private responsibilities within the realm of sexuality in early childhood education. Together, the 'historical locations' and the 'public/private debate' set the context for teachers' understandings of sexuality in the early childhood setting.

Historical locations

The cultural, ethnic, religious and community based categories highlighted the ways in which teachers come to view sexuality. As a result, multiple understandings were identified which gave rise to tensions between varied perspectives. From the findings, the cultural and ethnic categories were most obviously located and assumed a more simple distinction between diverse perspectives on sexuality matters. Religion and community, however, were not as easily identified because fewer teachers made a direct connection with those categories. In sum, the construction of multiple understandings of sexuality can be understood through a

social constructionist framework. Burr (1995) asserts that social constructionism does not lay claim to objective facts but rather brings to attention the different ways we perceive our world; as historically and culturally specific. Social constructionism therefore affirms the idea that sexuality is socially constructed (Davies & Robinson, 2010; Flanagan, 2011; Robinson, 2013; Surtees, 2003, 2005, 2006 & 2008). Sexuality as socially constructed resonates with the findings from this study where diverse perspectives were contingent on different categories.

An important finding to come from this study was the reference to Muslim and Christian religions made by two of the participants. It is important because it holds a strong connection with much of the literature; and more specifically highlights the ways in which some understandings of sexuality are constructed. As a result, some of the prevailing belief systems which inform teachers' *conceptualisation* of sexuality are brought to light. One of the participants in this study quoted a sermon heard in her childhood which relegated masturbation to a sinful act; something that should not be done. In this respect, the reference to religion is attached to the Christian morals and values of childhood purity, where masturbation would be viewed as impure and sinful. Surtees (2006) references childhood purity in relation to Christian morals and values as, "the sinless condition of the child" (p. 15). The literature highlighted that conceptions of children as innocent and sexually immature are mobilised within religious discourse, and masturbation is discouraged as a result (Robinson, 2013; Surtees; 2006). This would explain the connections made in the findings between religious and community based categories where one of the participants says the problem with her community is that nothing is ever explained to children. Particular community beliefs may be indicative of Christian morals and values where conceptions of children as innocent and sexually immature are used to shield children from sexuality knowledge.

Public/Private Debate

Interesting in this study was the placement of sexuality matters in the concrete *locations* of the public and private spaces. Teachers struggled to place sexuality matters between public and/or private responsibilities in the wider public realm. The findings highlighted that the reason for such struggle stems from the contested nature of sexuality, as it is socially constructed and therefore subject to multiple

understandings. The findings revealed that teachers in this study often surrendered the responsibility of sexuality matters to the private realm which was constitutive of the home environment. This was despite teachers expressing a desire to more formally involve sexuality matters in some way into the early childhood education context. The concept of 'difficult knowledge' (Robinson, 2013) can be used to explain the reason for teachers placing sexuality matters in the private realms, outside of their responsibility. Robinson (2013) discusses difficult knowledge in relation to sexuality having been socio-culturally constructed as difficult. The emotional concept of 'shame' is linked to sexuality being constructed as difficult knowledge. Robinson (2013) states that "shame can occur...when one is involved in behaviours considered inappropriate according to sexual conduct norms" (p. 23). The children referred to by the teachers involved in this study as having indulged in activities such as masturbation and genital exposure, were considered by them as demonstrating shameful behaviours, particularly when children are viewed as innocent and sexually immature. Matters were therefore placed in the private realm of the home environment and therefore perceived as difficult knowledge.

Teachers struggled to locate any formal mention of sexuality in policy documents. Teachers in this study made links, instead, with child abuse policy and nappy changing policy as they searched for ways to relate policies to sexuality in the early childhood context. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two did not discuss the absence of sexuality in official policy outside of curriculum, however it did identify that sexuality matters were excluded from *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) and contextual discussions pertaining to early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand (see for example Nuttall, 2003 & 2013). According to the literature, the absence of sexuality matters from policy could be explained through the prevalence of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (see for example Fler, 1995; Surtees, 2008). While it is not obvious in the first instance, a connection is made between hegemonic understandings of childhood (Davies & Robinson, 2010; Robinson, 2008; Surtees, 2005) and policy content. In other words, when children are viewed as innocent and sexually immature, sexuality matters are rendered irrelevant to their developmental stage, and therefore exempt from policy. This hegemonic understanding of childhood sexuality is further highlighted in Sinkinson's (2009) study which identified how pre-service teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand initially thought children should not be

privity to sexuality knowledge, as they were too young. It can then be taken that Developmentally Appropriate Practice informs policy content, where children are viewed as innocent and sexually immature.

Exposure

Teachers' *conceptualisation* was informed by their level of *exposure* to sexuality matters. The level of *exposure* encompassed two mediums which teachers engaged with ideas surrounding sexuality in the early childhood context. The first medium highlighted a common concern held by all participants in this study that is that the lack of acknowledgement of sexuality matters in curriculum, policy and teacher education provided limited guidelines for teachers and their practice surrounding sexuality with children. The second medium highlighted how teachers' personal experience of sexuality informs their practice and conception of some sexuality matters.

Curriculum, policy and teacher education

A significant finding to come from this study was the shared concern of all participants about the inaccessibility of sexuality matters in curriculum, policy and teacher education. Teachers felt that their practice surrounding sexuality with children was not supported because of the exclusion of sexuality matters in any official capacity; guidelines were found to be necessary, yet inadequate. Current literature outlines the need for sexuality matters to be more formally recognised, but mostly in relation to teacher practice surrounding inclusion of diverse identities. In her study on sexualities in early childhood education, Surtees (2006) identifies an implication from the research. It was [suggested] that early childhood teachers are insufficiently prepared to fulfil responsibilities of inclusive education. This current study, in part, [confirms] Surtees implication, that teachers are unprepared. However, it moves beyond inclusive education to encompass sexuality matters, more generally, as its focus.

Experience

Participants in this study made reference to their lived experience of sexuality matters. As a result, some core beliefs which permeate the early childhood scene

were brought to light. It was found that individuals, who were exposed to diverse groups of people, such as gay, lesbian or transgendered identities, were much more open and accepting of diversity. Conversely, some colleagues, spoken about by participants, who tended to espouse prejudice were perhaps limited in their exposure to difference or who came from different cultural backgrounds. As a consequence, the discourse of heteronormativity emerged based on individuals' broader experience of sexuality matters. Despite participants in this study demonstrating a more open and neutral approach to sexuality, heteronormative responses were still prevalent based on the experience of colleagues about whom they were speaking. Homophobia and discomfort were expressed when issues of same-sex couples were discussed among colleagues. Heteronormative discourse privileges heterosexuality as the normal and natural way of being (Gunn, 2008 & 2011; Robinson, 2005 & 2013; Surtees, 2008) and homophobia is an outcome of preferred heterosexuality. The emergence of heteronormativity in this study aligns with Gunn's (2008) assertion that heteronormativity is pervasive in early childhood education. In this study, the concept of 'hierarchy of difference' (see for example Robinson & Jones Diaz 2006) can be used to explain the connection between an individual's experience and the preferencing of certain identities as heterosexual. This concept describes the ways in which individuals come to preference certain identities, such as the privileging of heterosexuality in heteronormative discourse (Robinson, 2013). An individual's experience with difference or lack thereof, speaks to the discomfort expressed by colleagues when same-sex couples were the topic of conversation. Cultural and religious values are also tied to the preferencing of identities within the hierarchy of difference (Robinson, 2013) which further supports the assertion that *exposure* is mediated by *location* in this study.

Conceptualisation

Teachers' *conceptualisation* of sexuality in the early childhood context was informed by the level of *exposure*. The main finding to come from this study was that teachers conceptualised a separation between a child's world and an adult's world of sexuality. Figure 1 uses a Venn diagram to highlight the ways in which the separation manifested. From this, a space in between emerged. The space identifies

contradictions with the separation and is an area where teachers critically engaged with sexuality matters in the early childhood education context.

The separation

The separation between a child's world and an adult's world of sexuality was conceptualised in a number of ways. Common themes identified in the literature help to explain the ways in which the separation is both developed and maintained. However, children as innocent and sexually immature are perhaps the most prominent theme in establishing the separation more broadly. The Venn diagram (Figure 1) highlights the separation conceptualised by teachers in this study. Flanagan's (2011) article on children's sexual development claims that dispositions such as innocence and sexual immaturity dominate current understandings of childhood in educational systems. The findings from this study affirm Flanagan's assertion, where teachers placed children outside of the realm of the adult's world of sexuality. In doing so, it is implied that teachers viewed children as 'sexual beings in the making'.

Participants in this study referred to the child's world of sexuality as extending primarily to their bodies. Children experimenting with their body parts was highlighted as, "*normal development and experimentation*" (Melanie), with little to no ability of conceptualising their actions into an affective state of understanding. Developmentally Appropriate Practice is a theme from the literature which would explain teachers' conception of what constitutes normal sexual development in young children, that is, experimentation with their body parts with no emotional attachment or conceptual awareness. Developmentally Appropriate Practice has been critiqued for applying a hegemonic understanding of childhood to the lives of young children (Davies & Robinson, 2010; Robinson, 2008; Surtees, 2005), rendering childhood to a set of predetermined ideals. In framing children's experimentation with body parts as normal, Melanie is pulling on Developmentally Appropriate Practice, as she perhaps unwittingly defines a hegemonic understanding of children's sexual development. In this sense, it is the combination of Developmentally Appropriate Practice and the view that children are innocent and sexually immature which maintains the separation between a child's world and an adult's world of sexuality.

Participants in this study highlighted another component to the separation. In different ways, teachers highlighted the need to protect children from the prospect of sexuality being imposed on them. The child's world of sexuality in this respect was conceptualised by teachers as children needing protection. Particularly, the notion that children are innocent is reflected in the ways that teachers conceptualised this separation. Multiple works on sexuality and early childhood draw on the discourse of childhood innocence (see for example Flanagan, 2011; Kehily, 2009; Surtees, 2006). This discourse is connected with the need to protect children. More specifically, Surtees (2006) identifies a sort of urgency in protecting children's sexual innocence from the harsh realities of a violent world. In this study, teachers conceptualised the protection of children in much the same way; children were viewed as sexually immature. Their innocence was found to be in need of protection from prospective impositions, such as sexual abuse or sexuality understandings typical to the adult world.

The theme of 'moral panic' identified in the literature speaks to the way the separation is maintained. Two of the participants in this study expressed concern over their role as early childhood educators when sexuality matters became the topic of interest in their centre. These teachers were placed in a position of questioning their practice in accordance with what is considered appropriate conduct and responses to sexuality matters. One of the participants spoke most clearly about this situation and stated that *"there is always the thought of avoiding situations where you might be accused of something inappropriate"* (Melanie). Jones (2003a) discussed a similar finding from a study of 55 primary teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand where all forms of 'touch' between a teacher and their pupils were nearly eliminated due to the perceived risk of sexual abuse. This current study highlights the idea that teachers are placed in the realm of risk where their actions are subject to the prospect of sexual abuse and therefore explains why the participant in this study avoided certain situations.

The space in between

The common conception that children are innocent and sexually immature was contested, in some ways, by teachers in this study. As a result, a space emerged between the separation of a child's world and an adult's world of sexuality. The Venn

diagram (Figure 1) illustrates this space as a tension where teachers critically engaged with dominant discourses of childhood sexuality in the early childhood context. In this sense, queer theory can be used to explain teacher's critical engagement and disruption of common sexuality understandings. Queer theory has been recognised as a perspective which incorporates a more fluid understanding of childhood and sexuality (Robinson, 2013). Surtees (2008) uses this perspective as a way to enable teachers to engage with new possibilities of 'doing' sexuality in the early childhood context. It is therefore drawn from the findings that teachers in this study were perhaps inadvertently looking through a 'queer lens' (Surtees, 2008) when a space was developed from contradictions between the child's world and adult's world of sexuality. Teachers showed a desire to disrupt prevailing beliefs formed through *location* and *exposure* relative to the early childhood education context.

Summary

This chapter has been important in making sense of the findings from this research. Three themes were discussed and elaborated on as they relate to the purpose of the study which was to gain insight on teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context. As a result, a *conceptualisation* was developed which informs the conclusion and implications in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Implications

Introduction

The final chapter of this dissertation will synthesise key ideas discussed in this study. It will cover three implications drawn from the findings: 'diverse perspectives', 'teacher practice' and 'critical pedagogy'. Chapter Five provided a discussion of the findings and illuminated some core implications as a result. From this, the conclusive findings to come from the study will be discussed along with relative implications for teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context.

Diverse perspectives

The foundation for teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context were built on an awareness of historical *locations*. Sexuality understandings were therefore contingent on diverse perspectives as they are constructed through different cultural and experiential ties. It can be taken from this study that teachers began to conceptualise sexuality understandings through a social constructionist framework, as historically and culturally specific categories are drawn on to make sense of our world (Burr, 1995). Varied perspectives induced further considerations of sexuality matters within concrete *locations* and teachers grappled with the responsibilities of sexuality's placement within public and/or private spaces.

The construction of diverse perspectives signified the complexities associated with teacher beliefs and practice surrounding sexuality with young children. The Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) is a document which wholeheartedly supports the inclusion of diversity within education. *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) is also a document which is open to interpretation and diversity and can therefore be taken to include both cultural and sexuality perspectives. The implication for teachers' attitudes towards sexuality at this point, rests in the acknowledgement of diversity within curriculum. This can prove to be difficult for teachers working in early childhood education, however, due to prevailing

beliefs of children as innocent and sexually immature. In other words, certain areas of interest, such as sexuality, are often dismissed in relation to children, despite an inclusive approach to early childhood education (MoE, 1996). The concept of difficult knowledge (Robinson, 2013) was used to explain the relationship between challenging understandings of sexuality associated with young children and the placement of sexuality matters outside of curriculum and the official capacity. This highlights the need for further consideration and research into early childhood sexuality matters, as teacher's responses in this study exposed the complexities associated with challenging and difficult forms of knowledge in the early childhood education context.

Teacher practice

Generally, teachers in this study felt their practice surrounding sexuality with young children in the early childhood education context was not adequately supported. It was highlighted that the exclusion of sexuality matters from curriculum, policy initiatives and teacher education made it difficult for teachers to know how to respond appropriately under certain circumstances. Because of this, teachers practice around sexuality with young children was often viewed as reactive rather than proactive. One of the teachers in this study clearly explained what is meant here when she said that sexuality in the early childhood context is like an *"ambulance at the bottom of the hill...it's something you deal with"* (Amie). Overall, teachers felt a strong desire for sexuality to be more formally recognised in the official capacity to better inform and support their practice.

The exclusion of sexuality matters in an official capacity highlighted how teachers felt inadequately supported to 'do' sexuality with children in the early childhood education context. The implication for this is that many teachers may feel there are not enough guidelines to inform teachers' practice within this topic. In her study, Surtees (2006) came to a similar conclusion. She highlighted the lack of teacher education surrounding sexuality. It is therefore still an area of much needed debate and research to better inform and support early childhood teachers and their practice, particularly when sexuality matters are complex, and understandings are diverse.

Critical Pedagogy

A significant finding to come from this study is teachers' *conceptualisation* of sexuality. Teachers expressed a desire to disrupt and challenge the prevailing beliefs which informed their conceptualisation of sexuality in the early childhood context. In other words, it is concluded that hegemonic discourses such as heteronormativity and the view of children as innocent and sexually immature are prevalent in the early childhood setting. Yet the teachers in this study were prepared to engage critically with those dominant perspectives and challenge normality in some ways. It is concluded that, at times, teachers were inadvertently looking through a 'queer lens' (Surtees, 2008) which allowed the space in between the two worlds to emerge. The emergence of this space provided the prospect that teachers are able and willing to critically engage with normality, viewing children as sexual citizens in their own right.

At this point, it is important to highlight a limitation to the study. This study gathered data from only three participants. It was mentioned in the methodology that, unlike quantitative research, generalisations cannot be drawn from a small sample size within qualitative research. While the teachers in this study made a space to contest prevailing beliefs, the same cannot be said for all teachers in early childhood education. It is therefore important to gain further insight into teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality in the early childhood education context in order to yield more information on a seemingly under-researched topic. In fact, it was still apparent that even teachers in this study were inadvertently drawing on dominant perspectives which, in the first instance, actually informed the separation between a child's world and an adult's world of sexuality. Remarkably, children are still viewed as subjects in the making, with sexuality extending only as far as their bodies. Further research would help in challenging dominant perspectives that permeate the early childhood setting. The teachers in this study proved it was possible.

Summary

Sexuality in the early childhood education context is an area which requires further research. Sexuality is a complex topic in itself, and this study highlighted the complexities associated with it and the early childhood setting. It was pleasing to

recognise that teachers in this study adopted a critical pedagogy at times, as this presents new possibilities for 'doing' sexuality with young children.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide

1. Is sexuality the sort of thing that might come up in staff meetings?
 - ⇒ Why do you think that is?
 - ⇒ What kind of things do people say?
 - ⇒ Do you think this is held in the same way with other staff members?

2. Where might sexuality matters appear in policies you're aware of?
 - ⇒ Why do you think that is?
 - ⇒ What are the ways it's expressed?
 - ⇒ Are they helpful? How?

3. I'm curious to find out about a memorable experience you've had in the early childhood setting surrounding sexuality...
 - ⇒ How did you respond?
 - ⇒ What did you think?
 - ⇒ How did you feel?
 - ⇒ Would other staff have reacted in the same way?
 - ⇒ Why do you think that is?

4. Could you tell me about a most difficult situation you've experienced?
 - ⇒ What was it about that incident that put it in the too hard basket?
 - ⇒ How did you respond?
 - ⇒ What did you think?
 - ⇒ How did you feel?
 - ⇒ What impact did it have on other teachers; children and their families?

5. And how about a most humorous situation?
 - ⇒ What do you think made it a light-hearted experience?
 - ⇒ How did you respond?
 - ⇒ What did you think?
 - ⇒ How did you feel?
 - ⇒ How did other children; teachers; parents respond?

6. Is there anything you think we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Appendix 2

Participant interview guide

Questions will cover the following areas as they relate to the topic: *Teacher's experience of sexuality matters in early childhood settings.*

- **Basic centre profile / Demographic data** (preferably met before interview)
 - ⇒ non-traditional families
 - ⇒ ethnicity
 - ⇒ turnover

- **Experience of sexuality matters as they relate to:**
 - ⇒ policy
 - ⇒ staff meetings/programme development/collegial discussions
 - ⇒ children and their families

- **Incidents that have happened affecting:**
 - ⇒ yourself
 - ⇒ other teacher's
 - ⇒ children and their families

Please note, this script serves as a guide only; questions in the interview will be indicative of the above content. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. Thanks again for your support in this project.

Anastasia Bargiacchi
abar206@aucklanduni.ac.nz
027 295 7370

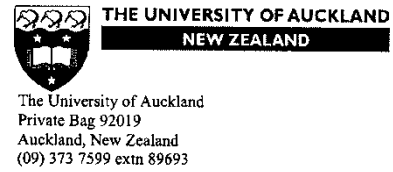
Appendix 3

Sample transcript

The analytic method used in this sample was the initial stages of thematic analysis. Points of interest have first been highlighted and then brief notes are made on either side of the transcript.

<p>Links to theory, literature, other transcripts (relating texts to other texts).</p> <p>Table of levels or types of sexuality.</p> <p>What other terms are used?</p> <p>"not incredibly well understood" - how do others describe it?</p> <p>"huge, huge gulf of knowledge" - quote</p> <p>"cultural round" - how do other cultures relate?</p>	<p>This is an interview between Krystle and myself on the 21st of June 2013. OK so just to get the ball rolling really nice and easily, is sexuality the sort of thing that might come up in staff meetings at all?</p> <p>Sexuality of children? Sexuality of teachers? Sexuality of the community? Are you speaking specifically or generally?</p> <p>Generally and however you would relate to sexuality.</p> <p>OK sexuality comes up but only inasmuch as it relates to other people in terms of, in a gossipy way with my colleagues. Um, they'll talk about somebody who's transvestite and I'll have to correct them and say they're transgendered. Um, so because one of them is Māori and one of them is Nuwean there is, yes, sexuality is something that's not incredibly well understood. Um, everything, especially in communities like Mangere, there is a very, and this will be obvious throughout the interview, that there is very much um, it's not taboo necessarily anymore, it is that it is something that is just never discussed.</p> <p>Just never discussed. OK.</p> <p>So for an example the other day they were talking about somebody being gay (mhmm) and...</p> <p>And this is in the staff meetings?</p> <p>Not a staff meeting. Sorry this isn't in the staff meetings. So no, they don't come up at all in staff meetings.</p> <p>OK.</p> <p>Just in general. Sorry I misunderstood (that's alright) yea, no, just amongst us but not in staff meetings.</p> <p>OK. So, just when you're talking amongst each other (yup). So you were saying...</p> <p>Um, it's not taboo anymore but there is a really big misunderstanding, there is a huge, huge gulf of knowledge (yup) that exists between what my experience of the world in sexuality and my colleague's experience of the world in sexuality (yup). Um, and their experience in the cultural round, the spectrum of sexuality. So, whereas in my life I have friends who are transgendered, bi-sexual, heterosexual, homosexual (mhmm). Um, they are likely not to have friends that they know of or there are members of the family who may be transgendered. Um, but it's never really talked about.</p>	<p>Perceiving / note things of interest (looking inside the text).</p> <p>Sexuality as relationships.</p> <p>Multiple interpretations.</p> <p>"Gossipy"</p> <p>Link between ethnicity and understandings of sexuality.</p> <p>Locating it by place.</p> <p>NOT taboo vs. never discussed (contradiction?)</p> <p>Informal settings (3).</p> <p>Understandings of sexuality are 'worlds apart'.</p> <p>Sexuality experience is culture specific.</p> <p>Exposure to diversity (or lack thereof).</p> <p>Minimal acknowledgement.</p>
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Appendix 4



APPLICATION FOR SITE ACCESS Centre Manager

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

Dear [*name of centre manager*],

Anastasia Bargiacchi is enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) (Honours) at the University of Auckland and is required as part of this programme to undertake a small research project. She wishes to investigate teacher attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings. We are seeking permission for Anastasia Bargiacchi to carry out the research in your centre.

Data will be gathered through individual semi-structured interviews with selected teachers. The interviews will be about 20 to 30 minutes in duration. The interviews will be conducted by Anastasia Bargiacchi.

We seek your permission for the student-researcher to talk to the teacher/s about the research and invite the teacher/s to participate. Those teachers who are willing to be involved will be given a participant information sheet, a consent form and a stamped addressed envelope. They will be asked to return the consent form to the student-researcher.

The teacher interviews will be held at the centre at a time convenient for the teacher. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The teachers do not have to answer every question and can ask for the tape to be turned off at any time. They can withdraw from the project at any time and ask for their interview data to be withdrawn up until two weeks after the individual interview. For your information, copies of the information sheets for the teachers outlining the nature of their involvement in the project are included with this letter.

You have the right to withdraw access to your centre at any time up until the completion of the last interview. We ask for your assurance that the teachers' employment in the centre will not be affected in any way should they agree/not agree to be interviewed, or to support this project whichever may apply.

Consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of one of the course coordinators for a period of six years and then destroyed. Access to the data will be restricted to Anastasia Bargiacchi and the three supervisors. During 2013 Anastasia Bargiacchi will keep the interview tapes and transcripts in a secure location. On completion of the dissertation (December 2013) interview tapes and transcripts will be given to Ruth Williams who will keep them in a locked filing cabinet in her office for a period of six years. These

will be used to inform possible future presentations and publications in peer-reviewed journals. After this time, all data and the consent forms will be destroyed.

The dissertation will be written in a way that protects your centre's identity and pseudonyms will be used for all the participants. Once the dissertation has been completed, you may ask Anastasia Bargiacchi to present an oral and/or written summary of their findings to interested parties.

Thank you for considering our request. If you would like further information about the proposed research project please contact either Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald or Carol Mutch.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

The co-ordinators / supervisors are:

Dr. Ruth Williams
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Lyn McDonald
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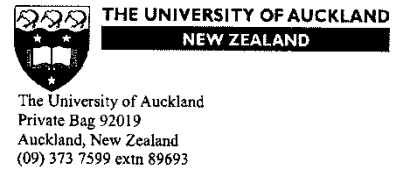
Dr. Carol Mutch
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The Head of Programme is:
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If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 373-7599 xtn 87311.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 11 January 2011 for a period of 3 years from 8 April 2012 to 8 April 2015. Reference Number: 2009/C/007.

Appendix 5



APPLICATION FOR SITE ACCESS Head Teacher

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

Dear [*name of head teacher*],

Anastasia Bargiacchi is enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) (Honours) at the University of Auckland and is required as part of this programme to undertake a small research project. She wishes to investigate teacher attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings. We are seeking permission for Anastasia Bargiacchi to carry out the research in your centre.

Data will be gathered through individual semi-structured interviews with selected teachers. The interviews will be about 20 to 30 minutes in duration. The interviews will be conducted by Anastasia Bargiacchi.

We seek your permission for the student-researcher to talk to the teacher/s about the research and invite the teacher/s to participate. Those teachers who are willing to be involved will be given a participant information sheet, a consent form and a stamped addressed envelope. They will be asked to return the consent form to the student-researcher.

The teacher interviews will be held at the centre at a time convenient for the teacher. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The teachers do not have to answer every question and can ask for the tape to be turned off at any time. They can withdraw from the project at any time and ask for their interview data to be withdrawn up until two weeks after the individual interview. For your information, copies of the information sheets for the teachers outlining the nature of their involvement in the project are included with this letter.

You have the right to withdraw access to your centre at any time up until the completion of the last interview. We ask for your assurance that the teachers' employment in the centre will not be affected in any way should they agree/not agree to be interviewed, or to support this project whichever may apply.

Consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of one of the course coordinators for a period of six years and then destroyed. Access to the data will be restricted to Anastasia Bargiacchi and the three supervisors. During 2013 Anastasia Bargiacchi will keep the interview tapes and transcripts in a secure location. On completion of the dissertation (December 2013) interview tapes and transcripts will be given to Ruth Williams who will keep them in a locked filing cabinet in her office for a period of six years. These

will be used to inform possible future presentations and publications in peer-reviewed journals. After this time, all data and the consent forms will be destroyed.

The dissertation will be written in a way that protects your centre's identity and pseudonyms will be used for all the participants. Once the dissertation has been completed, you may ask Anastasia Bargiacchi to present an oral and/or written summary of their findings to interested parties.

Thank you for considering our request. If you would like further information about the proposed research project please contact either Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald or Carol Mutch.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

The co-ordinators / supervisors are:

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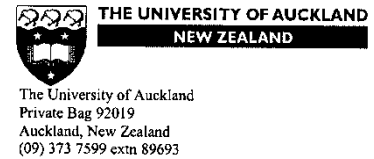
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The Head of Programme is:
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If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 373-7599 xtn 87311.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 11 January 2011 for a period of 3 years from 8 April 2012 to 8 April 2015. Reference Number: 2009/C/007.

Appendix 6



CONSENT TO ACCESS THE CENTRE SITE - Centre Manager (This Consent Form will be held for a period of six years)

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

I have been given an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I understand what is involved in the project for the centre and teachers.

I consent to the student-researcher coming to the centre site to approach potential participants and enlist the support of teachers for an individual interview and to carry out the interviews.

I understand that I can withdraw access to the centre site at anytime, up until the completion of the last interview.

I understand that the findings will be used in the student-researcher's dissertation and may be used for journal publications and conference presentations.

I understand that the centre's name will not be used in any reports / presentations.

I understand that at the conclusion of the project I can ask the student-researcher to present and oral or written summary of the findings to interested parties.

I understand that all data and forms will be held securely for a period of six years and will then be destroyed.

I give my assurance that a teacher's decision to support or not support the project will not affect their standing / employment status in the centre.

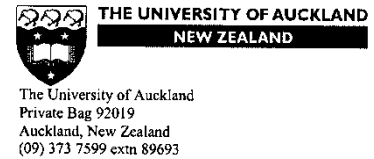
Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 11 January 2011 for a period of 3 years. Reference Number: 2009/C/007.

Appendix 7



CONSENT TO ACCESS THE CENTRE SITE - Head Teacher (This Consent Form will be held for a period of six years)

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

I have been given an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I understand what is involved in the project for the centre and teachers.

I consent to the student-researcher coming to the centre site to approach potential participants and enlist the support of teachers for an individual interview and to carry out the interviews.

I understand that I can withdraw access to the centre site at anytime, up until the completion of the last interview.

I understand that the findings will be used in the student-researcher's dissertation and may be used for journal publications and conference presentations.

I understand that the centre's name will not be used in any reports / presentations.

I understand that at the conclusion of the project I can ask the student-researcher to present and oral or written summary of the findings to interested parties.

I understand that all data and forms will be held securely for a period of six years and will then be destroyed.

I give my assurance that a teacher's decision to support or not support the project will not affect their standing / employment status in the centre.

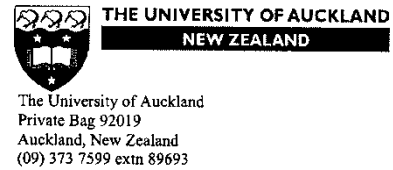
Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 11 January 2011 for a period of 3 years. Reference Number: 2009/C/007.

Appendix 8



INFORMATION SHEET Teachers - Interviews

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.
Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch
Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

Anastasia Bargiacchi is enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) (Honours) at the University of Auckland and is required as part of this programme to undertake a small research project. She wishes to investigate teacher attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

We invite you to participate in the research. Your participation would involve one individual interview that would take 20 to 30 minutes.

If you are willing to be involved you will be given a participant information sheet, a consent form and a stamped addressed envelope. You will be asked to return the consent form to the student-researcher.

Anastasia Bargiacchi would like to audio-tape the interview but you may request that the tape be turned off at any time.

You may withdraw from the research at any time and information you have provided up until data analysis (approximate date).

The centre manager has given an assurance that your decision to participate/not participate in the project will not affect your employment in the centre.

Consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Ruth Williams' office for a period of six years and then destroyed. Access to the data will be restricted to Anastasia Bargiacchi and the three supervisors. On completion of the dissertation (December, 2013) interview tapes and transcripts will be given to Ruth Williams who will keep them in a locked filing cabinet in her office for a period of six years. These will be used to inform possible future presentations and publications in peer-reviewed journals. After this time, all data and the consent forms will be destroyed.

The dissertation will be written in a way that protects the centre's identity and pseudonyms will be used for the teachers interviewed. Once the dissertation has been completed, Anastasia Bargiacchi may be asked to present an oral and/or written summary of their findings to interested parties.

Thank you for considering our request. If you would like further information about the proposed research project please contact either Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald or Carol Mutch.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

The co-ordinators / supervisors are:

Dr. Ruth Williams
Faculty of Education
623.8899 xtn 48739
ruth.williams@auckland.ac.nz

Lyn McDonald
Faculty of Education
623.8899 xtn 48710
l.mcdonald@auckland.ac.nz

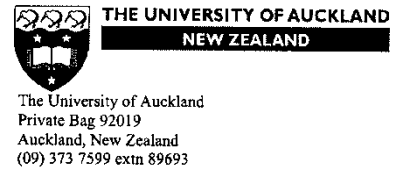
Dr. Carol Mutch
Faculty of Education
623.8899 xtn 48275
c.mutch@auckland.ac.nz

The Head of Programme is:
Associate Professor Toni Bruce
Faculty of Education
623.8899 xtn 48646
t.bruce@auckland.ac.nz

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 373-7599 xtn 87311.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 11 January 2011 for a period of 3 years from 8 April 2012 to 8 April 2015. Reference Number: 2009/C/007.

Appendix 9



INFORMATION SHEET Teachers - Interviews

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.
Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch
Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

Anastasia Bargiacchi is enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Teaching) (Honours) at the University of Auckland and is required as part of this programme to undertake a small research project. She wishes to investigate teacher attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

We invite you to participate in the research. Your participation would involve one individual interview that would take 20 to 30 minutes.

If you are willing to be involved you will be given a participant information sheet, a consent form and a stamped addressed envelope. You will be asked to return the consent form to the student-researcher.

Anastasia Bargiacchi would like to audio-tape the interview but you may request that the tape be turned off at any time.

You may withdraw from the research at any time and information you have provided up until data analysis (approximate date).

The head teacher has given an assurance that your decision to participate/not participate in the project will not affect your employment in the centre.

Consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Ruth Williams' office for a period of six years and then destroyed. Access to the data will be restricted to Anastasia Bargiacchi and the three supervisors. On completion of the dissertation (December, 2013) interview tapes and transcripts will be given to Ruth Williams who will keep them in a locked filing cabinet in her office for a period of six years. These will be used to inform possible future presentations and publications in peer-reviewed journals. After this time, all data and the consent forms will be destroyed.

The dissertation will be written in a way that protects the centre's identity and pseudonyms will be used for the teachers interviewed. Once the dissertation has been completed, Anastasia Bargiacchi may be asked to present an oral and/or written summary of their findings to interested parties.

Thank you for considering our request. If you would like further information about the proposed research project please contact either Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald or Carol Mutch.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

The co-ordinators / supervisors are:

Dr. Ruth Williams
Faculty of Education
623.8899 xtn 48739
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Lyn McDonald
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The Head of Programme is:
Associate Professor Toni Bruce
Faculty of Education
623.8899 xtn 48646
t.bruce@auckland.ac.nz

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 373-7599 xtn 87311.

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Appendix 10



CONSENT FORM

Teacher - Interview

(This Consent Form will be held for a period of six years)

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

I have been given an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I understand what the project involves.

I consent to participate in the research.

I agree to being involved in one individual interview.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being taped. I understand that I can ask that the tape be turned off at any time.

I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time and information that I have provided up until data analysis (approximate date).

I understand that the findings from the project will be used in the student-researcher's dissertation and may be used for journal publications and conference presentations.

I understand that the centre's name and the names of the participants will not be used in any reports / presentations – pseudonyms will be used.

I understand that at the conclusion of the project an oral or written summary of the findings may be presented to interested parties.

I understand that all data and forms will be held securely for a period of six years and will then be destroyed.

I understand that the centre manager has given an assurance that my decision to participate/not participate in the project will not affect my standing / employment status in the centre.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 11 January 2011 for a period of 3 years from 8 April 2012 to 8 April 2015. Reference Number: 2009/C/007.

Appendix 11



CONSENT FORM

Teacher - Interview

(This Consent Form will be held for a period of six years)

Title of Research Project: Teachers' attitudes towards sexuality in early childhood settings.

Course coordinators/supervisors: Dr Ruth Williams, Lyn McDonald, Carol Mutch

Student Researcher: Anastasia Bargiacchi

I have been given an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I understand what the project involves.

I consent to participate in the research.

I agree to being involved in one individual interview.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being taped. I understand that I can ask that the tape be turned off at any time.

I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time and information that I have provided up until data analysis (approximate date).

I understand that the findings from the project will be used in the student-researcher's dissertation and may be used for journal publications and conference presentations.

I understand that the centre's name and the names of the participants will not be used in any reports / presentations – pseudonyms will be used.

I understand that at the conclusion of the project an oral or written summary of the findings may be presented to interested parties.

I understand that all data and forms will be held securely for a period of six years and will then be destroyed.

I understand that the head teacher has given an assurance that my decision to participate/not participate in the project will not affect my standing / employment status in the centre.

Signed: _____ **Name:** _____

Date: _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 11 January 2011 for a period of 3 years from 8 April 2012 to 8 April 2015. Reference Number: 2009/C/007.