Care as curriculum for 3-year-old children: A Victorian case study

Sarah Louise Nelson[a]

Abstract

The early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector has seen significant reform over the past 20 years. Outwardly, this has contributed to the care versus education dichotomy, seemingly decentering care in the pursuit of neoliberalist educational and economic outcomes. Recent inquiries, reports and recommendations have demonstrated a keen focus on these educational and economic outcomes, further contributing to the commentary that care and education are separate and exist unconnectedly within the ECEC sector. Global literature on the matter of care demonstrates that while care is fundamental to the life-long trajectories of children under the age of 3 years, the matter is less focused on children in their preschool years. This further adds to the argument for the replacement of care with educational pursuits in more formal ECEC settings. To contribute to this international dialogue through a phenomenological paradigm, I have conducted a single-site case study of a standalone kindergarten in the eastern suburbs of Naarm (Melbourne) to understand the way in which the early childhood teacher (ECT) working with 3-year-old children makes decisions about the inclusion of care in their curriculum. A triangulation approach to data generation alongside a quadrilateral theory of care and a deductive reflexive thematic analysis reveals that the ECT's curriculum decisions surrounding play and the design of the environment play a significant role in how 3-year-old children experience care.

Corresponding author: Sarah Louise Nelson, Email: Sarah.Gandolfo1@monash.edu

---

[a] Monash University

Introduction

The Australian early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector is marked by significant complexity (Wong & Press, 2016), shaped by a range of operational and pedagogical factors that vary between states and territories. Across the country, ECEC systems differ in their qualification requirements for educators, the ratios allocated for various age groups, and even the terminology used to describe kindergarten services. All of these depend greatly on locale (Ailwood, Boyd & Theobald, 2016). These variations contribute to a highly intricate landscape that demands a critical and informed approach to effectively navigating its challenges and nuances.

Viewed holistically, the ECEC sector often finds itself subject to shifting political priorities, becoming a political football that is passed between governments with each change of leadership. These transitions can occur with limited consideration for the real-world impacts on the primary stakeholders: the children attending ECEC programs, their families, and the early childhood professional who are responsible for the daily operations of these services. The ongoing dilemma, and the central focus of this research project, is that amidst these continual changes, the essential component of care – the second 'C' in ECEC – has increasingly been sidelined in favour of educational imperatives. This trend is especially pronounced for children aged 3 to 5 years, raising important questions about the balance between care and education with the sector.

The complexity of the 'problem': the broad and local context

Victoria, and specifically metropolitan Naarm (Melbourne), has consistently led the way in implementing innovative local reforms to ensure high0quality kindergarten provision for children in the year before formal schooling (Early Learning & Care Council of Australia, 2023). Kindergarten in Victoria is facilitated in two types of settings. The first are standalone settings where shorter hours of operation traditionally align more with the school system, between 3 to 5 hours per day over 1-3 days per week. The second are long day care settings where children attend for extended periods of time, up to 12 hours per day, to, generally, allow families to engage in paid employment.

In 2021, Victoria achieved a major advocacy milestone when the State government committed to ongoing funding for 15 hours of kindergarten in the year before school. This funding also extends to providing an additional year of funding for children considered vulnerable, such as refugee and asylum-seeking children, as well as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and First Nations children (Early Learning Association Australia, 2021). This initiative further strengthens Universal Access. In 2020, the State government made a new commitment to ECEC by including 3-year-old children in funding plans. There was a dedicated rollout of 15 hours of 3-year-old kindergarten for all Victorian children, scheduled to be fully implemented by 2025 (State Government of Victoria, 2018). An even more significant step was taken in 2022, when the government pledged to cover all out-of-pocket expenses for families accessing kindergarten (Raper, 2022).

In 2021 Victoria saw one of its biggest advocacy successes. This included a commitment from the State government to permanently fund 15 hours of kindergarten for children in the year before school. Children considered vulnerable and requiring two years of kindergarten, these being refugee and asylum-seeking children, and First Nations children (Early Learning Association Australia, 2021) would also be included in this commitment, further supporting Universal Access. In 2020 there was also a brand-new commitment to

ECEC with the inclusion of 3-year-old children in funding plans, and a dedicated roll out of 15 hours of 3-year-old kindergarten for all Victorian children by 2025 (State Government of Victoria, 2018). Perhaps even more significant was the 2022 commitment to also cover all out-of-pocket expenses for families accessing kindergarten (Raper, 2022). While there were criticisms about what this would mean for the practical provision of ECEC, advocates rejoiced at the news and celebrated these Australian firsts.

While these local reforms have been exceptionally beneficial for ensuring that all Victorian children have access to quality ECEC in the two years prior to formal schooling (Raper, 2022), it has meant a change in the way in which young children are both educated and cared for. Funding reforms and modified operating schedules have enhanced their affordability for families seeking cost-effective ECEC options, resulting in increased enrolment and attendance in standalone settings compared to long day care settings. Traditionally, long day care has been utilised for those working families who require longer hours of ECEC to look after their children (Sims, 2014), though it has been argued that these settings are highly institutionalised and have little place within current education contexts (Erickson, 2018). Early Childhood Australia (2023), however, have identified the need for these settings as places predominately of care, where children's needs are met while their families are unavailable due to needing to work. It is in these arguments that the dichotomy of care versus education is strong and deeply embedded (Sims, 2014; Rentzou, 2019).

Ongoing reforms in Victoria are unlikely to slow into the coming decade as the state moves to a new policy dedicated to ensuring children in the year immediately before formal schooling receive 30 hours of funded kindergarten (Raper, 2022). Changes in how standalone services operate, including timetabling and staffing arrangements, will be required to ensure this policy comes to fruition, and will continue to have ongoing effects to the care of children in this age group. This provides a unique and valuable opportunity to begin investigating the care needs of these young children.

Of importance to note when thinking about the political space of reform, policy, and economics, is also the significant impact that care practices and elements have on children's lifelong trajectories (Garboden Murray, 2021), as alluded to by a recent Department of Education report (2023a). Relationships, safety, attachment, and connection have all been well theorised within the ECEC sector (Australian Education Research Organisation and ECA, 2023). Theorists such as Bronfenbrenner, whose Ecological Systems Theory underpins the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Department of Education and Training, 2016); Gerber; and Pikler, all impart that care must be a foundational consideration in our role as ECEC professionals (Kennedy, 2012). While not explicit, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child also requires that children be kept safe, listened to, and always maintaining a strong sense of identity (Livingstone, 2020), all of which can be considered as interpretations of elements of care. Contrary to these perspectives, I could find no study investigating care in formal ECEC programs for 3-year-old children. This project, therefore, explores this idea further through the research question: w*hat elements of care are considered in the curriculum decision-making of ECTs working with 3-year-old children in a Victorian standalone kindergarten?*

Literature review

This study employed both a thematic literature review (Clark et al, 2021) and a revelatory, single-site case study approach (Lobo et al, 2017). The purpose of the literature review was to identify the care practices of education professionals from around the world to develop a framework for application to explore curriculum decision-making in one specific

ECEC context, referred to as The Kindergarten to protect anonymity. Fifty articles were initially identified for review, with the selection reduced by considering how care was applied in practice as opposed to simply the theory of care. The articles reviewed spanned almost nine countries over three continents, providing a global perspective on the practice of care in education settings. This created an opportunity to consider care as a global practice that universally applies to all children everywhere (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2023). It is evident from this review that care is a significant consideration in curriculums designed for children aged 0-3 around the world (Recchia, Shin & Snaider, 2018), though not so for children in the kindergarten years.

By comparing and contrasting, I was able to confidently identify four key themes emerging from the literature related to care theories, curriculum design, and care practice:

- Care as love (*toward*)
- Care as relationship (*with*)
- Care as practice (*for*)
- Care as materialism (*within*)

Care as love

Love is a contentious concept in the ECEC sector. Discourses of fear, false connections to inappropriate touch, and the conflation of love with abuse have all led to love being considered unprofessional and all but ignored in the Australian ECEC research space for some time

The concept of love is a contentious concept in the ECEC sector. Debates highlight that there are ongoing concerns that talking about love could be misunderstood, especially due to fears surrounding inappropriate touch or potential abuse (Bryant, 2019). As a result, love has often been regarded as unprofessional and has largely been overlooked in Australian ECEC research for quite some time (Aslanian, 2018)This is of course despite the plentiful international research that exists connecting love to stronger relationships between children, parents, and educators (Page, 2010; Page, 2014; Page, 2018), with a result of improved learning outcomes for children in formal educational spaces (O'Connor et al. 2020). There has also been writing to describe the juxtaposition between love and contemporary ECEC practice and policy (Cousins, 2017; Kaukko, Wilkinson & Kholi, 2022) which may continue to support the care/education dichotomy. When ECEC professionals consider love as a way of theoretically acting *toward* children, they may be able to remove the dominant fears of love and instead conceptualize these as care practices that fit firmly within the VEYLDF (DET, 2016).

Care as relationship

Both Cousins (2017) and O'Connor et al. (2020) also support the theme of care as relationship. This may be considered as an extension of the professional love concept proposed by Page (2010) as both studies demonstrate that the relationship that exists between a child and the ECEC professional is vital for ensuring that the practices of care from a lens of love can occur (Page, 2010). Shin (2021), conversely, adds another dimension to understanding care through seeking to explain the way that the discourses of love and care are considered in American ECEC contexts, writing that love is both a professional and personal concept that occurs in caregiving practices in ECEC spaces. They argue that care must be considered as a legitimate part of the ECEC curriculum and service delivery model (Shin, 2021). This literature helps to highlight the false dichotomy of education versus care

that permeates the ECEC sector globally due to the very nature of the language used for ECEC (Sims, 2014) and contributes significantly to a theoretical framing of care *with*.

Care as practice

The essence of connect*ing*, car*ing*, understand*ing*, and appreciat*ing* are rooted in an ECEC professionals' ability to act on core values of care to demonstrate relationship in action (Cousins, 2017; Page 2017). Page (2017) draws heavily on attachment theory (Nolan & Raban, 2015) and relational ethics (Quinones, Rutanen & Revilla, 2023) to help explain the ways in which the practice of love and care may be identified in ECEC spaces. Page (2017) very clearly articulates findings that demonstrate that care and caring or loving thought are not simply behaviors, but instead intentional actions, helping to provide a base for which to understand effective ways of theoretically caring *for* in practice.

Care as materialism

The vital role of environment in shaping care practices emerged as a final thematic consideration from the literature, highlighting how care is constructed and influenced by the physical spaces and resources within an ECEC setting (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind & Kocher, 2016). Aslanian's (2020) research delves into the existence of care beyond practical and relational contexts, with early work (Aslanian, 2018) illuminating how the organization of materials empowers professionals to embody and enact care in meaningful ways. This perspective resonates with the widely adopted concept of 'the environment as the third teacher' in Australian contexts (ACECQA, 2018) and echoes Rautio's (2014) theory about the intra-active relationships between children and matter.

Materialsconditions and structural realities deeply shape the possibility of ethical care in ECEC classrooms. Langford and Richardson (2020) further expand on the materialist dimensions of care by examining how the structural features of neoliberal ECEC settings, such as staffing rations and timetabling, can restrict educators' capacity to engage in ethical care practices (Sims, 2017). In contrast to scholars like Berge (2019) and Aslanian (2020), who focus on the influence of the physical environment, Langford and Richardson (2020) emphasize that administrative and logistical constraints serve as significant barriers to the enactment of care.

The development of a theoretical framework: a quadrilateral theory of care

There are many theories that exist around the concept of care, including the more prominent Care Theory as first introduced by Gilligan and Noddings (Edwards, 2009) and further imagined by Tronto and Gastmans (Edwards, 2009). Care Theory proposes that when there is a foundational relationship built between the cared and the cared-for, nurtured through explicit and intentional caring behaviours, children are more likely to engage in higher levels of moral thinking and decision-making (Garboden Murray, 2021). The theory is rooted in feminist philosophy though it also leans on political ideology and spans many ethical and moral issues outside of education (Garboden Murray, 2021), such as the care of animals and the environment, and into occupations such as nursing (Edwards, 2009).

While Care Theory (Edwards, 2009) is relatively robust and can provide good framing for research on care, a common criticism of the theory is that it does little to provide clarity on the concept of care (Edwards, 2009) as would be needed for this research project. de la Bellacasa (2012) explains that long-held belief about care is too focused on the *self* and the *doing* of care, and that other elements have yet to be properly considered. Additionally,

the distinct omission in the theory relating to materialism and love do create limitations for theoretically framing this research project. Having understood the themes as they have emerged from the literature, a self-designed theoretical framework that will provide a more precise backdrop for this research project, a quadrilateral theory of care, is more suitable. Within this framework sit the four themes of care *toward, with, for,* and *within*. This framework supports a deductive approach to this research project as it seeks to take what is first known and then apply it. The objective of this approach is to be able to test concepts, in this case the quadrilateral theory of care, and their indicators, against appropriate data sets (Clark et al., 2021).

The case study

Located in Melbourne's eastern suburbs on Wurundjeri Country, The Kindergarten is a small, community-connected service with a strong philosophy centred on care, connection to Country, and inclusive practice. The participant for the study was a dual qualified (ECEC and primary) early childhood teacher (ECT) presenting teaching in a 3-year-old program, with seven years of experience at The Kindergarten. Their personal philosophy included an emphasis on emotional wellbeing and play-based learning,

Data collection included a semi-structured interview (Clark et al, 2021), a content analysis of the Term 1 2023 digital curriculum documents (Bengtsson, 2016), and an analysis of the VEYLDF Practice Principles. The VEYLDF was intentionally chosen over the national Early Years Learning Framework as it underpins the development of curriculum in Victorian ECEC settings as required under kindergarten funding guidelines (State Government of Victoria, 2023) These three sources enabled data triangulation (Carter et al., 2014), enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings. Deductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) was utilised as the tool for reviewing the data.

Analysis

To support the analysis of each of the data sets, I developed a series of indicators to review the data against. Table 1 shows the full list of indicators. The indicators were developed from the literature review, pulling out commonalities or repeated threads of practice and theory related to the four elements of care.

Table 1

*Care indicators used for content analysis.*

Care *toward* (love)	Care *with* (relationships)	Care *for* (practice)	Care *within* (materialism)
Relationships as triangular Safety Belonging Underpinning of professional love Future preparation Touch	Relationship with the child Language used around care Legitimizing the value of care Connection Understanding	Attachment theory Relational ethics Connect*ing* Understand*ing* Apprecia*ting* Car*ing* Intentional actions	Created for and through the environment Meditated through the environment

Relationship with the child	Appreciation	Providing and responding	
Shown through caring for others	Care		

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the prevalence of each of the elements identified in the literature review within the data sets. Considering this as a cursory overview of the trends within the data, it is evident that across the interview and the ECT's curriculum document that all four of the elements hold some value. However, within the VEYLDF, there is a significant missing element of care *within.* There is also evidence that care *toward* and *for* are the most prominently featured across the three data sets with at least 5 or more instances identified.

Figure 1

Prevalence of the four elements of care as identified across the three data sets.
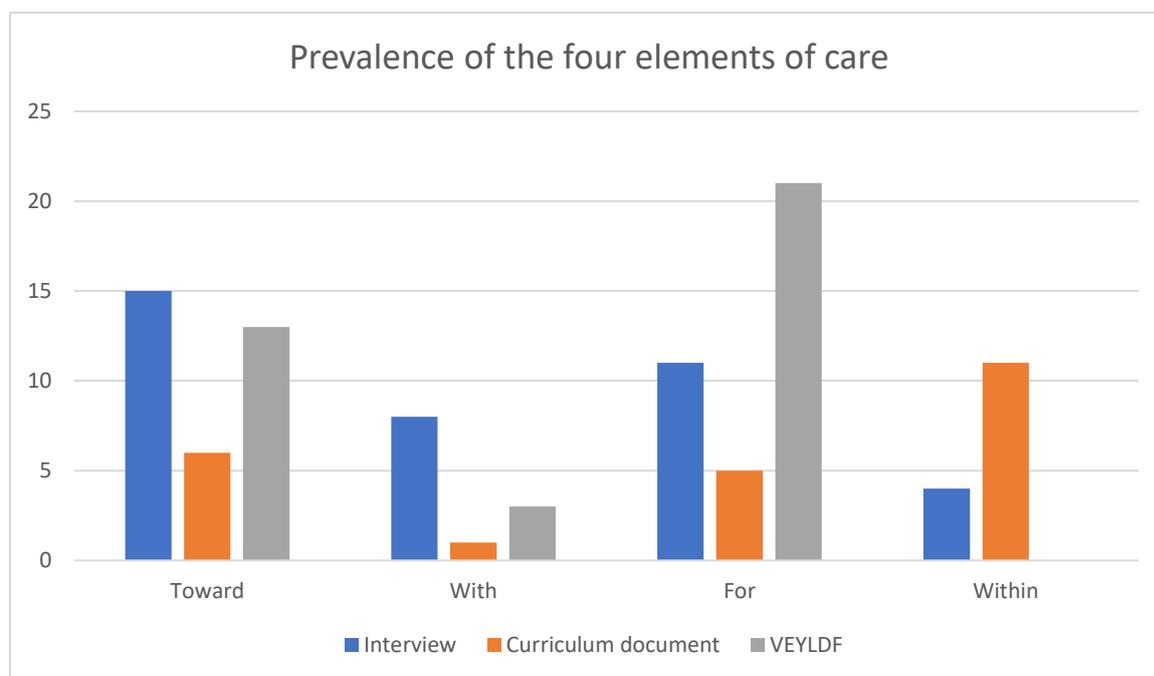
Interview

In reviewing the transcript of the interview, it was evident that the ECT was able to comment about all four elements of care and how these were influenced by their own knowledge and experience. The ECT was able to clearly describe their interpretation of care, with most of their thinking about care sitting in the themes of *toward* and *for.* The ECT was able to strongly connect to some of the Practice Principles, speaking particularly enthusiastically about the role of Reflective Practice, Partnerships with Families, and Respectful Relationships and Responsive Engagement, and how much this impacted on the way in which they planned the curriculum. The ECT repeated references to relationships: between the ECT and the child; the child and their peers; the child and their family; and the ECT and the family. Comments related to diversity and respect were also frequent.

Curriculum document

Within the curriculum document are multiple allusions to the theme of care *within*, which is contradictory to both the interview data and the VEYLDF data. There were multiple references within the curriculum document to the way in which the environment was set up and/or facilitated; plans for how small and large groups were to be created and facilitated; and plans for experiences whose rationales could be interpreted as care. Examples of experiences included role and sensory play experiences involving animal habitats and water; spaces for solitary play involving drawing and writing and/or story books; and whole group yoga play. Play was a surprising but significant consideration of each of these design elements.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: Practice Principles

My review spanned the 9 pages of the VEYLDF related to the Practice Principles (DET, 2016) and focused specifically on the indicators (Table 1) identified through the literature review. While there are very low numbers of indicators present across the Practice Principles it is significant in demonstrating the lower focus on elements of care across this section of the document, continuing the feed into the care versus education dichotomy discussed early in this paper.

Figure 2

Prevalence of the four elements of care within the VEYLDF Practice Principles

Care in the Practice Principles
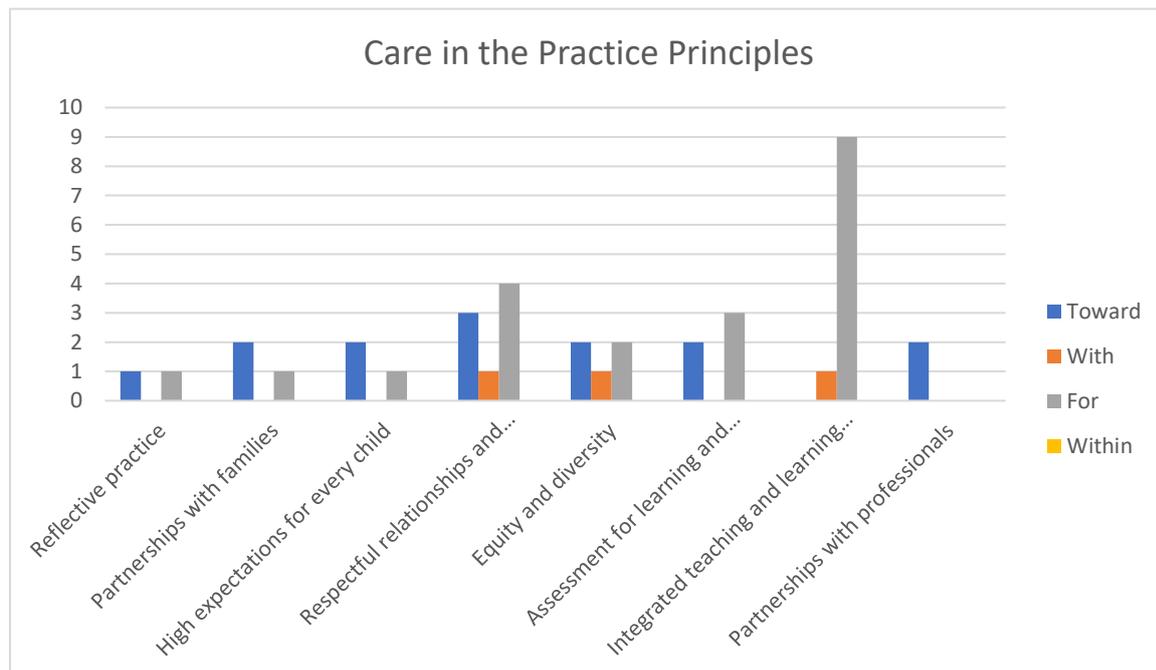
It is interesting to note the very low levels of care *with* throughout the section given the VEYLDF is espoused as strongly supporting relationships and relational pedagogies. As well, the lack of description of *within* is noteworthy as it speaks to a lack of direction for how early childhood professionals can utilise the environment to facilitate and mediate care. *Toward* and *for* were observed in generally high amounts across each of the Practice Principles.

Discussion and interpretation

Some key ideas have emerged in response to the research question that are worthy of discussion. The research question for this project was concerned with the elements of care, as was then identified through the literature review, that were considered in the curriculum decision-making of the ECT. What was evident from the research project was that all elements within the quadrilateral theory of care are evident in the ECTs curriculum design decision-making, though some more so than others. It had been expected during the planning stages for this research project that the influences of the ECTs thinking and theorising, curriculum planning document, and the VEYLDF Practice Principles would all play a relatively equal role in curriculum decision-making. However, the analysis of the interview transcript showed that the ECTs thinking and theorising through reflective practice, and personal philosophical standpoint of play played the most significant role. Several comments were made by the ECT during their interview about their 'beliefs' about care (specifically that care comes from safety, belonging and trust) and what they felt children 'needed' in order to learn (namely having their basic needs met, adequate levels of affection, relationship, and an inclusive approach to diversity).

Reflective Practice as one of the VEYLDF Practice Principles appeared to be considered one of the more influential Practice Principles on the ECT's curriculum decision-making. The ECT spoke about how reflection allowed them to consider the role of the family in designing the curriculum, and how important reflection was to ensure that, as the ECT, their own words and actions were setting children up for success in the classroom. Considering Reflective Practice had one of the least occurrences of the four elements of care, it could be stated that the VEYLDF Practice Principles do little to influence the curriculum decision-making around care made by the ECT.

It is also evident from the data that the ideas of care *toward* and *for* may be easier to conceptualise than *with* and *within*. Except for the curriculum document, which did go into greater detail about the elements of *within* as they were to occur in the classroom, it appears that the ECT had an easier time both verbally explaining and documenting on their curriculum the way in which the more practical elements of care were considered in their curriculum decision-making. During the interview, the ECT spoke often of their partnership and mutually respectful relationship with both children and their families, leaning heavily into the theory of professional love (Page, 2017). They also spoke of their commitment to 'basic care needs' (AERO & ECA, 2023) and the pedagogical considerations (Berge, 2019) that might support this in the classroom.

, Two previously unexplored ideas did emerge from the analysis. The first, noticeable through the interview data but more significantly emerging from the curriculum document, was the implication that there is a significant relationship between children's basic care needs and play. The ECT mentioned throughout the interview the way in which the stages of play were influenced by how well children felt cared for by the ECT (Berge, 2019), and it was clear in the curriculum document that the design of play spaces was a mediating factor in how the ECT engaged in the ideas of materialism for care (Aslanian, 2017).

Secondly, the curriculum document showed multiple instances of how considerations of care *within* mediated the other three elements. Plans related to the design of the physical space involving spaces for small and large group learning; the placement of art easels to support pairs and more intimate relationship building; and the use of children's interests in role play and construction as tools for developing trust and respect were strong examples of the role materials plays in allowing care *toward, with* and *for* within the ECEC classroom.

Limitations arose from conducting this research as a small-scale project within the constraints of a single university unit. Time emerged as the primary limiting factor

throughout the research process. Most significantly, interviews could not commence until late November, creating a compressed timeframe for data collection and analysis. The time constraints also precluded gathering year-long curriculum documents and conducting a comprehensive analysis of the entire VEYLDF document—both of which may have generated alternative findings or deeper insights.

Conclusion

This unique, small-scale research project has the potential to impact policy and practice as the Victorian ECEC sector remains on the path of reform. It situates care as an important and ongoing consideration of ECTs across the country as they design curriculums for 3-year-old children, and that with critical reflection and careful planning for play it is possible place equal value on care as education. This project shows that care is an important part of ECTs curriculum design processes for children's learning and development and that it is under referenced in the research, globally, for children in their preschool years. As the sector continues through periods of reform aimed at increasing educational and learning outcomes, a focus must remain on the second C in ECEC. Care is fundamental to learning and a focus on a quadrilateral theory of care, care *toward, with, for* and *within*, in curriculum design will help steer ECTs in a direction of foregrounding these benefits now and into the future.

Ethics

The research for this project received the approval of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee, Project number: 40808

Declaration of conflict of interest

The author declares no known financial or personal conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgement

References

Ailwood, J., Boyd, W., & Theobald, M. (2016). Introduction. In J. Ailwood, W. Boyd, and M. Theobald (Eds.), *Understanding early childhood education & care in Australia: Practices and perspectives.* Allen & Unwin.

Aslanian, T. K. (2015). *Getting behind discourses of love, care and maternalism in early childhood education.* Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 16*(2),* 153-165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949115585672

Aslanian, T. K. (2017). *Ready or not, here they come! Care as a material and organisational practice in ECEC for children under two.* Global Studies of Childhood, 7*(4),* 323-334. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610617747979

Aslanian, T. K. (2018). *Embracing uncertainty: A diffractive approach to love in the context of early childhood education and care.* International Journal of Early Years Education, 26*(2)*, 173-185. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1458604

Aslanian, T. K. (2020). *Every rose has its thorns: Domesticity and care beyond the dyad in ECEC.* Global Studies of Childhood 2020, 10*(4),* 327-338. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610620978508

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2018). *The environment as the third teacher.* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-02/QA3_TheEnvironmentAsTheThirdTeacher.pdf

Australian Education Research Organization & Early Childhood Australia. (2023). *Encouraging a sense of belonging and connectedness in early childhood education and care.* https://www.edresearch.edu.au/sites/default/files/2023-07/encouraging-belonging-connectedness-ecec-aa.pdf

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open, 2*, 8-14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

Berge, A. (2019). 'I believe that a sofa can be of great help': Materiality in a kindergarten room and the impact on social practice. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 51.* 59-72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-019-00235-6

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical Guide.* London: Sage.

Bryant, L. (2019). *Is love the same as care?* http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/is-love-the-same-as-care/

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum, 41*(5), 545-547. DOI: 10.1188/14.ONF.545-547

Clark, T., Foster, L., Sloan, L., & Bryman, A. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Commissioner for Children & Young People. (2023). *What is the UNCRC?* https://www.ccyp.com.au/knowing-your-rights-2/#:~:text=Every%20child%20has%20the%20right,human%20rights%20treaty%20in%20history.

Cousins, S. B. (2017). *Practitioners' constructions of love in early childhood education and care.* International Journal of Early Years Education, 25*(1)*, 16-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2016.1263939

de la Bellacasa, M. P. (2012). 'Nothing comes without its world': Thinking with care. *The Sociological Review, 60*(2), 197-216. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2012.02070.x

Department of Education. (2023). Best start, best life: Transforming early childhood education together. www.content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-11/Transforming-early-childhood-together_what-we-heard%2C-what-we%27re-doing.pdf

Department of Education and Training. (2016). Victorian early years learning and development framework.

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/veyldframe
work.pdf

Early Childhood Australia. (2023). Seven tips on flexible hours you may not know.
https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/extended-hours-families-children/

Early Learning & Care Council of Australia. (2023). ELACCA applauds the Victorian
government for ground-breaking early learning reforms [Media release].
https://elacca.org.au/elacca-applauds-the-victorian-government-for-ground-
breaking-early-learning-reforms/

Early Learning Association Australia. (2021). Ongoing preschool funding for Victoria
welcomed [Media release]. https://elaa.org.au/wp-
content/uploads/2021/12/131221_media-release_response-to-vic-com-4-year-funding-
agreement_final.pdf#:~:text=Early%20Learning%20Association%20Australia%20%2
8ELAA%29%20welcomes%20the%20announcement,up%20to%20330%2C000%20
Victorian%20children%20in%20four-year-old%20kindergarten.

Edwards, S. D. (2009). Three versions of an ethics of care. *Nursing Philosophy, 10,* 231-240.

Erickson, J. (2018). Measuring the long-term effects of early, extensive day care.
https://ifstudies.org/blog/measuring-the-long-term-effects-of-early-extensive-day-care

Garboden Murray, C. (2021). *Illuminating care: The pedagogy and practice of care in early
childhood communities*. Exchange Press.

Kaukko, M., Wilkinson, J., & Kholi, R. K. (2022). Pedagogical love in Finland and
Australia: A study of refugee children and their teachers. *Pedagogy, Culture &
Society, 30*(5), 731-747. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2020.1868555

Kennedy, A. (2012). What have theories got to do with it?
www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-
12/WhatHaveTheoriesGotToDoWithIt.PDF

Langford, R., & Richardson, B. (2020). Ethics of care in practice: An observational study of
interactions and power relations between children and educators in urban Ontario
early childhood settings. *Journal of Childhood Studies, 45*(1), 33-47.
https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs00019398

Livingstone, R. (2020). For every child, every right. www.acecqa.gov.au/latest-
news/blog/every-child-every-right

Lobo, M. A., Moeyaert, M., Baraldi-Cunha, A., & Babik, I. (2017). Single-case design,
analysis, and quality assessment for intervention research. *Journal of Neurological
Physical Therapy, 41*(3), 187-197. https://doi:10.1097/NPT.0000000000000187

Nolan, A., & Raban, B. (2015). *Theories into practice: Understanding and rethinking our
work with young children and the EYLF*. Teaching Solutions.

O'Connor, D., Robinson, C., Cranley, L., Johnson, G., & Robinson, A. (2020). Love in
education: West Australian early childhood pre-service teachers' perspectives n
children's right to be loved and its actualisation within their future practice. *Early
Childhood Development and Care, 190(*15*),* 2402-2413.
https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1574778

Pacini-Kethcabaw, V., Kind, S., & Kocher, L. L. M. (2016). *Encounters with materials in early childhood education*. Routledge.

Page, J. (2010). Do mothers want professional carers to love their babies? *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 9(3)*, 310-323. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X1140798

Page, J. (2014). Developing professional love in early childhood settings. In L. Harrison & J. Sumsion (Eds.), *Lived spaces of infant-toddler education and care* (pp. 119-130).

Page, J. (2017). Reframing infant-toddler pedagogy through a lens of professional love: Exploring narratives of professional practice in early childhood settings in England. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 18(4)*, 387-399. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949117742780

Page, J. (2018). Characterising the principles of professional love in early childhood education and care. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 26(2)*, 125-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1459508

Quinones, G., Rutanen, N., & Revilla, Y. L. (2023). A cultural-historical exploration of relational ethics in research involving children. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction, 42,* 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2023.100756

Raper, A. (2022). NSW and Victorian governments plan new free year of preschool schooling within a decade. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-16/nsw-victoria-plan-for-new-preschool-year-education/101155350

Rautio, P. (2014). Mingling and imitating in producing spaces for knowing and being: Insights from a Finnish study of child-matter intra-action. *Childhood, 21*(4), 461-474. https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568213496653

Recchia, S. L., Shin, M., & Snaider, C. (2018). Where is the love? Developing loving relationships as an essential component of professional infant care. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 26(2*), 142-158. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1461614

Rentzou, K. (2019). Greek early childhood educators' conceptualization of education, care and educare concepts. *Early Years, 39*(2), 148-162. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2017.1361386

Shin, M. (2021). To love or not to love, that is the question: Examining the intersection of love, care and education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 22(3*), 282-285. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949120902864

Sims, M. (2014). Is the care-educator dichotomy behind us? Should it be? *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 39*(4), 5-11.

Sims, M. (2017). Neoliberalism and early childhood. *Cogent Education, 4(1)*, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1365411

State Government of Victoria. (2018). Ready for school: Kinder for every three-year-old [Media release]. https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/ready-school-kinder-every-three-year-old

State Government of Victoria (2023). Kindergarten funding guide. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/J641-Kindergarten-Funding-Guide-v6.pdf

Wong, S., & Press, F. (2016). The development of early childhood education and care in Australia. In J. Ailwood, W. Boyd, and M. Theobald (Eds.), *Understanding early childhood education & care in Australia: Practices and perspectives.* Allen & Unwin.