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Towards a pedagogy of love: An investigation into how teachers' perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Rachel Mary Hughes

Abstract

This thesis has investigated teachers' perception of the concept of love in early childhood care and education (ECCE) in Aotearoa New Zealand, through a critical examination of love as a component of teaching practice. By examining love as a multi-layered phenomenon, the role of the teacher has been positioned as one of the key influences in a child's life through which that child may experience love. This critical examination emerged from a concern about the lack of recognition of love as an integral facet of teaching, and has argued for children's right to be loved by their teachers, and teachers' rights and responsibilities to love children in an educational context in partnership with parents and whānau (extended family).

The narratives of six qualified ECCE teachers from a range of backgrounds and ECCE environments were gathered using a qualitative case study methodology. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection tool. Case study findings were supported by the literature reviewed.

The context within which the word love is used prescribes its meaning (Berscheid, 2006), and research findings indicated participants' need for a definition of love they could relate to their role. The research also revealed that tensions existed between the compatibility of teaching with love and the notion of professionalism in ECCE. The relative invisibility of love in initial teacher education and Ministry of Education (MoE) documentation, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996), was interpreted to be a contributory factor to these tensions.

This research identified the interwoven nature of love in Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996), and concluded the need for it to be made more apparent in the English language text of the document. The argument has been made that if this insight was more widely accepted it would have implications for initial teacher education and ongoing professional development, which could contribute to the situation in which love was accepted as a legitimate component of discourse about the teaching profession (Dalli, 2006). It has been acknowledged that significant scope remains for investigation into the concept of love in ECCE towards a pedagogy of love in Aotearoa New Zealand.
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# Table of contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ ii
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................ iii
Chapter 1 Introduction................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Purpose of the study ............................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 The influence of Loris Malaguzzi and the Reggio Approach, Lisa Goldstein, and *Te Whāriki* ... 2
  1.3 Research topic ..................................................................................................................... 3
  1.4 My place in this study ......................................................................................................... 3
  1.5 Models and deliberate usage of language .......................................................................... 3
  1.6 Thesis overview.................................................................................................................. 5
Chapter 2 Literature review ........................................................................................................ 6
  2.1 Exploring meanings and theories of love .......................................................................... 6
  2.2 The multiple layers of love ............................................................................................... 9
    2.2.1 Mother love ................................................................................................................. 9
    2.2.2 Father love .................................................................................................................. 9
    2.2.3 Family/whānau love ................................................................................................. 10
    2.2.4 Teacher love ............................................................................................................. 10
    2.2.5 Community love ....................................................................................................... 12
  2.3 Conclusion ........................................................................................................................ 18
Chapter 3 Methodology ............................................................................................................. 19
  3.1 Purpose of the study .......................................................................................................... 19
  3.2 Study design ..................................................................................................................... 19
  3.3 Participant selection ......................................................................................................... 20
  3.4 The participants ................................................................................................................. 21
  3.5 The early childhood care and education centres ............................................................. 24
  3.6 The interviews ................................................................................................................ 24
  3.7 The interview questions .................................................................................................. 25
  3.8 Working with the data ..................................................................................................... 26
  3.9 Ethical considerations .................................................................................................... 26
  3.10 Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 27
Chapter 4 Findings ...................................................................................................................... 28
  4.1 Interview questions and responses .................................................................................... 28
  4.2 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 51
Chapter 5 Discussion ................................................................................................................... 52
  5.1 Preface ................................................................................................................................ 52
  5.2 The value and importance of love in early childhood care and education ......................... 52
  5.3 Teachers’ perception of the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand ........................................................................... 54
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the study

This thesis investigated love as a multi-layered phenomenon. It has explored how teachers perceived the concept of love for children, and what love looked like in their practice with children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a result of this research I have gained an insight into teachers' thoughts about love, how they taught with love, how love existed in their early childhood centre, and how they shared the concept of love for children with parents and whānau (extended family). From the insight I acquired, it was evident to me that there remains significant scope for future investigation into this topic which, if pursued, I believe could contribute towards a pedagogy of love in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This chapter describes the purpose of this thesis. I commence with a brief explanation of my motivation for undertaking this research, and acknowledge three key influences. I outline the research topic, and my place in this study. I then introduce two models I developed to shape and inform my research: ‘The multiple layers of love’ (Hughes, 2010), and Loving teacher-child relationships. Clarification of the phrase early childhood care and education is provided, and the chapter concludes with an overview of this thesis.

The topic of love in the context of early childhood care and education was chosen because of my concern about the lack of recognition of teaching with love as a legitimate component of teaching practice, which seems to have been progressively silenced with the emergence of the early childhood teacher as a recognised professional in Aotearoa New Zealand (Hughes, 2010). I was also interested in investigating the extent to which the concept of love was part of children's daily encounters in early childhood care and education settings, because current research has highlighted the steady increase in the numbers of children commencing early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Dalli, White, Rockel & Duhn, 2011). Research also showed that children were entering the sector at increasingly younger ages, meaning they were spending more time in institutionalised settings even before they started their formal school education (Brennan, 2008; Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011).

Through my understanding of the sector I have also become conscious of an underlying tension between love and professionalism. Dalli (2008) has paraphrased her 2002 work, and suggested this discord has historic roots when she "... argued that the traditional alignment of early childhood work with the role of mothering, and the attendant discourses of love and care, have acted to disempower early childhood practitioners from claiming professional status" (cited in Dalli, 2008, p. 174). Dalli (2006) has highlighted the paradox of a situation in which “love and care are words that have a lot of significance for early childhood teachers when they talk about their work” (p. 7) yet at the same time, as early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand has,

... moved closer to the goal of a professionalised sector, we have become more and more articulate about all the knowledge and skills that we consider important in a professional
teacher, but less and less clear about how, or even whether, to integrate love and care in [emphasis added] this new construction of profession. (Dalli, 2006, p. 6)

This lack of clarity about the compatibility of love with professional practice appears to have manifested itself in the fact that the word ‘love’ is not present in any of the following Ministry of Education publications: Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996), Quality in Action (MoE, 1998a), Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations (MoE, 1998b), Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (MoE, 2008), Self-Review Guidelines (MoE, 2009); although the concept ‘loving’ is articulated twice in the English text of Te Whāriki (Hughes, 2010).

I have argued that this relative invisibility of love in professional discourse has potentially led to uncertainty in the minds of teachers about the role love plays in their practice (Hughes, 2010). As a consequence, I was motivated to undertake this research to gain a deeper understanding of teachers’ perceptions of the concept of love in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

1.2 The influence of Loris Malaguzzi and the Reggio Approach, Lisa Goldstein, and Te Whāriki

I found inspiration and empowerment to pursue this study through three primary influences. Through Loris Malaguzzi and the Reggio Approach, I was introduced to the concept of the “100 languages of children” (Malaguzzi, cited in Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998, p. 3), and to a way of thinking about children as citizens with rights. I continue to be inspired by the Reggio Approach, which immediately after WWII showed, by the building of a school from the rubble of bomb damaged buildings without official sanction, how it is possible to challenge existing mindsets in a peaceful yet powerful way, starting with the destiny of children (Barazzoni, 2000).

In the work of Lisa Goldstein, I found a kindred spirit who had challenged the perceived wisdom that “Love is difficult to define, impossible to measure, and outside the boundaries of generalizability, reliability, and validity” (Goldstein, 1997, p. 8). Goldstein's (1997) “teacherly love” (p. 152), the operative components of which are “a belief in the value of love in education” (p. 152), and “a deliberate decision to love students” (p. 152), has proven fundamental to my research. Both the difficulty of defining love and teacherly love will be expanded on later in this thesis.

The beginning of my career in early childhood care and education coincided with the first draft of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996), Aotearoa New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum. I was fortunate to have been guided in my teaching by such an enlightened piece of documentation which encompassed the ‘whole child’. Te Whāriki was founded on the following aspirations for children, “to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society” (MoE, 1996, p. 9). I continue to believe that Te Whāriki is an ideal foundation upon which to build a culture of love in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.
1.3 Research topic

From the literature I had read related to love and teaching, it became apparent to me that research into the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education was an area of relatively uncharted territory (Goldstein, 1997) and presented an exciting and self-motivating opportunity to pursue an investigation into this topic. Little investigation has been conducted into the role love plays in the classroom interactions between children and their teachers (Goldstein, 1997). Accordingly, I developed the following research question to guide this study: In what ways do teachers perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand? I believed that this research would be a valuable addition to the existing body of work in this field.

1.4 My place in this study

I vividly recall an evening in 2009, when, as a Centre Supervisor, I facilitated a discussion with my teaching team about the values they perceived as being fundamental to their role as early childhood teachers. As the ideas came forth, I contributed my belief that love was an essential ingredient as it has always been an implicit facet of my professional teaching practice. However, during the course of the conversation it became obvious that not all my team felt the same way. This thesis emerged as a result of my subsequent investigation into teachers' perceptions about the concept of love in the early childhood care and education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand.

My passion for early childhood care and education began when, as a high school student, I was always surrounding myself with young children to care for in a babysitting capacity. In 1988 I was included in the inaugural intake for a three year Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood Education qualification at Dunedin College of Education. I was also enrolled for a Bachelor of Education at Otago University at this time. In the intervening years since graduating with these qualifications, early childhood care and education has been a constant presence in my professional life. I have held a variety of positions in the sector as a Teacher, Centre Supervisor/Leader, and Lecturer.

In 2009 I partook in a study tour to the Loris Malaguzzi Centre in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Not only was this a tremendous learning opportunity, it was also a huge motivation for me as I commenced my Postgraduate Diploma in Education that same year. I enrolled in a paper about infants and toddlers, and was encouraged to develop my existing interest in the concept of love in the sector through the course work. As a subsequence, I published a journal article in 2010, in which I suggested that the time had come to give love a greater emphasis in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Hughes, 2010). This in turn provided the impetus for me to embark on this thesis.

1.5 Models and deliberate usage of language

As will be expanded upon through the Literature Review (Chapter 2), when the word “love” is used in this thesis, it reflects a range of behaviours as identified by researchers (Fromm, 1995; hooks, 2000; Peck, 2003); including, but not limited to, respect, care, attunement, commitment and trust.
To shape and guide this research, I developed a model to represent what I believe are the key relationships in a child’s life through which that child may experience love. I have called this model, which positions the child at the centre of the various relationships, the *multiple layers of love*.

**The Multiple Layers of Love**

![Diagram of the Multiple Layers of Love]

While the *multiple layers of love* model visually presents the ‘layers’ as distinct entities, it is necessary to appreciate that the intention behind this representation is an acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of the layers. It is also acknowledged that a child can simultaneously receive love from more than one layer.

I also developed a second model which represents what I believe are the essential elements of teaching with love I called this model, *loving teacher-child relationships*. The model encompasses the notion of unconditional love for children. It embraces respect for and acceptance of each child for who they are and what they bring to early childhood care and education. *Loving teacher-child relationships* embodies a belief in children’s right to be loved by their teachers, and teachers’ rights and responsibilities to love children in an educational context through their practice and ongoing dialogue in partnership with parents and whānau (extended family).

I also made the deliberate decision to include the word ‘care’ in all references made to the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood sector in this thesis as there appears to have been a ‘swing’ away from a focus on care, a position reinforced by Rockel (2013), who has suggested it is timely to revisit this aspect of working with very young children. I uphold that care, like love, must continue to be included as a foundational component of teaching infants, toddlers and young children.
1.6 Thesis overview

This research study is presented in six chapters, including this introduction which has outlined the purpose of my study and my research topic, together with a description of three significant influences and my place in the study. Models and deliberate usage of language have been explained. The following is an overview of the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 2 is a critical review of a range of literature exploring various definitions and aspects of love using the multiple layers of love as a framework. Particular focus is given to the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education, and to the 'teacher' layer of the multiple layers of love.

Chapter 3 details the overall design of the research undertaken, and specifies how this was conducted using a qualitative case study methodology employing semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool. Participant demographics have been provided.

Chapter 4 is a presentation of the key findings from my research interviews, together with a selected range of participant responses to the twelve interview questions, extracted from the full interview transcripts.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion and analysis of the key findings from my research interviews to draw out the pre-eminent themes. Case study findings were supported by the literature reviewed.

In conclusion, Chapter 6 summarises the key findings, and makes recommendations for teacher education and teaching practice in early childhood care and education settings. The significance and limitations of the study are acknowledged, and opportunities for future research have been suggested.
Chapter 2 Literature review

This literature review critically examines various aspects of love, with a particular focus on the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education. The model, the multiple layers of love, provided the framework for this investigation of the key relationships in a child’s life through which that child may experience love. However, to provide a context for love in the early childhood care and education sector, the following section first considers meanings of love and theories related to it.

2.1 Exploring meanings and theories of love

From a review of academic discourse relating to love it is acknowledged that love can be a contentious topic (Dalli, 2006; Goldstein, 1997). According to hooks (2000), “When the very meaning of the word is cloaked in mystery, it should not come as a surprise that most people find it hard to define what they mean when they use the word ‘love’” (p. 4). hooks (2000) has asked us to “Imagine how much easier it would be for us to learn how to love if we began with a shared definition” (p. 4), and conceded she “spent years searching for a meaningful definition of the word” (p. 4). hooks (2000) professed to have been “deeply relieved” (p. 4) when she found a definition for love in what she referred to as “psychiatrist M. Scott Peck’s classic self-help book The Road Less Travelled, first published in 1978” (p. 4).

Peck (2003) prefaced his definition of love by stating that “One result of the mysterious nature of love is that no one has ever, to my knowledge, arrived at a truly satisfactory definition” (p. 69). Peck (2003) defined love as “The will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth” (p. 69), and continued, “Love is as love does. Love is an act of will - namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love” (p. 71). From this insight, hooks (2000) has concluded that, “Since the choice must be made to nurture growth, this [Peck’s] definition counters the more widely accepted assumption that we love instinctually” (p. 5).

Interestingly, while hooks (2000) has acknowledged her appreciation of Peck’s definition, she has also suggested that he has echoed the work of Fromm, originally published in 1956. According to Fromm (1995), “In the most general way, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving” (pp. 17-18). Fromm (1995) also contended that there are four basic elements common to all forms of love; “These are care, responsibility, respect and knowledge” (p. 21). hooks (2000) herself then echoed Fromm when she stated that “To truly love we must learn to mix various ingredients - care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust, as well as honest and open communication” (p. 5).

Also reflecting the difficulty of defining love, Berscheid (2006) has noted “Because the word love is used in an almost infinite variety of contexts, it has an almost infinite variety of meanings” (p. 173) and has stated that “This is unfortunate from the point of view of those who wish to construct a
simple definition of love and a set of algorithms representing its causes and consequences” (p. 173). According to Berscheid (2006),

As a word, love is used by people to represent something - many things, actually - in their communications with other people, and despite the fact that love is one of the most polysemous words in the English language, people generally know what a person using the word is trying to communicate. Love in the phrase “I love ice cream” does not have the same meaning as love in the phrase “I love you,” for example. People generally know what love means in common discourse because they construe its meaning from knowledge of precisely who, in what situation, in what culture, is using the word to describe his or her attitudes, emotions, feelings, and behaviors about a person or a thing. It is the context in which love is used that establishes its meaning. (pp. 172–173)

As a result of her research, Berscheid (2006) has suggested “classifying love into four different kinds: attachment love, compassionate love, compassionate love/liking, and romantic love” (p. 7).

Author’s note: From the perspective of critically examining love in the context of early childhood care and education, romantic/sexual love has no place in the classroom and is not considered in this research. It should also be noted that this investigation is strictly secular in nature.

According to Berscheid’s (2006) taxonomy noted above, ‘attachment love’ emphasises the need for protection and occurs naturally. It involves one seeking out another when experiencing a situation where one is unsure. ‘Compassionate love’ occurs when attention is given to another’s well-being, this is also known as altruistic love. ‘Compassionate love/liking’ is based on reward and punishment where the person who rewards another is liked, and the person who punishes is disliked.

Lewis, Amini and Lannon (2000) have investigated many aspects of human life, including how children should be raised and taught. They observed that teachers’ affection for children “does not rival parental passion” (p. 200), but also acknowledged that “Some nannies and day care workers feel a genuine and abiding fondness for the children they supervise” (p. 200). Be it parental or teacher love however, Lewis et al. (2000) have reached what they have called “The unimpeachable verdict” (p. 199) that “love matters in the life of a child” (p. 199).

Sternberg (2006) has theorised that love is composed of three components: intimacy, decision/commitment, and passion, and has adopted a triangle as a metaphor to represent their relationship. According to Sternberg (2006), while all three components must be present, they do not need to appear on the triangle in any particular order, and the shape of the triangle can vary to give emphasis to one component over another. Sternberg (2006) defines each component as follows,

- **Intimacy** is the "feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships. It thus includes those feelings that give rise, essentially, to the experience of warmth in a loving relationship" (p. 185).
• **Decision/commitment** is the decision to love someone, and a commitment to sustain that love.

• **Passion** is the motivational forces that drive a loving relationship and involves, "self-esteem, nurturance and self-actualization" (p. 185).

In contrast to the more generalised theories of love proposed by researchers such as Berscheid (2006) and Sternberg (2006), Goldstein (1997) has explored love in the specific context of early childhood care and education settings, and developed a construct she has called “teacherly love” (p. 149) to capture her “understanding of the nature of love in early childhood classrooms” (p.149). She has suggested that “Teacherly love arises when a belief in the value of love in education and a deliberate decision to love students combine with a passion for teaching; and it grows as a result of the intimacy that occurs in the life of a loving classroom” (Goldstein, 1997, p. 152).

Though acknowledging that Sternberg's (2006) model was not expressly intended to represent love in the classroom, Goldstein (1997) has suggested it could be amended for application to this purpose. In her version of Sternberg's (2006) 'triangular theory of love', the three core components are essentially retained, with slight modifications to their original interpretation. **Intimacy**, for Goldstein (1997), still portrayed "close connected and bonded feelings" (p. 19); however instead of being referenced to a one-on-one relationship, Goldstein (1997) has proposed that it should encapsulate the multi-faceted relationships of an educational setting.

In Goldstein's (1997) model, **decision/commitment** simply became **commitment**, and reflected the professional role of the teacher. Commitment, for Goldstein (1997), characterised the time and energy essential for working with children, although she agreed that the "decision to love and to maintain that love" (p. 19) from Sternberg's (2006) theory also sat well with the idea of teacherly love.

Goldstein (1997) was unequivocal in her position that **Passion** was the component of Sternberg's (2006) model that most needed to be contextualised for educational settings because of its association with other types of love (romantic/sexual) that have no place in the relationship between a teacher and a child. She made particular reference to the contribution of Fried (1995) to discourse about passion in an educational context. According to Fried (1995) the passionate teacher, is “... someone in love with a field of knowledge, deeply stirred by issues and ideas that challenge our world, drawn to the dilemmas and potentials of young people who come into class each day” (cited in Goldstein, 1997, p. 21).

In his theory, Sternberg (1988a) defined the situation where intimacy, commitment, and passion existed in a relationship as “consummate love” (cited in Goldstein, 1997, p. 21). For Goldstein (1997) “... if love is to be present in a classroom, it has to be present in this consummate form” (p. 21). From this exploration of definitions of love, and related theories, the key relationships in a child's life through which that child may experience love are now examined.
2.2 The multiple layers of love

The model *the multiple layers of love* has been used to visually represent 'layers' of love-relationships. An analysis of each layer has been conducted, with a particular focus on the concept of teaching with love in early childhood care and education.

![The Multiple Layers of Love](image)

2.2.1 Mother love

The first layer in this model is the mother-child dyad. Brownlee (2008) has described the mother-child bond as "the First Partnership" (p. 17). In her opinion "it is from within this partnership that the baby learns to make relationships" (p. 17). Hrdy (2001) has acknowledged that "Mother-love is a powerful emotion" (p. 59) and, echoing Brownlee (2008), has noted that "The mother-infant bond is the first, the most critical, and in many social creatures the most enduring social relationship" (p. 86).

According to Karen (1994) "The primary caregiver - and therefore the mother in most cases - is, of course, especially important. Something fundamental seems to get established in the infant's relationship with her during the first year or two that often considerably outweighs the contribution of any secondary attachment figure" (p. 199). From this primary relationship, Brownlee (2008) has concluded that from the "safety and love" (p. 17) of the mother-child partnership "the baby will move out to make relationships with dad, with brothers and sisters, nanas and poppas, aunts and uncles" (p. 17).

2.2.2 Father love

While he has clearly acknowledged the primary caregiver role of the mother, Karen (1994) also noted that "Although fathers are usually secondary caregivers, they are not merely secondary mothers" (p. 199). He has contended that while fathers share, on average, a lesser degree of
intimacy with the child than mothers do, this makes fathers "more of a stepping-stone to the outside world where the child will have to relate to people who are not in perfect sympathy and attunement with him" (p. 199).

Author’s note: The author acknowledges that father love was an area where very little current literature was able to be identified. This is a position supported by the personal observations of Professor Emerita Sarah Hrdy with whom I discussed the situation when she was a visiting guest at the Early Childhood Centres for which I am the Centre Leader on 21 November 2013.

2.2.3 Family/whānau love

Cultural norms will impact the degree to which the extended family is involved in relationships with the child (McAdoo, 2000; Valdes, 1999, cited in, Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark & Moodie, 2009). It has been noted that "In some cultures, multi-generational households are common, and extended family members … have important roles in caring for and raising children" (McAdoo, 2000; Valdes, 1999, cited in Halgunseth et al. 2009, p. 5). Metge (1995) has noted that in traditional Māori culture in Aotearoa New Zealand, the whānau often included up to three generations (Reilly, 2007). According to Winiata (1956) the whānau was "... the 'joint and extended family', which 'comprised the most intimate circle of social relationships'" (Reilly, 2007, p. 61). Fundamental to relationships in Māori culture is 'aroha', literally meaning "love/concern for others" (Kai'ai & Higgins, 2007, cited in Kai'ai et al. 2007, p. 17).

Sims (2009) has referred to the concept where responsibility for children’s well-being is shared between multiple adults as “allo parenting” (p. 9), and has contrasted this notion with what she appeared to consider to be the less effective structure of the ‘nuclear family’ when she stated, “Let us free ourselves from the nuclear family and create a world where we all function as allo-parents and together ensure all our young children get the best possible start to life” (p. 10). While Sims (2009) may have been talking about ‘allo-parenting’ at a conceptual level, Brennan (2008) has suggested that in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand, teachers are already fulfilling this role. According to Brennan (2008) “Today even very young children are spending greater proportions of their lives in public, group care environments, a circumstance that sees early childhood teachers significantly contributing to infants’ and toddlers’ first experiences of emotion, social interactions, and relationships” (p. 13).

2.2.4 Teacher love

It has been observed by Goldstein (1997) that "the idea of teaching with love is not new" (p. 167). Cygnæus was writing about teacher love in the 1860’s (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011), and in 1910 he proposed that "Every teacher has to blaze with the spirit of sacred love. Sacred love that does not seek its own, that does not look at the present but the future" and concluded that "That kind of love towards pupils has to smoulder in a teacher’s heart" (Cygnæus, 1910, cited in Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, p. 1). Goldstein (1997) has also noted that teaching with love "… has been in the heart of the educational experience all along, quietly enhancing teaching and learning relationships” (p. 167). In
support of this position, Määttä and Uusiautti (2011) have concluded that “...love cannot be ignored when reflecting good teacherhood” (p. 1).

In Goldstein and Lake’s (2000) research of a group of pre-service teachers entering their initial teacher education, participants spoke of their love for children, and one student teacher said that love was the reason she had initially come into teaching. This was a position supported by Ayers (2010) who also stated that “People are called to teaching because they love children ... watching them open up and grow and become more able, more competent, more powerful in their worlds” (p. 20).

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, while the *multiple layers of love* visually presents the ‘layers’ as disparate entities, the model also allows for the interrelatedness of the layers. Goldstein (1997) has demonstrated how an individual can be a provider of love from the perspective of more than one layer, in this instance by juxtaposing the ‘teacher’ and ‘mother’ layers. According to Goldstein (1997) “Motherlove is passion-filled and deep and personal and tangled .... Teacherlove is more general, reasonable, neutral” (p. 98); and though it may have been different to the love she felt for her own children, for Goldstein (1997) the love she experienced as a teacher was nonetheless still valid and real,

... my realization that I was feeling a kind of love for the children in the class also contributed to my feelings of professional authenticity. Teacherly love is a distinct set of feelings, the presence of which is an integral part of my professional identity. (p. 99)

In stating “that loving children is an essential qualification for preschool teachers” (p. 32), and “...each young child has a right to be loved and understood” (p. 28), Ayers (1989) has also taken the position that love is integral to early childhood care and education. According to Ayers (2010), “Good teaching requires most of all a thoughtful, caring teacher committed to the lives of students (p. 31), and that “Teaching is primarily a matter of love” (p. 31).

From research undertaken by Ayers (1989) with six early childhood care and education teachers to understand their practice, he observed that each teacher discussed “her work in terms of caring at the moment, of compassion, of connection” (p. 134). Of his participant, Darlene Mosley, he noted that, “For Darlene, teaching is part of a life of care and concern for other people” (Ayers, 1989, p.128). This reflects Peck’s (2003) notion that one aspect of love is the nurturing of others. As has also previously been noted, both Fromm (1995) and hooks (2000) have included respect as a core component in their definitions of love, and Ayers (1989) has shared the following description of the respectful manner in which his research participant, Maya Dawson, communicated with the children at her centre,

She doesn’t patronize children, and she doesn’t talk down to them. There is none of the drawn-up authoritarianism of some teachers in her voice, nor is there the sugar-coated sing-song condescension of others. She speaks directly, and easily, allowing and expecting an honest back-and-forth exchange. (p. 108)
Another of Ayers' (1989) participants, Anna Tiant, made specific reference to love in her practice when she noted that "... what's important to very young kids is to be loved, to be safe, to be cared for and that's what I do. The toddler curriculum is a curriculum of love and play" (p. 24). Tiant also observed,

> They [teachers] need to love kids, and that means knowing how to meet their needs. It could be kissing or holding, or just smiling across the room, or it could be getting out the paint or changing wet clothes. You actively seek their cues and respond to the real people they are. When you love kids you are giving to them in specific ways, and you don’t demand things back. You don’t say, 'I'll give you this, if you'll do that'. Rather, you communicate that they are loved and lovable as they are. (Ayers, 1989, p. 32)

From this last observation, Tiant laughed, and added "And incidentally you do get a lot of love and affection back" (Ayers, 1989, p. 32). Of Tiant's practice, Ayers (1989) has noted,

> Anna feeds and changes and nurtures when that is what she feels is needed, but she also admires and respects the child's development toward self-reliance. She loves the child enough to hold it close, but also enough to let go when the child is ready to fly free. (pp. 32-33)

Continuing the theme that a loving teacher can exert a strong influence on the classroom environment experienced by a child, benShea and DiGiulio (2005) have determined that "Students must first feel they are loved before they can move ahead to get their higher-level needs met (p. 56), these “include an appreciation of mathematics, art, music, science, as well as languages, and social relationships” (p. 56). For benShea and DiGiulio (2005), love is "a most powerful educational tool" (p. 56).

2.2.5 Community love

As previously established, the multiple layers of love model allows for the interrelatedness of the layers, and a link between parental concern and community concern for children has long been recognised. Dewey, writing in 1902 noted that "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children" (cited in Goldstein, 1998, p. 7). As observed in the African proverb, 'It takes a whole village to raise a child' (origin unknown), and a specific example of a community embracing this concept in relation to early childhood pedagogical practice is Reggio Emilia, Italy.

The Reggio Approach

A primary figure in what became known as The Reggio Approach was Loris Malaguzzi (Edwards et al. 1998), while the Reggio Approach itself is described as,

> ...a collection of schools for young children in which each child's intellectual, emotional, social, and moral potentials are carefully cultivated and guided. The principal educational vehicle
involves youngsters in long-term engrossing projects, which are carried out in a beautiful, healthy, love-filled setting. (Gardner, 1998, cited in Edwards et al. 1998, p. xvi)

In the immediate post World War II reconstruction period, the people of this area of northern Italy made a conscious political decision to support the rights of their children by putting them at the heart of their society (Gardner, 1998, cited in Edwards et al. 1998). In 1946 Malaguzzi, an elementary school teacher, got news that at the neighbouring town of Villa Cella, "...the people had gotten together to put up a school for the young children; they had pulled out the bricks from the bombed-out houses and had used them to build the walls of the school" (Malaguzzi, 1985, cited in Barazzoni, 2000, p. 13). Hoping, but not daring to believe this news was true, Malaguzzi cycled to Villa Cella to get confirmation for himself (Barazzoni, 2000).

In Malaguzzi’s (1985) own words,

There were piles of sand and of bricks, a wheelbarrow full of hammers, shovels and hoes. Behind a curtain made of rags to shield them from the sun, two women were hammering the old mortar off the bricks. The news was true, and the truth was there, for all to see on this sunny spring day, in the uneven but stubborn hammering of these two women. One of them looked up at me... “We’re not crazy! If you really want to see, come on Saturday and Sunday, when we are all here. Al fom da boun l’asilo” (“we’re really going to make this school!”). (cited in Barazzoni, 2000, pp. 13-14)

As an experienced, university educated elementary school teacher, Malaguzzi felt a sense of wonder at this extraordinary happening; wonder that such an event would be at the initiative of non-educators, and wonder that these ordinary people would have the courage to go ahead with the construction of a school without formal bureaucratic consent (Barazzoni, 2000). Said Malaguzzi (1985), “I was excited by the way it all overturned logic and prejudices, the old rules governing pedagogy, culture, how it forced everything back to the beginning. It opened up completely new horizons of thought” (cited in Barazzoni, 2000, p. 14). Malaguzzi (1985) concluded,

I had the honour of experiencing the rest of the story ... And it remained an uninterrupted lesson given by men and women whose ideals were still intact [despite the horrors of war], who had understood long before I had that history can be changed, and is changed by taking possession of it, starting with the destiny of the children. (cited in Barazzoni, 2000, pp. 14-15)

Author’s note: The author is inspired by this story; by the fact that it is possible to challenge an existing mind-set in such a peaceful yet powerful manner; and for it being a paradigm-shifting moment of historic proportions for the early childhood teaching profession.

The emergence of an early childhood curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand

Another example of political decision-making in relation to early childhood pedagogical practice occurred in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1980's. Under the leadership of David Lange, "... who was both Prime Minister and Minister of Education" (Te One, 2003, cited in Nuttall, 2003, p. 20), Aotearoa New Zealand became the first country in the world to transfer policy and administrative responsibility for all childcare and preschool services from the Department of Welfare to the Department of Education in 1986 (Moss, 2000, cited in Dalli, 2008).

The emergence of the early childhood teacher as a recognised professional gained further momentum in 1988, when a benchmark three-year early childhood diploma level qualification was introduced to bring early childhood teachers into the same vocational sphere as their primary and secondary school counterparts, and "... created a qualifications track for early childhood practitioners that paralleled that of the compulsory school system" (Dalli, 2008, p. 172). As a consequence, according to Dalli (2008) "... by 1990, early childhood practitioners were entering the field with the same training background, meeting at cross-sector fora and conferences, and participating in professional development courses alongside colleagues from other parts of the sector" (p. 172). This ultimately led to the introduction of an official curriculum for early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1996, known as Te Whāriki (Te One, 2003, cited in Nuttall, 2003).

**Te Whāriki**

From the Māori language, *Te Whāriki* (*Te*, meaning 'the', and *Whāriki*, meaning 'mat'), "metaphorically represents a mat for all to stand on" (Sansom, 2011, p. 19). Under the heading "The curriculum whāriki for New Zealand's children" (MoE, 1996, p. 11), the following description has been provided,

> The early childhood curriculum has been envisaged as a whāriki, or mat, woven from the principles, strands, and goals defined in this document. The whāriki concept recognises the diversity of early childhood education in New Zealand. Different programmes, philosophies, structures, and environments will contribute to the distinctive patterns of the whāriki. (MoE, 1996, p. 11)

Reedy (2003) has observed that, "*Te Whāriki* has a theoretical framework that is appropriate for all; common yet individual; for everyone, yet only for one; a whāriki woven by loving hands that can cross cultures with respect, that can weave people and nations together" (cited in Nuttall, 2003, p. 74). *Te Whāriki* was founded on the following aspirations for children, "to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (MoE, 1996, p. 9); and is based on four general principles: Empowerment (*Whakamana*), Holistic Development (*Kotahitanga*), Family and Community (*Whānau Tangata*) and Relationships (*Ngā Hononga*); with five supporting strands: Well-being (*Mana Atua*), Belonging (*Mana Whenua*), Contribution (*Mana Tangata*), Communication (*Mana Reo*), and Exploration (*Mana Aotūroa*); with each strand having its
own Goals, Learning outcomes, and Questions for reflection, together with a number of Examples of experiences which help to meet these outcomes (MoE, 1996).

Reflecting benShea and DiGiulio’s (2005) assertion that “For teachers, Love means accepting students unconditionally (p. 53), Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996) states,

The early childhood environment should be like a caring home: a secure and safe place where each member is entitled to respect and to the best of care. The feeling of belonging, in the widest sense, contributes to inner well-being, security and identity. Children need to know that they are accepted for who they are [emphasis added]. (p. 54)

While Te Whāriki is divided into four parts, I suggest the curriculum should be considered as an integrated whole. Parts A, C, and D are written in English, with Part B written in Māori, and while the English and Māori texts are not direct translations of each other (MoE, 2008), I believe they are complimentary. Part A gives an overview of children’s learning and development, and considers the processes of planning, evaluation and assessment and their relationship to the principles of the curriculum. Part B is specifically designed to provide guidelines for kōhanga reo (Māori medium early childhood centres) and other Māori immersion programmes. Part C provides a framework for the implementation of the curriculum, while Part D makes an association between each strand of Te Whāriki and The New Zealand Curriculum Framework for schools (MoE, 1996).

Specifically linking the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood curriculum to teaching with love, Te Whāriki establishes the following key curriculum requirement for infants in the English text, “Any programme catering for infants must provide: sociable, loving, and physically responsive adults who can tune in to an infant's needs” (MoE, 1996, p. 22). In the Māori text of Te Whāriki, the word ‘aroha’ or “love, concern for others, sympathy, charity” (Kai’ai, 2004, p. 238, cited in Kai’ai & Higgins, 2007) is liberally used.

Pere (1991) has defined aroha as,

... an important concept in regard to the survival and true strength of whanaungatanga (kinship ties, extended family across the universe). It is a quality that is essential to the survival and total well-being of the world community. It is a pillar of life from Io Matua (the Godhead, the Divine Parent). (p. 6)

Of aroha, Reedy (1979) provides the following insight,

Aroha is not something anyone can command from others because they imagine it’s their right. To accept and enjoy the loving, the sharing, the caring of aroha means you give back a little more than you received. This keeps the networks alive and functioning. The acceptance of aroha in any shape or form places one unequivocally under obligation to that person, that family, that group. (Reedy, 2003, cited in Nuttall, 2003, pp. 57-58)
According to Reedy (2003) “Te Whāriki teaches us to respect ourselves and ultimately to respect others. It aims to ensure that children are empowered in every way possible ... [and] nurtured in the knowledge that they are loved and respected” (cited in Nuttall, 2003, p. 74).

This loving respect is reflected in Strand 1 ‘Well-being’, where Goal 2 states, “Children experience an environment where their emotional well-being is nurtured” (MoE, 1996, p. 50); and from this Goal, the following experiences which have particular relevance to teaching with love have been articulated, though as Sansom (2011) has noted, they are not intended to be prescriptive; rather, they are posed as provocative or guiding suggestions,

- For infants: “Time and opportunity are provided for the infant and familiar adults to build a trusting and loving relationship together” (MoE, 1996, p. 51).
- For toddlers: “There are opportunities for toddlers to be independent while knowing that comfort, emotional security, and familiar adults are available” (MoE, 1996, p. 51).
- For young children: “Children are supported in expressing, articulating, and resolving a range of emotions” (MoE, 1996, p. 51).

*Te Whāriki* stipulates that a programme catering for infants must provide, “sociable, loving, and physically responsive adults who can tune in to an infant’s needs” (MoE, 1996, p. 22). This position is supported by Gerhardt (2011) who has stated that the adult undertaking this responsibility must be “…attuned and available, and committed to providing continuity of care for the infant” (p. 207).

Elliot (2006; Elliot, 2010) has drawn on the work of Hopkins (1990) to demonstrate the powerful consequences to children of interacting with adults who are attuned to their needs, noting that Hopkins (1990) has provided “…an interesting illustration of the power of responsive caregiving in her study of nurses [an English term for early childhood teachers] working in day nurseries [an English term for infant and toddler centres] in London, where care for the babies was ‘fragmented and impersonal’” (cited in Elliot, 2006, p. 30). In her study, Hopkins (1990) discussed the needs of the babies with the teachers, and found that their training had emphasised the need for them to keep their feelings for the babies at bay (Elliot, 2010). As a result of her discussions with the teachers, Hopkins (1990) observed that, “As nurses began to see the value of an intimate connection with the babies and began to understand the infant’s need for this connection, they began to attend more sensitively to them” (cited in Elliot, 2006, p. 30). Hopkins (1990) concluded that, “As the nurses became more attuned to the babies” (cited in Elliot, 2006, p. 30), “The result was they were happier in their jobs and responded more positively to the infants’ feelings” (cited in Elliot, 2010, pp. 57-58). Furthermore, “the children began to flourish as they were receiving a responsive connection. The nurses began to enjoy their job more and absenteeism dropped” (cited in Elliot, 2006, p. 30).

The realisation of the nurses in Hopkins’ (1990) study about the value of attentunement reinforces the position that teaching with love is beneficial to both children and teachers. Cooper (2004) has reflected this when she said “Working with this amazing group of people has taught me about living in the moment, about empathy, respect, and most importantly, about unconditional love – who else would shake and wiggle like crazy to my out of tune singing voice?” (p. 34).
Children’s rights

As highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, the numbers of very young children attending early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand is steadily increasing (Dalli et al. 2011), as is the length of time they are spending in centres (Brennan, 2008; Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011). These trends suggest the need for an attendant increase in the awareness of children’s rights, though Smith (2000) has expressed the concern that this need is not widely appreciated when she has stated, “Children’s rights are not greeted with huge enthusiasm by people generally in New Zealand, and I have not heard politicians giving children’s rights any prominence” (cited in Smith, Gollop, Marshall & Nairn, 2000, p. 191).

According to Smith (2000), adults have, for centuries, assumed they know what is best for children, and while academics such as Määttä and Uusiautti (2011) have emphasised “the right and need [of children] to be loved, accepted, and cared for as well as the right and need to grow and develop” (p. 2), and hooks (2000) has asserted that “When we love children we acknowledge by our every action that they are not property, that they have rights” (p. 30), Smith (2000) appears to view the general attitude towards children in Aotearoa New Zealand as being inconsistent with this respectful stance. Smith (2000) has noted that “The idea of children having rights tends to be interpreted as being permissive and giving them too much power and control, while at the same time taking power and control away from parents (or others in authority over children, such as teachers)” (cited in Smith et al. 2000, p. 191).

Smith (2000) has concluded that “It is vital that we pay more attention to promoting and sustaining children’s rights to quality early childhood education, and making sure these rights are respected within early childhood settings” (cited in Smith et al. 2000, p. 203). Smith (2000) has also provided an example of how this respectful attitude is already being implemented in Italy through the Reggio Approach, where,

... a great deal of attention is given to the design and arrangement of equipment and furniture to allow small children a say in decisions. For example there are small cots or ‘nests’ made like baskets at floor level, which allow babies as soon as they can crawl, to choose the comfort of their personal nest rather than being lifted by adults into a cot. Babies can also collect their own clean nappies from low cupboards and climb onto a little ramp with changing mats where adults can be invited to change them. (cited in Smith et al. 2000, p. 202)

Pikler/Gerber approach

Another approach that shows respect for children is demonstrated at the Pikler Institute, a residential nursery home for children in Budapest, Hungary. Established in 1946 to care for World War II orphans in the first three years of their lives (Weber, 2010), the Pikler Institute is named after its founder, Doctor Emmi Pikler (Weber, 2003). The Piklerian approach challenges educators to remain respectful to the child they are interacting with (Weber, 2003) and Pikler herself has articulated her advocacy for the respect of children most poetically,
Hands constitute the infant’s first connection with the world. Hands pick her up, lay her down, wash and dress her, and even feed her. What a different picture of the world an infant receives when quiet, patient, careful, yet secure and resolute hands take care of her - and how different the world seems when these hands are impatient, rough, or hasty, unquiet, and nervous. In the beginning hands are everything for an infant. The hands are the person, the world. (cited in Gonzalez-Mena, 2010, p. 46)

Magda Gerber, a friend and colleague of Pikler, and herself founder of the Resources for Infant Educarers (RIE) organisation (Weber, 2003), simply but eloquently demonstrated her respectful attitude towards children in the video, ‘Seeing infants with new eyes’. When Gerber was asked “Would you like to hold a baby?”; her poignant reply was, “Well, do you think that the baby would like to be held by me?” (Stranger & Lindsay, 1984).

hooks (2000) has encapsulated the sentiments of Smith (2000), Pikler (cited in Gonzalez-Mena, 2010), and Gerber (cited in Stranger & Lindsay, 1984) presented above when she has stated, “When we love children ... we respect and uphold their rights. Without justice there can be no love” (p. 30).

2.3 Conclusion

This literature review has critically examined the complexities of the concept of love. The difficulty of finding a definition for love was identified through the exploration of a range of meanings and theories about the concept. My first model, the multiple layers of love, was used to provide a framework for a review of the key relationships in a child’s life through which that child may experience love. The next chapter addresses the methodology that underpinned my research into how teachers’ perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the intention for pursuing this research, considers the overall design of the research undertaken and specifies how the research was conducted.

3.1 Purpose of the study

As acknowledged in the introduction to this thesis it had become apparent to me that the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education was an area of relatively uncharted territory (Goldstein, 1997); a position which Goldstein (1997) has recognised when she stated “there has been no research undertaken on exactly how love operates in the classroom lives of teachers and children” (p. 8). Consequently, I wanted to find out from teachers how they perceived the concept of love for children, and what love looked like in their practice with children. Accordingly, my research question was, In what ways do teachers’ perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand?

3.2 Study design

In conducting my investigation of the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education I have employed a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. While Punch (2009) has described quantitative research as “relatively methodologically unidimensional” (p. 115), he noted that qualitative research is “a complex, challenging and contested field - a site of multiple methodologies and research practices” (p. 115). Punch (2009) has further proposed that “Qualitative research’ therefore is not a single entity, but an umbrella term that encompasses enormous variety” (p. 115). Miles and Huberman (1994) have suggested that qualitative research enables the researcher to attempt “to capture data on the perceptions of local actors ‘from the inside’, through a process of deep attentiveness, [and] of empathetic understanding” (cited in Punch, 2009, p. 117).

Within the framework of a qualitative research design I have used a case study methodology, with the ‘case’ in question being the particular social phenomenon of teachers’ perceptions of the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This method was used because, as Mutch (2005) has explained, “a case study focuses on providing rich description of a bounded case” (p. 112); an explanation that Theordorson and Theordorson (1969) have taken further with their definition of a case study as being,

... a method of studying social phenomena through the thorough analysis of an individual case. The case may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of social life. All data relevant to the case are gathered, and all available data are organised in terms of the case. The case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single case. It also provides an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked with other methods. (cited in Punch, 2009, p. 120)
According to Punch (2009) “Many case studies will use sociological and anthropological field methods, such as observation in natural settings, interviews and narrative reports” (pp. 120-121). In this study the method used to collect the data was the semi structured interview, through which each participant had the opportunity to respond in an open-ended manner to a set of key questions (Mutch, 2005), and which allowed the participants to share their thoughts, concerns and stories. This approach to data collection was chosen as it enabled me to gather what Ayers has (1989) called “life narratives” (p. 8). Of the telling of stories, Elliot (2006) has suggested that they “… can capture layers of meaning and nuances of emotion. Sometimes, stories stay with us so that we might puzzle over them and understand their possible meanings” (p. 29); she has further suggested that through the telling of their stories, people share their thoughts, feelings and ideas through narrative (Elliot, 2006).

The interview questions were developed in such a manner so as to provoke, as much as possible, uninhibited responses to the questions. This was an important aspect of the study, because in my experience, teachers do not typically engage in dialogue about love in their practice.

3.3 Participant selection

The selection of participants was crucial to this study as I believed it was necessary to represent the diversity of the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood care and education sector. Participants, therefore, were sought from a range of early childhood care and education centres throughout the Auckland region. Participants were assured that their identity would remain anonymous to support them to feel secure in their participation in the study.

My first step was to approach Centre Managers/Owners (by telephone and/or in person) to seek permission to invite potential volunteers from their centres to take part in the research. In response, I received permission from three Centre Managers and from one Centre Owner. Those Managers and the Owner were provided with a poster and Participant Information Sheet outlining:

- the aim of the research topic;
- my background;
- the data collection and storage method;
- the participant's right to access a transcript of the collected data;
- an assurance of anonymity for both the participant(s) and the centre;
- the voluntary nature of their participation.

Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the Participant Information Sheet for the Centre Manager/Owner.

Refer to Appendix B for a copy of the information poster for the Centre Manager/Owner.

In addition, the Centre Managers and the Owner were also provided with a consent form to complete to confirm they had read their Participant Information Sheet, and had understood the nature of the
research and their rights in the study. The Managers/Owner were given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to their satisfaction.

Refer to Appendix C for a copy of the consent form for the Centre Manager/Owner.

Once I received the Centre Manager’s/Owner’s completed consent form, and the Centre Managers/Owner had communicated my research intention to potential participants via the information poster, I was contacted by those teachers who wanted to be involved in my study. I responded to the volunteers by phone to accept their participation in the research, and to arrange an interview time with each of them. Each participant was informed of the following:

• that participation in the research project was voluntary;
• that they had the right to withdraw from this study up to one month after the interviews were conducted and to withdraw any data traceable to them;
• that assurance had been given by their Centre Manager/Owner that their participation or non-participation in this study would not affect their relationship with the early childhood centre.

Refer to Appendix D for a copy of the Participant Information Sheet for the early childhood teacher.

Each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to their satisfaction. They provided me with their completed and signed consent form prior to my conducting their interview.

Refer to Appendix E for a copy of the consent form for the early childhood teacher.

3.4 The participants

The participants interviewed in this study were six qualified early childhood teachers from a range of backgrounds and early childhood care and education centres in central Auckland. At the time of the study, the participants were employed as follows: four were teachers from full day care centres, one of which was a Māori medium early childhood centre, and two were teachers from a sessional centre.

Participant A

• Qualifications:
  ▪ Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education).
  ▪ Teaching for 14 years.
  ▪ Title: Manager/Centre Leader.

• Ethnicity/demographics:
  ▪ Pakehā.
  ▪ Mother of 3, grandmother of 2.

• Early childhood care and education environment at time of interview: Staffing:
  ▪ Participant worked 37.5 – 43 hours per week.
  ▪ Participant had input into programme for all ages.
Centre had 7 teachers per day, an ethnically diverse teaching team consisting of 5 distinct ethnicities.

Operating hours:
- Open 7.30 am-5.30 pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks a year.

Children:
- Catered for children 0-5 years old.
- Licensed for 12 children under 2 years old, 32 children 2 years old and over.
- A child could attend 50 hours per week maximum, 1 to 5 day option for attendance. 6 hours a day minimum (6.5 hours a day minimum to receive 20 hours free).

Participant B

- Qualifications:
  - Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education).
  - Teaching for 6 years.
  - Title: Teacher.

- Ethnicity/demographics:
  - European, I have lived in New Zealand since the beginning of 1986.
  - Mother of 2, grandmother of 4.

- Early childhood care and education environment at time of interview:
  Staffing:
  - Participant worked 5 hours a day, 4 days a week.
  - Participant worked with children aged 0 to 5.
  - Centre had 9 teachers.

Operating hours:
- Sessional/casual centre open from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm, Monday to Friday. Two 2 hour sessions. 5 days a week, closing for a month over the Christmas period.

Children:
- Catered for children 0-5 years old.
- Licensed for 25 children under 2 years old, 25 children 2 years old and over.
- A child could attend a maximum of 1 two hour session per day from one to five days a week.

Participant C

- Qualifications:
  - Bachelor of Education (Hons).
  - Teaching for 12 years.
  - Title: Manager/Centre Leader.

- Ethnicity/demographics:
  - Māori.
  - Mother of 2.

- Early childhood care and education environment at time of interview:
  Māori medium early childhood centre.

Staffing:
- Participant worked 9-10 hours per day, 45-50 per week.
- Participant had input into programme for all ages.
- Centre had 8 teachers.

Operating hours:
- Open 8.00 am-5.00 pm, Monday to Friday, 49 weeks a year.

Children:
- Catered for children 0-5 years old.
- Licensed for 49 children.
- A child could attend 45 hours per week maximum. Most attended daily, though some attended part-time for 2, 3 or 4 days.
Participant D

- **Qualifications:**
  - Bachelor Teaching (Early Childhood Education).
  - Teaching for 7 years.
  - Title: Infant/Toddler Centre Supervisor.

- **Ethnicity/demographics:**
  - European/Pākehā, I've come from the Czech Republic and have lived in New Zealand since 2002.
  - Not a mother.

- **Early childhood care and education environment at time of interview:**
  
  **Staffing:**
  - Participant worked 40 hours per week, though not always starting at the same time each day due to rostered hours.
  - Participant worked with children aged 0 to 5.
  - Centre had 16 teachers in total; 8 teachers in the infant/toddler area.

  **Operating hours:**
  - Open 7.30 am-6.00 pm, Monday to Friday. Closed only for the week of Christmas to New Year.

  **Children:**
  - Catered for children 0-5 years old.
  - Licensed for 25 children under 2 years old, 50 children 2 years old and over.
  - A child could attend the centre from 7.30 am - 6.00 pm daily. Some children attended full time on a daily basis (enrolled from 7.30 am - 6.00 pm), others could be enrolled from 8.30 to 3.30, some children attended part time. Part time children had to attend for a minimum of 2 days. Two sessions available, the full day and a shorter day starting at 8.30 am and finishing at 3.30 pm.

Participant E

- **Qualifications:**
  - Bachelor of Graphic design, Graduate Diploma (Early Childhood Education), Master of Art and Design.
  - Teaching for 5 years.
  - Title: Atelierista (art specialisits).

- **Ethnicity/demographics:**
  - Pākehā.
  - Mother of 2.

- **Early childhood care and education environment at time of interview:**
  
  **Staffing:**
  - Participant worked 40 hours per week.
  - Participant mostly worked with two and a half year olds up to four year olds. Participant spent small amounts of time with infants and toddlers.
  - Centre had 16 teachers in total; 8 teachers in the infant/toddler area.

  **Operating hours:**
  - Open 7.30 am-6.00 pm, Monday to Friday. Closed only for the week of Christmas to New Year.

  **Children:**
  - Catered for children 0-5 years old.
  - Licensed for 25 children under 2 years old, 50 children 2 years old and over.
  - A child could attend the centre from 7.30 am - 6.00 pm daily. Some children attended full time on a daily basis (enrolled from 7.30 am - 6.00 pm), others could be enrolled from 8.30 to 3.30, some children attended part time. Part time children had to attend for a minimum of 2 days. Two sessions available, the full day and a shorter day starting at 8.30 am and finishing at 3.30 pm.
Participant F

- Qualifications:
  - Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education).
  - Teaching for 14 years.
  - Title: Team Leader.

- Ethnicity/demographics:
  - New Zealander.
  - Mother of 3.

- Early childhood care and education environment at time of interview:
  **Staffing:**
  - Participant worked 6 hours a day, 5 days a week.
  - Participant worked with children aged 0 to 5.
  - Centre had 9 teachers.
  **Operating hours:**
  - Sessional/casual centre open from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm, Monday to Friday. Two 2 hour sessions. 5 Days a week, closing for a month over the Christmas period.
  **Children:**
  - Catered for children 0-5 years old.
  - Licensed for 25 children under 2 years old, 25 children 2 years old and over.
  - A child could attend a maximum of 1 two hour session per day from one to five days a week.

3.5 The early childhood care and education centres

A total of four early childhood care and education centres were involved in this research. One centre was privately owned, and three centres were part of larger organisations, being attached respectively to a school, a university, and a gymnasium/fitness facility. The three centres that were part of a larger organisation had been established to support the staff and students/customers of the organisation and the wider community. The privately owned centre, and the centres associated with the school and the university shared similar operational circumstances, being open for between 9 and 10.5 hours per day, 49 to 51 weeks per year, with children attending on a regular full or part-time basis. The centre associated with the gymnasium/fitness facility was unique in that it was set up and packed away every day as the studio in which it was situated was used for other purposes before and after the centre’s hours of operation.

The sessional pack-away centre operated two two-hour sessions, five days a week, 48 weeks per year. Children attending this centre were dropped off by a parent/caregiver who typically then used the gymnasium/fitness facilities. The parent/caregiver was required to return to collect their child within the two hour timeframe. Each session had no set roll as children’s attendance was determined by a central booking system via the gymnasium/fitness facility’s reception. This meant the number and the identity of the children attending the centre varied on any given day.

3.6 The interviews

As a mother, a wife, a full-time worker, and a part-time Masters student, I was empathetic to the time and commitment I was asking of the participants who had volunteered to take part in my research. As such, I endeavoured to make the experience as positive and productive for the participants as it
was for me. The interviews were undertaken at the most convenient location for each participant, at a mutually agreed time.

I met four of the participants at their centres, and the other two away from their work environments; one at their house, and the other at my own home. While I believe all the interviews went well, those conducted at centres were subject to greater time constraints, and in one situation the background noise levels were high. Additionally, one participant had her baby with her during the interview and as a consequence the flow of that interview was not as smooth as with the others. The interviews that took place outside of centres were less hurried, which I maintain allowed the participants more time to answer the questions, to reflect on their answers, and to offer additional comments.

Each interview consisted of twelve open ended questions which the participant was asked to respond to. The interviews were arranged in two broad parts consisting of questions aimed at uncovering information at the 'Community' layer of the multiple layers of love, and questions focussed on uncovering information at the 'teacher' layer. The interviews were conducted, digitally voice recorded, and transcribed solely by me (the researcher).

3.7 The interview questions

The intention behind the twelve interview questions was to gather sufficient data to be able to gain an understanding of how teachers understood love as a pedagogical concept and how it was enacted in their daily practice. The questions were designed to elicit responses across the following aspects of the participant's teaching experiences:

- Participants were asked to reflect upon the preparedness they felt when they first entered the sector to understand and to articulate the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education, and to determine if they thought teaching with love was promoted through official documentation.

- Participants were asked to comment about whether or not they felt, with the emphasis on professionalism in the sector, if the concept of love for children had been silenced, or if they believed love is a component of professionalism. They were also asked if they had thought about the public's view of love in association with early childhood care and education, and did they engage in dialogue about love with parents and whānau at their centre.

- Participants were introduced to the research observations of Brennan (2008) about the contribution of early childhood teachers to infants' and toddlers' first emotional experiences, and were invited to reflect on both Brennan's observations and the work they are involved in with infants, toddlers and young children.

- Participants were also introduced to Goldstein's (1997) concept of "Teacherly love" (p. 152) and asked for their perception of the concept. Using Goldstein's (1997) definition of teacherly love to provide context, participants were invited to describe specific examples of teaching with love in their practice.
It is important to note that the researcher provided no pre-interview definition of “love” or of love as a pedagogical concept in the deliberate interests of not influencing the participants’ responses to questions that addressed their initial teacher education, official documentation, or perspectives on the public perception of love in the sector. It was only at Question 7 that Goldstein’s (1997) concept of “Teacherly love” (p. 152) was introduced to provide context for the subsequent questions.

3.8 Working with the data

Once each individual interview was completed I transcribed it. By transcribing each interview I increased my familiarity with the data. Each interview was recorded into a digital recorder which I then played back as I typed the transcript into a Microsoft Word document. This was time-consuming, but it gave me the opportunity to reflect on the interview process, the participants’ stories, and the emotion of the event. Once the process of transcribing each interview was completed, to ensure the validity of what I had reproduced I emailed each participant their transcript as required by the ethics process to provide them with the opportunity to review the content. Each participant confirmed that my transcription of their interview was accurate, and that I could use the data. Additionally, Participant C helped me with the correct spelling and definitions of the words she had spoken in Māori during the interview.

As I began to work with the data I found that I needed it to be more functional for me. Through the transcription process I had initially kept the responses of each participant separate; however I found this did not allow me to easily compare and contrast the responses to an individual question, or to easily identify any themes that may have arisen across the participant’s respective responses to a particular question. I felt that if I was to make the most of the participants willing contributions to my research, the raw data needed to be presented in a manner which more effectively revealed its richness and its depth. By re-grouping all the responses to a particular question together I found clarity in the data that had not existed for me when it was initially collated per participant.

3.9 Ethical considerations

As has previously been noted, with love being seen as a contentious topic (Dalli, 2006; Goldstein, 1997), and with recent trends in early childhood care and education attendance in Aotearoa New Zealand (Brennan, 2008; Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011; Dalli et al. 2011), I was motivated to investigate how teachers perceive love in this context as a component of their practice. Explaining this context to potential participants enabled them to make an informed decision about their participation in this study.

Full ethics approval was sought from The University of Auckland and granted in 2012. Following ethics approval, the Centre Managers and the Centre Owner and participants were provided with information sheets outlining their involvement in the research. The Centre Managers and the Centre Owner and participants voluntarily gave their consent to take part in the study. The names and contact details of centres and participants were not recorded in the interview transcripts.
It was recognised that confidentiality and anonymity could be problematic given the collegial nature of the early childhood care and education community, so pseudonyms were used to preserve the anonymity of participants and centres in the research. It was acknowledged that anonymity could not be guaranteed though none of the participants expressed any concern about their possible identification through taking part in the study. This notwithstanding, every endeavour was made to maintain confidentiality throughout the research undertakings.

The data collected from participants was stored separately from their consent forms for a period of six years in a locked cabinet at the Faculty of Education, Epsom Campus, The University of Auckland.

3.10 Conclusion

The methodology employed in this research enabled me to critically examine various aspects of the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. It gave me the opportunity to gather thick rich narrative from teachers that revealed their insights into, and experiences of this topic. The qualitative approach allowed me the flexibility to ask provocative questions, and the participants the freedom to share their opinions with depth and frankness. The next chapter presents the findings of my research interviews.
Chapter 4 Findings

In this chapter I present the key findings from my research interviews. Each interview consisted of twelve open-ended questions which the participant was asked to provide a response to. Each participant was given the opportunity to answer the questions to the extent to which they felt comfortable. Once a participant appeared to have completed their answer I prompted for confirmation they had finished by asking "shall we move onto the next question?" After each participant had answered their twelve questions, I asked them if they had any additional comments they wanted to make to conclude their interview.

Reflecting on the participant's responses, it became apparent that questions 8, 9, and 10, had elicited effectively the same sorts of responses, even though the original intention was to examine if and how the participants demonstrated love in their practice from three quite distinct perspectives. As a result, I have grouped together the responses to questions 8, 9, and 10 for each participant.

Participant profiles have been provided in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

4.1 Interview questions and responses

As illustrated in my introduction to the thesis, my model, the multiple layers of love, was developed to represent what I believe are the key relationships in a child's life through which that child may experience love. While the interviews were arranged in two broad parts consisting of questions aimed at uncovering information at the 'community' and 'teacher' layers of the multiple layers of love, the participants responses also conveyed information relating to the 'Family'/Whānau', 'Father', 'Mother', and 'Child' layers. The questions and a selection of participant responses follow.

Question 1: What exposure, if any, did your initial teacher education provider give you regarding the concept of love in early childhood care and education? Please explain.

Author's note: The intention behind this question was to investigate the preparedness the participants felt when they first entered the sector to understand and to articulate the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education.

Participant A responded, "... in the early 90's ... it didn't exist. I don't recall anything pertaining to love in early childhood education". Participant F said, "Nothing. Nothing that comes off the top of my head", while Participant E stated, "I would say absolutely nothing". "I don't think there was discussion about love at all. It's one of those words that no one wants to mention".

Participant D observed, "Not much actually - I think that love is not the kind of word that is spoken about, especially not at university". Participant D also recalled that, "I remember times we would talk about relationships, and the importance of developing relationships with the children, and that [developing relationships] was always something that was talked about, but I can't remember anything about love".  

28
While the above responses represent the reflections of the European/Pakeha participants in this study, Participant C explained that,

Because my teacher education was coming from a Māori perspective, we probably talked about ‘aroha’ rather than the concept of love ... I don't know and I can’t remember talking about it [love] especially, but I am sure that it [aroha] was innate in everything that we did - you wouldn't deal with children without aroha.

Participant C concluded, "I know that in taha Māori, aroha would be what we were talking about, and that was always interwoven with everything". Participant B stated,

I don't remember getting a lot of training on love at all", and recalled being actively discouraged from incorporating love into her practice when she stated, "When I did my teacher registration ... we were discussing it [loving children] one day, and she [the mentor] said it's not my job to make a child happy.

Question 2: In what ways does Ministry of Education documentation support you to foster the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Author's note: The intention behind this question was to find out if the participants thought they were supported to love children as a component of their teaching practice, and if they felt teaching with love was promoted through official documentation.

Participant F commented, "I don't think they [Ministry of Education documents] really do"; a position mirrored by Participant B, who said, "I don't think they do". In specific reference to Te Whāriki, Participant B continued, “You know there’s [the strands] ‘belonging’ and ‘well-being’, but it’s very broad - you can really take Te Whāriki to mean whatever you want it to mean”. In contrast, Participant E said,

I think that Te Whāriki is very strong on children’s well-being, and them being happy in a very holistic sense as well - which I think is fantastic - as well as inviting community and families into centres - I think that’s also surrounding the holistic concept of love. That would be the two areas that I would say that we’re encouraged to foster a concept of love.

Participant C suggested that, “If you look at the Māori side of it [Te Whāriki], aroha is woven in through [the strands of] ‘well-being’ and ‘belonging’. How can you not have love in that?" Participant C then observed that, "To settle that child’s wairua (spirit), to make them feel happy, there has to be that concept of something, and I think it has to be aroha, or love, as you might call it.”

Participant A stated,

I can’t think of any area where the Ministry of Education documentation supports us to foster the concept of love ... we’ve been ERO-ed, we’ve been audited, we’ve been relicensed and I
read extensively and I don’t think there is support for love - the concept of love that I think what love means - from either of those agencies in question one or in question two.

Participant D reflected Participant A’s position when she stated, “I don’t think love is a word mentioned in Te Whāriki”.

Question 3: Do you feel there is any tension that exists between the concept of love in early childhood care and education and professional teaching practice? Please explain.

Author’s note: The intention behind this question was to find out if the participants felt, with the emphasis on professionalism in the sector, if the concept of love for children had been silenced, or if love is a component of professionalism.

Participant E was emphatic in her feeling that tensions do exist. She started her response to the question with, “Definitely, definitely”. She continued,

I think there’s a lot of people that feel - like some of our colleagues - that love has no place in early childhood; that to be seen as a professional, you can’t love the children or have love for families, and that love is a very personal emotion that can’t be part of professional practice. I don’t think that’s right. I think a lot of parents have got a funny idea about that as well actually. There’s this little boy who came last year to the centre - he was a baby; his mother said that we were not to cuddle him too closely or give him any kisses - not that I would kiss a child anyway - but you know she made it very, very clear that she did not want any kind of close relationship with her baby whilst he was in the centre; that we were to act as carers and professionals, which I thought was very interesting. So I think there’s a lot of tension around the idea of love.

Participant D observed that,

For me, love is a very strong word, and has got a strong meaning for me; it’s not the kind of word I would use every day. It’s something that I keep to my family and to the closest people that I do love.

Participant D continued, I don’t really agree with this word [love] being used in early childhood because I see my job or my career as [a] career, and I take it seriously, and so I think that ‘love’ kind of underestimates the teaching profession. Participant D added, “Thinking historically, it [the role of the early childhood teacher] has always been undermined as a profession, and so for me if we talk about love I think it underestimates what we are trying to achieve in the sector”. Participant D concluded that,

I think that teachers need to have the kind of dispositions towards children, they need to have some kind of love towards them, but it is not something I would put emphasis on, in relation to the teaching profession. I think that, yeah, I feel there is a tension.
Participant A stated,

Yes ... there is tension there between the concept of love in early childhood education and definitely what we do"... "and I think it's a really good tension because there's heaps of discussion and thinking and I think where there's tension in anything there's development and growth - nothing's standing still, and nothing's going backwards.

Participant B mused,

I don't know about tension, but I do believe that the moment you put 'professional' teaching in ... when you start to study, and trying to put into practice what you're learning, you're putting theory into practice, and in a way I think it holds you back [from being] your normal, natural, loving self.

Participant B then reflected on a time she had spent outside the sector, "I have been in business, and in business, being 'professional' is in a way holding back [your feelings] ... and I had to work around this with what I was being taught." Participant B continued,

I sometimes still think, well, if a child runs up to me and hugs me and I swing them round and give them a love [sic] (hug back) I think, well is this 'professional'? And then I think, I don't care if it is or isn't, because this is what the child wanted, I think we must put the child's thoughts and feelings first.

Participant C initially queried,

What's the difference between early childhood education and professional teaching practice? To me they're both the same, aren't they? So actually I don't think that there should be any tension there - to me they're one and the same thing.

Participant C then referred to the concepts of 'respect', 'concern', and 'aroha', and surmised that, "Maybe people don't want to talk about it as love, but I'm sure that's what it is. The researcher then requested Participant C to explain a little more about 'aroha'. Participant C explained that,

Aroha is more than love; I think it's that respect and caring for and looking after ... it's deeper [and] more spiritual, more to do with the wairua (spirit) of the child. You can't deal with children, or people really, without aroha.

Participant F reflected and stated,

Yes, I remember when I first started [in] early childhood education ... I was told not to cuddle the children. If they came for a cuddle then [I was told] to cuddle them and put them down on the ground as soon as possible; definitely no kissing their heads or showing any sort of affection.
Participant F recalled that the teacher who was training her “explained it as that it is not your job - that is not part of what you need to be doing ... so I worked like that for a while, but I’ve reversed back”. She concluded that,

I can't personally teach children without showing them affection or giving them a hug if they want to, and if they want to sit on my knee for five or ten minutes then so be it. So, yes I think there is [tension]. I think they [the general public] see professional teachers as just being teachers; just there to teach the children and not really showing them affection or love.

**Question 4: What do you think public perception is of the concept of love in early childhood care and education?**

*Author's note: The intention behind this question was to establish if the participants had thought about the public’s view of love in association with early childhood teaching.*

Participant B stated,

I haven't thought about how the 'public' see it, but I have spoken to mothers over the years I've been teaching, and what has been repeated to me a number of times is that they felt happier leaving their little ones with me because I was warm and loving.

Participant B clarified her role when she stated, I'm not their [the child's] mother - and I don't want to be their mother - but I do want them [the children] to feel that I'm someone that they can come to and feel that they can show their emotions. Participant B concluded, “So I have always looked at the parents and it's just worked for me, [but] I don't really know what the public think”.

Participant A made a more general comment when she stated, “The concept of love in early childhood education is something a lot of people want”. She then observed that, “Some people think it is a prerequisite”. Participant C observed that in the context of the Māori medium early childhood centre,

I know that my whānau expect us to love their children, to care for them, and to treat them in a special way. I think the reason that they [our whānau] come here is because of that feeling of aroha, and how they feel their children are safe and happy here, and are going to be well cared for in a way they have chosen. But the public perception? I don't know how it is out there in other places. I just know how our whānau choose us because of that.

Participant D stated,

The way we are viewed in early childhood, I think people often think 'oh you work with children, you've gotta love them', so I think that they naturally have this perception about teachers working in the early childhood sector, and I think that's what they genuinely believe, is that teachers do love children otherwise you couldn't work with them.
Participant D then recalled that,

I've actually had a chat to another teacher about this, and we were talking about parents and how they would view it if you said 'I love children, I love your child'. Wouldn't they find it offensive? - because they are the parents and they should love them? We've had some parents that wouldn't want us to give hugs or kisses to their children - so that's something that I've dealt with actually not so long ago.

Participant D concluded that, "Everyone has got different opinions, but definitely I think that love is something that's associated with early childhood and that's how [the] public views it". Participant E reflected that,

I think the general public would believe that teachers should care a lot about the children, but I would think that they would be challenged by the idea of 'love' for children in early childhood". "I'm thinking [of] the 'greater public', you know, the media, in that kind of sense.

Participant E also indicated that in her experience that, "I think a lot of the parents really want [us to love their children] - some parents don't - but some parents really want us to love their children". Participant F considered, "I think they [the 'public'] see us more as carers", then mused, "I suppose if you love someone you care for them". She also observed that, "Or you have the other perception which is all about teaching - they [children] must learn 'A, B, C's', so I don't know, it's mixed", and conceded that, "I don't know the public perception".

**Question 5:** From question 4, do you feel empowered to challenge public perception of the concept of love in early childhood care and education? If so, how have you done this?

Author's note: The intention behind this question was to find out if the participants felt they were able to challenge public belief about love, and if so how? Do early childhood teachers have a voice, do they use it, and are they listened to?

Participant A said, "Yes, I do feel empowered to challenge the public perception and yes I have many times, very gently and kindly and respectfully - with the teaching team plus with the parents". Participant A continued,

Almost always on enrolment, if the parent has one or two or three hours for the ‘tiki tour’ to relax and feel comfortable on that first informal or formal visit ... I do raise the concept of love and what their expectation is and how we see it. I think it's because [of] my concept of love in the early childhood centre.

Participant A then stated, "I've got some quite firm - but flexible - practical beliefs around it"; and then shared her beliefs as follows,

- "They're not our children to handle, or give physical love to. The love in our centre is about respect, and gentleness, and kindness, and patience, and plenty of time";
• “[Parents] can pick your child up and throw it in the air, if you like - but we [the teaching team] won’t”;
• “[Parents] can pick your child up and walk around with it on your hip as long as you like - we [the teaching team] won’t do that either”;
• “What we [the teaching team] will do - we’ll sit next to your little child, and if they want to sit on our knee all day, they can”.

Participant B stated, “I have”; she then reflected that,

I suppose when you mean ‘public’ it’s people I know, people I meet. I do speak to them [about] how I love them [the children in the centre], and if they said ‘Oh, don’t you feel nervous that the parent will think you’re taking over’, and I’ve said ‘no’.

Participant C responded,

Not really but if someone came up and told me that we didn’t love our children or that love wasn’t necessary I’d be pretty strong in arguing the fact that actually I think it’s really important. Perhaps I would explain it as ‘aroha’ [though] ‘love’ is the way people would explain it in the Pakeha world.

Participant C continued,

I just think sometimes people don’t think about it at all, they don’t even put it in there but any centre that didn’t have love in it would be a pretty cold place. I think it’s not talked about and people might go ‘Ooh, no, there’s no such thing but of course there is - there has to be or you couldn’t do your job - that’s what it comes down to.

Participant D pondered,

Do I feel empowered to challenge public perception? I wouldn’t know how - because it’s just something that’s always been there; the kind of opinions about early childhood and I think that [the] public will always associate love with early childhood and that’s something the teachers are assumed to be and to do and that’s to love children if they are to be their teachers.

Participant E described a more tacit approach to challenging public perception when she stated,

I think so in some ways ... I think we show the children love in front of the parents and invite parents to see that all the time - so I think that in some ways we are challenging the public perception of love in early childhood education, but no more than that.

The researcher was aware that Participant E had previously had a book published about a project on love she’d undertaken in her capacity as ‘Atelierista’ in her centre [in the Reggio Approach to early childhood care and education, an Atelierista is an art specialist or teacher trained in art education].
Of her project being a vehicle to challenge the public perception of the concept of love for children in early childhood education, Participant E responded,

I guess that it was a prime example really of where we actually talked about love with children, and then the children drew about it, made it out of clay, communicated it with their parents and that started a whole dialogue between the centre and home about love and how they felt about love, and saw love, and understood love.

Participant F stated, ”I haven’t done it [challenged public perception of the concept of love in early childhood education], but I might just do it now [that I’ve done this interview] (laughs).

Question 6: In 2008, Margaret Brennan stated,

“Today, even very young children are spending greater proportions of their lives in public, group care environments, a circumstance that sees early childhood teachers significantly contributing to infants’ and toddlers’ first experiences of emotion, social interactions, and relationships” (p. 13).

How do you perceive Brennan’s statement? How does it make you feel?

Author’s note: This question was intended to encourage the participants to reflect on both this quote, and the work they are involved in with infants, toddlers and young children.

Participant A responded, “It’s a huge responsibility that we have children [spending] up to 50 hours per week [in the centre]”. She added that, ”We definitely need to have … loving relationships, respect, kindness, and fun [in the centre], and it’s exciting to be caring for and taking an interest in other people’s feelings”. Participant A also stressed the importance of role-modelling “healthy emotions, social interactions, relationships”. Participant B stated,

I think it’s sad because I believe that infants and toddlers should be home with their mothers - in a perfect world, and it would be great if they [mothers] did have longer maternity leave but they don’t. So therefore, early childhood teachers … contribute to babies and toddlers [experiences of emotion, social interactions, and relationships]. So to a certain extent as teachers of this age group we are filling a need, and we need it to be the best care that they [the children in centres] can get.

Participant B then asked rhetorically, ”What does responsive care to young children teach them? I believe that it teaches them to care because you’re a role-model”. Participant B then re-read the Brennan quote and said, ”I agree with her. I feel it’s sad that it has to happen, but if it is we’ve got to be there with the best care we can give them”. Participant C replied that, ”It makes me feel that we’ve got a really important job to do”.

35
Participant C then reflected on teaching practice in the centre and said,

When I leave and go away and come back the children are always happy to see me back so I think they know that I love and care and protect them ... that’s the way that I do it; whereas there are these others [teachers] that are very soft and caring and happy to ‘hiekie hiekie’ - carry the children everywhere ... so I think that a mix of people like that is really important in a centre, I think, and it makes me feel like we have a really important job to do.

Participant D responded,

I think definitely, especially today when parents need to return back to work, and so of course children as young as being infants and toddlers they have to attend these educational settings. And so definitely these are the experiences of emotion, and social interactions, and definitely relationships, and I think that these are the kind of places that development of relationships, and social interactions have to be emphasised, and children have to be helped to develop these skills, it’s very important.

Participant D then clarified that her belief that the child’s very first experiences of emotion are with their parents, not when they come to a centre. She continued,

I definitely agree with this statement and the way that early childhood teachers significantly contribute to infants’ and toddlers’ social interactions and relationships. I think that it’s something very important and something that we try to do every day. We promote social interactions, we build these relationships, we definitely help them [infants and toddlers] to develop these skills, because these skills are the kind of skills for life, so definitely.

Participant E stated,

I think that’s very true, that is very true. Lots of our children spend more than 40 hours a week here - which is incredible, and [compared to children that don’t spend so long in the centre], those children I think get more of that idea of love from us, definitely.

Of the children who spend more than 40 hours per week in the centre, Participant E said,

We do special little things with them, they come and help us with routines throughout the day, that makes them feel like this is more of a home than a centre, and I think - given that [Brennan’s] statement - that the idea of loving children while they are here is vital really if they’re going to grow up as socially competent, and happy well-rounded people.

Participant F said,

I totally agree with her statement, it makes me feel very sad that so many young children are in care. And I think it is very, very, very important that teachers are aware of the social, emotional interactions and relationships, and the important role they are playing in that, and I don’t think a lot of them are – it’s not covered a lot, well it wasn’t covered a lot in my training.
Participant F then considered the Brennan quote from a perspective that none of the other Participants had talked about when she noted,

But then it also has an up-side, like, some children are better off in care because their home environment is probably even worse, so they could be learning more from being in care than being at home. So you know there is a flip side. But yes it makes me very sad - I don't like the trend.

Question 7: Lisa Goldstein (1997) has coined the phrase “Teacherly love” (p. 152), and defines it as follows,

“Teacherly love arises when a belief in the value of love in education and a deliberate decision to love students combine with a passion for teaching; and it grows as a result of the intimacy that occurs in the life of a loving classroom” (p. 152).

What is your perception of Goldstein's definition of teacherly love?

Author’s note: The intention behind this question was to introduce the concept of teacherly love, and to invite the participants to think of their practice in relation to this concept.

Participant A reiterated her comment about role-modelling made in Question 6 when she stated,

Back to the modelling thing again, when I think about the team of ten teachers that we have - we probably kiss and hug each other every day ... so the children are witnessing this emotion, these bonds, this physical intimacy - all of the communication styles go on - and that's who we are, so that is there for them, and that's how we treat them, and that's how we treat their families.

Participant A then took a moment to re-read Goldstein's definition, and noted,

Well, once again the value of love in education gets back to those early concepts of respect, and kindness, and gentleness, and time, and patience - it's really, really important those things - and I think that's what defines for us love in education, and also, quite a large amount of excitement and joy goes with that value of love in education - and if the passion is there ... I suppose it is that, 'teacherly love'.

Participant A concluded, that because the centre embraces the concepts of respect, and kindness, and gentleness, and time, and patience,

Our centre is described as 'a family'; 'coming home' - this is my children's 'little village' - this is part of my village; [and for the children] 'this is part of our home' ... that's how it's perceived, that's how it's felt, that's how it's treated by the families. So I like teacherly love, I do!
Participant B enthusiastically exclaimed,

I love it, I love it; I think that is fantastic. Because if we are role models, it does show - it shows that you love the students, you love what you're teaching, and they [the children] catch that enthusiasm. If we can keep the [children's] enthusiasm going for learning - and a passion [for learning] - they'll carry on learning. I love this; I agree with her [Goldstein].

Participant C reflected on the difference between Parental love and Teacherly love when she said,

That's perhaps where it [teacherly love] is different - [the difference] between the love of a parent and the love of us [the teachers] - because I love them, I love them dearly, and I'm sad to see them go [leave the centre] and I'll be always thrilled to see them again, but I also realise that they do have to go. But it [teacherly love] is a different love - it is that, 'teacherly' love - because I am not heart broken when they leave, I just see that it is another phase of life. The difference is my son wants to leave home at 22 and I am heartbroken - that's a different love.

Participant E stated, "I like her [Goldstein's] definition [of teacherly love] and I think it's true"; a sentiment echoed by Participant F who enthused,

I actually like this lady Goldstein, and that [Goldstein’s definition] probably sums up my teacherly love. It doesn’t just happen, but the more you get to spend with the children, and the more you get to know them and their parents, the relationship grows stronger. Yeah, you do love the children you teach.

Participant D's interpretation of Goldstein's definition of teacherly love contrasted with the other participants when she opined,

I just find it untrue - because even if I said that perhaps ... a teacher could say 'I really love these students', there is no way I would ever believe that a teacher could love all of her students - there is no such thing. Because there are people, and there are people - and it is a natural thing that you like some people and you don’t like other people - and there is no way that any teacher could love all of her students. I just I don’t believe in this [teacherly love].
Author’s note: Reflecting on the participant’s responses to questions 8, 9, and 10, it became apparent that, while the questions were intended to look at love from three distinct perspectives, they elicited effectively the same sorts of responses from the participants. However, it also meant the participants had the opportunity to think both deeply and deeper about love in their practice. As outlined in the chapter introduction, the responses to these three questions have been grouped together.

Question 8: Describe a time when you displayed teacherly love in your practice. (Prompts: What happened? What did you do? What did you experience? What do you perceive the child to have experienced?)

Author’s note: The intention behind this question was to determine whether or not the participants demonstrated teacherly love, and if so, to prompt them to describe specific examples of this in their teaching practice.

Question 9: How do you perceive the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Author’s note: The intention behind this question was to find out from the participants if they thought love was a core component of their role.

Question 10: How do you demonstrate love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Author’s note: As an extension of questions 8 and 9, the intention here was to find out if there were any idiosyncrasies the participants customarily displayed in their daily practice to demonstrate love, and if so what these were.
Participant A

*Please refer to author’s notes on page 39.*

**Question 8:** Describe a time when you displayed teacherly love in your practice. (Prompts: What happened? What did you do? What did you experience? What do you perceive the child to have experienced?)

Participant A reflected that,

Well it [displaying teacherly love] is on-going - of course - it’s not something that you switch on or off - but I suppose the most difficult [situation requiring teacherly love] recently - a little one that isn’t settling as well as the parents think he is, and would like him to, and the [parent’s] expectation is that he will [settle in the centre] because they [the parents] love the environment so much, they desperately want their little child to *immediately* start trusting it [the centre], and join in, and be a part of it. I just kneel at the gate with them [the unsettled child], hold their hand if they let me, see if gentle touching helps - and the only thing that I can think the little person “M” (name suppressed) experiences is he knows he’s not alone - and there’s someone there that cares about how he feels, and won’t leave him alone, and will always find his “chuggy”, and his “ruggy”, and his “wooggy”, so that’s displaying it [teacherly love]; bending down, being close, and holding their hand if possible.

**Question 9:** How do you perceive the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant A mused,

The concept of love [in early childhood education and how I perceive it as part of my everyday practice] ... well, it’s so bandied about ‘love’ and yet ... it’s just what makes the word go round - it’s what makes people thrive. I only do what I do because I *love* it, what I do.

**Question 10:** How do you demonstrate love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant A reiterated, “[By] Acknowledging each person, acknowledging if they just want a ‘hello’ or if they want a lot more ... [demonstrating] those practices I described earlier about respect, and kindness, and understanding, and patience. I know I demonstrate it [love]."
Participant B

Please refer to author’s notes on page 39.

Question 8: Describe a time when you displayed teacherly love in your practice. (Prompts: What happened? What did you do? What did you experience? What do you perceive the child to have experienced?)

Participant B paused for a long thought, then said,

I find the most important time for me ... is the time when children are parted from their parents - especially if they [the children] are new. We once had a little girl, and for 3 months she would cry every day. She was I think 6 months [old] when she came, so she was little - darling little girl - and I would sit with her [when her parents left] every day. Slowly, I would get various toys, and find out what she - I would ask her mum what she liked - I spent a lot of time listening to her, just sitting with her, and what I did find, when the other children came round and sat on my lap or played where we were, she would be interested in it. It was one of our longest settling periods, and also working with the mother, because mum was very upset, and it was hard - I mean my heart would break, and it’s not even my child, and I felt for her. That little girl now is going into the over two’s area, and she’s ‘happy as Larry’, and she will still come up to me, and give me a cuddle. And, I had a little ritual with her every time her mother brought her in: I would point at her and say “M [name suppressed] you’re here!” And, so even though she’s in the over two’s now, when she sees me, we point at each other [Participant B smiled and laughed at the memory]. I find that little rituals, and laughter, and [by] not even talking to her, but [by] talking to the other children, she learnt to trust me.

Question 9: How do you perceive the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant B stated,

I think that following the cues of the children - with babies and little ones that aren’t speaking - I can only speak from that point of view. It’s being aware when they’re hungry, when they’re tired - because they do tell you in little ways: the sucking of the hand, or the thumb - the moment I see it [it’s] being responsive to that child - to know that that child is tired, or ready for a sleep. I pick her up, talk to her - or him - tell them what I’m going to do - I’m a ‘great’ singer [Participant B made a self-deprecating face] - I’ve got no voice - but I always sing to them, and I either bore them, or the only way to shut me out is to sleep [laughs (at herself)].
Participant B concluded by stating,

I think that this [the next point] is really important: If you know the child well enough, you pick up very quickly on what they need, or what they want - and for them to know that if they are unhappy, they can come to you, and they can feel safe. And if it does mean giving them a cuddle, or just letting them talk, or you talking to them and listening - that to me that is love. It [love] is being responsive, and listening, but really listening, to what they say and what they want.

**Question 10:** How do you demonstrate love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant B was quick to say,

I think I've just answered that [laughs]. Very similar to what I just said [in question 9] - it's being on cue [with the children], and I believe consistency [is important] - but I don't mean it has to be routines, because children change - some days they feel like eating at a certain time, other days they're not hungry - just as we adults don't eat if we're not hungry. But I will tell you what I do do - especially when I first started [teaching] - if I saw a child do something I would try and do what they were doing; get down on the floor [with them] - what do they see?

Participant B also reflected on feeding young children, and changing them, and stated,

A lot of these things are very intimate things that we do with these children - so be respectful. What I mean by 'respectful' is to watch their cues, listen, and ask them - because I do believe they [infants] understand a lot more than they [people in general] would have us think. And just be aware, and once again just be with them.

Participant B concluded, “And you can do that with a group of children [too]; just sit there, and listen to them interact, and try and shut everything else out [to give the children your undivided attention] - I think that's very important".
Participant C

*Please refer to author’s notes on page 39.*

**Question 8: Describe a time when you displayed teacherly love in your practice. (Prompts: What happened? What did you do? What did you experience? What do you perceive the child to have experienced?)**

Participant C started with a general comment when she stated,

> I’m really happy to give all the children here a cuddle … and I give that [teacherly love] every day”. She then reflected further and gave the following example, “Yesterday, one of our children was quite upset, and I said ‘bring him in here’ [the centre office], and I sat him on my knee and cuddled him to just keep him calm, because it was the end of the day, he was tired, his mum was later than normal picking him up, and so that’s what I did. I just looked after him and held onto him and talked to him about how she was going to be here soon, and he definitely felt comforted by that - and that’s love, because I know what it is that he needs. And he was certainly much happier, and once he’d settled down a bit in fact he got up and went off and did something else and waited until his mum came.

**Question 9: How do you perceive the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?**

Participant C’s immediate response was, “Well, that’s what I’ve just said” [in question 8]. Participant C then re-read the question and answered,

> Well, It just happens - all the time. I mean, I wouldn’t be in the job and I wouldn’t be caring for the children if I didn’t have that sense of aroha for whānau Māori, and tamariki Māori really - that’s how I perceive it, it’s part of everything I do, I do it for love - whakanui the tamariki; ‘whakanui’ - that means ‘make them feel good about themselves’.

**Question 10: How do you demonstrate love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?**

In the context of her responses to questions 8 and 9, Participant C reiterated that love was something she demonstrated every day in her practice when she said, “It’s just something that I do”. “Just in everything I do, just by being who I am - that’s how I demonstrate it!"
Participant D

Please refer to author's notes on page 39.

Question 8: Describe a time when you displayed teacherly love in your practice. (Prompts: What happened? What did you do? What did you experience? What do you perceive the child to have experienced?)

Participant D had said in question 7 that, “… there is no way I would ever believe that a teacher could love all of her students”; she qualified that statement in her answer to question 8 by differentiating her relationship with children she had known for a long time, versus those children she had only known for a short time. Participant D mused,

When did I display ‘teacherly love’? “Now there definitely have been moments when, working alongside children, and knowing them for some time - and I’m definitely speaking about children that I’ve worked with for an extended period of time - so I would definitely have those kinds of strong bonds with the children, and authentic relationships - perhaps at times I would definitely feel teacherly love. What happens? Just a real genuine feeling for the children - feeling the relationship, and the understanding that we can work together, knowing the child trusts me to do something, and that the child’s very confident, and comfortable to extend the learning, because the child would be working alongside me, we’d known each other for a [long] time, we’ve got this relationship, so these are probably the times. I would never be able to say that I’ve experienced ‘teacherly love’ with children who I haven’t got to know well yet - who I have worked with for a short period of time - it takes time to develop these relationships. So there definitely have been times, but I’m not sure that I’m talking about teacherly love to the kind of extent that this person [Goldstein] is.

Question 9: How do you perceive the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant D stated,

I just think to me it’s a matter of commitment, and being passionate about what we do. It’s about viewing what we do as a passion rather than a job - so just really being committed, because that’s what we do - we do commit our time to working with these children - we want to help them develop, so we care about them. So to me the concept of love in early childhood education, as part of everyday practice would come down to just demonstrating empathy, and really caring about them - being attentive to them, to their well-being and sense of belonging, so that they feel confident and comfortable.
Question 10: How do you demonstrate love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant D reiterated,

So just like I stated [in question 9] - I just think it's through my commitment and passion - [by] doing what I am doing with the children - extending the learning and just loving the way that they learn and being able to prove how competent and capable they are.
Participant E

*Please refer to author's notes on page 39.*

**Question 8: Describe a time when you displayed teacherly love in your practice. (Prompts: What happened? What did you do? What did you experience? What do you perceive the child to have experienced?)**

Participant E took a moment to order her thoughts, then stated,

There are so many times in the day - but I'm just thinking about this new little girl called "I" (name suppressed) who's started and she is just completely scrumptious - she is a princess and she only wears a tiara and a princess gown at all times - it's just absolutely gorgeous. She didn't really bond with her transitioning support teacher, so I took her under my wing and we've become *such* great friends - and now when she comes in the morning she shouts "S!" (name suppressed) - and I open my arms out, and she just runs into them, and I give her a huge cuddle - and when she first started in the centre I would just stroke her on the back just to calm her down - so I guess these are all ways of showing her 'love'. And yesterday in the classroom there was another new little girl who had just started and was quite miserable and "I" (name suppressed) sat on the mat - and she was very gently stroking her back *exactly* how I used to [for her] - and I guess that is a beautiful example of how me showing "I" (name suppressed) love, actually formed this kind of culture of love within the classroom

Participant E concluded,

I cuddle the children all the time, and show them affection, and let them know that I think that they're absolutely amazing, and special - just spontaneously throughout the day - and I don't know if that's right, necessarily, but I think it grows an environment where everyone really cares for each other and the children feel really nurtured and cared for.

**Question 9: How do you perceive the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?**

Participant E stated, "I think it [love] is there ... I do believe that you need to be professional at all times as well, but ... but I would say it's there, every day".

**Question 10: How do you demonstrate love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?**

Participant E stated,

I think you demonstrate it [love] by being passionate - [it's] about wanting to be there; being excited to be in the classroom every day; showing enthusiasm and care for children at all times; taking the time to get to know children as individuals; taking an interest in their personal lives. There's just a thousand ways that you can demonstrate it really I think.
Participant F

Please refer to author's notes on page 39.

Question 8: Describe a time when you displayed ‘teacherly love’ in your practice. (Prompts: What happened? What did you do? What did you experience? What do you perceive the child to have experienced?)

Participant F reflected that, "I try to have teacherly love, it's just [naturally] in my practice - I don't even realise that I'm doing it". Participant F continued with the following example,

For instance, a little girl was upset today; [her] Mummy didn't want to leave her because she was upset - so I took her and I said 'it's okay to be upset, so let's go and do this' - and she stayed with me for nearly half an hour, and I did try to put her down a couple of times, but she's like 'no, no, no', and so I just said 'come on then, let's just carry on' - and so she followed me round, and she was happy to do so, and there was no need for me to leave her crying. I think that was a teacherly love experience - just giving her the time to settle down in her own way, rather than being too busy to deal with it [the situation] because you've [also] got other children [in the centre].

Question 9: How do you perceive the concept of love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant F reiterated, I think it's just what I do. I try and show every child that I care for them, and that I'll listen to what they have to say - even when it's busy, and they're all trying to talk to you at once. So let them talk to you, but maintain some sort of order at the same time, but they all want to be heard - so you've got to let them be heard.

Participant F concluded that, "It's just what I do - I don't even think about it".

Question 10: How do you demonstrate love in early childhood care and education as part of your everyday practice?

Participant F stated, Just being there for them [the children] - just being there for them, and helping them when they need help - giving them that little extra smile or pat on the back. [Giving them that] big smile when they come in [that says] 'Hey, I'm so glad to see you here today'. You know, just those little extra things - that's how I show love.
Question 11: How do you explain the concept of love in early childhood care and education to new parents to your centre?

Author’s note: The intention behind this question was to find out if the participants talked about love with new parents starting their child at the centre, and if so, how they did this.

Participant A began by acknowledging that, “First of all I know that their [the parents] children are so precious to them, they are so precious ... I say that to them too”. Participant A continued, “I do explain a lot about our role, as [being] a kind, exciting teacher who cares deeply for their precious children - and they [the children] are [precious] - and that we [the teachers] are very aware of that”.

Participant B stated,

I know how upsetting it is for them [parents] to leave this little bundle with us - especially for the first time. So, I don’t know that you have to explain it [love] - I think that parents can tell if you genuinely love their child. I do always say to them that I will try and follow what routine they [the parents] have given - but that I do follow the child. If they say to me ‘I feed the child at 9’ or ‘give them a bottle at 9’, I say to them if the child does not want it I will not force it - because I can’t do that to them [the child].

Participant B concluded,

I answer their [the parents] questions, but I do always inform them that even though they are employing me to take care of their child, their child is my first concern, and that I will follow what the child wants - within reason, with the limits - and I try to get all the information [from the parents] about what the child likes and what they don’t.

Participant C stated, “I probably don’t explain it particularly well, but I know they [parents and their children] come here for whānau - and the way that I say things to people is that it’s whānau ... you’ll always be part of that whānau”. Participant C continued,

Whānau is about love, and that once you’re part of the “PK” (centre name suppressed) whānau - you’re part of it ... and to me that’s love. Love is demonstrated too in whānau: there’s kaupapa whānau, which is what we are around here - that is whānau around the “PK” (centre name suppressed) - and then there’s whānau mōno and whānau whakapapa - that’s the ones you’re related to - sometimes I can feel closer to these ones (whānau kaupapa) than I do to my relation ones. Just by saying this is a ‘whānau’ atmosphere [we’re saying] we will nurture your children - look after their wairua, their mana - that’s how we demonstrate it [love].

Participant D laughed in anticipation of what she was about to say, “I haven’t actually had to explain the concept of ‘love’ to any parent”. She continued,

When we get new families to the centre, we definitely talk to them about the programme, and we talk to them about what they can expect for the children to happen during the day in terms
of routines. But have we ever spoken about love? No. No, and I've never experienced a parent asking me about that either. And I also think that being in a centre ... it's a service so, I don't think that parents would expect it, you know, they wouldn't expect their children to be loved - I think that they're paying for a service that will provide great care to the children, and great education.

Participant E quickly stated, "Oh I don't think we do". She then reflected that,

I think that the parents who come here understand that their children ... will be respected and cared for at all times, and that is just an absolute given, and I think that - in some ways - is showing 'love'.

Participant E concluded, "But I don't think we talk about 'love' necessarily with new parents".

Participant F mused, "I don't know - I don't think I do". Participant F laughed self-deprecatively and continued, 'It's something I might start doing! (laughs) - I don't think I actually do that'. [For context to Participant F's next statement, Participant F worked in a centre within a gymnasium/fitness facility where children attending this centre were dropped off by a parent/caregiver who returned within the two hour limit restriction for using this facility.] Participant F continued,

I'm just trying to think - when a new parent comes in - I don't [talk about love] - we reassure them, and let them know that we're settling them [the child] - because a lot of our job is settling, so - we say we'll call them if their child's really upset. I don't really mention anything in those terms, I don't think I do - I might have to look into that!

Question 12: How do you maintain/continue dialogue with parents about the concept of love in early childhood care and education throughout their child's attendance at your centre?

Author's note: As an extension of question 11, the intention here was to find out if and how the participants engaged in ongoing dialogue about love with parents at their centre.

Participant A reflected, then stated, "[By] practicing everything - continuing to practice - everything that I've already described". Participant A paused for thought, then stated,

Right now [in our centre], the way we would be continuing our dialogue with parents about the concept of love, is that we care deeply about the children's nutritional needs, their love of tasting, and food, and the importance of good health, and food being our medicine, and [how] food - the right fuel - takes care of us ... that's how we're maintaining and continuing our dialogue with parents - [a focus right now in the centre] is about how we're going to care for them [the children] nutritionally.

Participant A quickly added, "That's besides everything else I've talked about [about love in this interview]".
Participant B stated,

I always tell them [the parents] what the children do during the day - if they've done anything funny, or something clever, or something humorous - they get the learning stories. I always try to speak to the parent when the child comes and when the child goes.

Participant C stated emphatically, "We don't talk about it [love] - it's just expected, it's expected that at this centre, this is a place where their children will be loved and cared for - the Māori way of doing things". Participant C concluded that, "[We're] always thinking 'we' not 'I' - I think that's why it [love] is innate". Participant D reflected that,

I think it depends how love is perceived by parents and by teachers - but I think that through keeping every day communication open, and definitely letting parents know that we care about the children: we talk to them about the children's day, we are curious about the day or night at home, we want to know as much as we can about the children so that we can provide better care, and I think that's what's most important - that both parties know we're there for the same reason - and that's to provide the highest possible quality care and education for the children".

Participant E stated,

Again I don't think that we talk about it [love]; but I think when we share experiences, and special things throughout the day, and invite them [parents] to be a part of the centre, we're showing care, and a kind of love. But no, I don't think it's a word that we really use.

The researcher then asked, do you think you'll consider using it in the future? Participant E responded enthusiastically, “Yes, I do. I think it's actually really important - I think this quote here is really very interesting, the Brennan statement. I'd like to read that - I think it's really interesting”.

Participant F stated, “We do have a lot of discussions with the parents at pick up and drop off - and the discussions are always around their child; and what they've done today”. Participant F then reflected, “About the concept of love - I think that the fact that I'm willing to talk about their child, and I'm interested in what their child's doing [shows love]".
Additional comments made by participants

Participant A: [Not applicable]

Participant B stated, "I think teachers should be taught about being loving". She continued,

You can help a child to feel that they belong - and that if they need help, they can come to you, they can come to the centre, [because] they know they're safe there. And I think that 'love' is showing love.

Participant B concluded, "I don't think you can love too much. I just don't believe that you can love too much".

Participant C: [Not applicable]

Participant D enthused, "I’m quite excited to see your work, because I’m a bit challenged by it myself - and some of the questions actually definitely challenged me, so I would like to see some work done about this".

Participant E: [Not applicable]

Participant F reflected that,

There seems to be this barrier of showing 'affection' and 'love' of children - a lot of teachers don’t want to show affection - I don’t really know why - maybe it goes back to what I was told when I first started - I’m not too sure. But I think we should be free to do things like that [show affection and love for the children], and not feel bad if we give someone a hug - when they want it of course.

4.2 Conclusion

This chapter represents a range of responses to the interview questions. Through the selection and reproduction of relevant extracts from my participant’s narratives I have obtained the dialogue I sought from the teachers in my study in relation to their thoughts about love, how they teach with love, how love exists in their early childhood centre, and how they share the concept of love for children with parents and whānau in Aotearoa New Zealand. The next chapter presents a discussion and analysis of my research findings to draw out the pre-eminent themes.
Chapter 5 Discussion

In this chapter I analyse the key findings from my research interviews to draw out the pre-eminent themes. I make correlations with the ideas and theories previously identified through my Literature review (Chapter 2). The participant's contributions have been referenced to my Findings (Chapter 4), using the relevant page numbers.

5.1 Preface

To preface this discussion I have summarised the preceding chapters to provide context and continuity for the reader. As has previously been noted the overall purpose of my research was to find out from teachers how they perceive the concept of love for children, and what love looks like in their practice in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The framework I used to shape and guide this research was a model I developed representing what I believe are the key relationships in a child’s life through which that child may experience love called the multiple layers of love.

Following the development of my model I extended an invitation for volunteers to participate in my research in order to obtain a sample of teachers’ voices, and six qualified early childhood teachers generously responded with an offer to share their time, experience, and forthright views. Through inviting my participants to share their beliefs, and by designing my interview questions to provoke them to consider and critique their practice, I wanted to hear their perspectives about the following aspects of love in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Was teaching with love something they practiced, and if so, what did this look like? Did they think their initial teacher education programmes had introduced them to the concept of teaching with love, and did they believe that Ministry of Education documentation supported and empowered them to teach with love? I was also interested to hear if my participants’ thought any tensions existed between the concept of teaching with love and being professional in their teaching practice. Finally, I wanted to learn if they shared their concept of love for children in the early childhood care and education context with parents and whānau, and if so, how they maintained this dialogue.

The questions I asked of my research participants were designed to elicit their opinions about both the ‘teacher’ layer of the multiple layers of love, and their relationships with the other layers of my model. To achieve this, I employed a qualitative research approach, with specific usage of the semi-structured interview to capture my participant’s narrative.

5.2 The value and importance of love in early childhood care and education

As previously noted in my introduction to this thesis, my journey of love for children began as a high school student when I was always surrounding myself with young children to care for in a babysitting capacity. As an early childhood teacher this love for children has always been the driving force of my teaching practice, and I have always strongly advocated for children’s right to be loved, and
teachers' rights and responsibilities to love children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

When I asked the participants in this study to share their thoughts about the concept of love in early childhood care and education, their responses indicated that they also held firm beliefs about love for children in this context. However as will be discussed later in this chapter, it became evident that some of the participants were looking for validation that the love for children they demonstrated in their practice was ‘acceptable’.

Of the value and importance of love in early childhood care and education, Participant A observed that, "We definitely need to have … loving relationships, respect, kindness, and fun [in the centre], and it’s exciting to be caring for and taking an interest in other people’s feelings" (p. 35); while Participant E stated, "… the idea of loving children while they are here is vital really if they’re going to grow up as socially competent, and happy well-rounded people" (p. 36). In her final interview reflections, Participant B summed up her feelings by stating,

I think teachers should be taught about being loving. You can help a child to feel that they belong - and that if they need help, they can come to you, they can come to the centre, [because] they know they’re safe there. And I think that ‘love’ is showing love. I don’t think you can love too much. I just don’t believe that you can love too much. (p. 51)

This notion of being taught about demonstrating love in early childhood care and education has been explored in depth later in this discussion. Participant B’s other comments are similar to those shared in studies conducted by Ayers (1989) and Elliot (2010). In his study, Ayers (1989) asked six American early childhood teachers to consider their practice. This response from one of Ayers’ participants, Anna Tiant, is reflective of the feelings held by the participants in my research, "... what’s important to very young kids is to be loved, to be safe, to be cared for and that’s what I do" (cited in Ayers, 1989, p. 24). In her study, also with American infant and toddler caregivers, Elliot (2010) acknowledged the value and importance of love in education when she said, “To have a relationship-based practice that is beneficial for children without [emphasis added] having the emotions of being deeply committed to those children is not possible” (p. 157). Elliot (2010) also noted the following about her research participants, “Successfully connecting with the children was a reward for each woman I talked with in this study. Mary said of her relationship with babies, ‘bonding with them and getting to know them was the best part of it - having close relationships with them and their parents’” (p. 87). This notion of bonding was also emphasised by Participant E in my study,

I'm just thinking about this new little girl called "I" (name suppressed) who's started and she is just completely scrumptious - she is a princess and she only wears a tiara and a princess gown at all times - it's just absolutely gorgeous. She didn't really bond with her transitioning support teacher, so I took her under my wing and we've become such great friends - and now when she comes in the morning she shouts "S!" (name suppressed) - and I open my arms out, and she just runs into them, and I give her a huge cuddle - and when she first started in the centre I would just stroke her on the back just to calm her down - so I guess these are all ways
of showing her ‘love’. And yesterday in the classroom there was another new little girl who had just started and was quite miserable and “I” (name suppressed) sat on the mat - and she was very gently stroking her back exactly how I used to [for her] - and I guess that is a beautiful example of how me showing “I” (name suppressed) love, actually formed this kind of culture of love within the classroom. (p. 46)

Participant E’s illustration of the beneficial consequences arising from such a ‘culture of love’ within the classroom, Te Whāriki, which was founded on the following aspirations for children, “to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society” (MoE, 1996, p. 9); and is also reflective of benShea and DiGiulio’s (2005) assertion that love is “a most powerful educational tool” (p. 56).

5.3 Teachers’ perception of the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand

As Gerber (1998) has stated, “A carer puts love into action. The way you care for your baby is how he experiences your love. Everyday caregiving routines, like feeding and diapering, can be educational and loving interactions” (cited in Gerber & Johnson, 1998, p. xiv). When the participants in my study were asked to consider the concept of love in early childhood care and education, they shared the following actions they had taken which demonstrated their perception of what ‘love’ means. Participant B observed that, “It’s being aware when they’re hungry, when they’re tired - because they do tell you in little ways: the sucking of the hand, or the thumb - the moment I see it [it’s] being responsive to that child” (p. 41). She continued,

I think that this is really important: If you know the child well enough, you pick up very quickly on what they need, or what they want - and for them to know that if they are unhappy, they can come to you, and they can feel safe. And if it does mean giving them a cuddle, or just letting them talk, or you talking to them and listening - that to me that is love. It [love] is being responsive, and listening, but really listening, to what they say and what they want. (pp. 41-42)

Like Participant B, Participant F also reflected on the importance of being both present with and attuned to the children in her care,

I’ll listen to what they have to say - even when it’s busy, and they’re all trying to talk to you at once. So let them talk to you, but maintain some sort of order at the same time, but they all want to be heard - so you’ve got to let them be heard. (p. 47)

While these participant’s responses illustrate a clear focus on their intimate awareness of the needs of the children, Participant D took a more generalised overview of the nature of her role to express her perception of the concept of love in early childhood care and education,
... to me it’s a matter of commitment, and being passionate about what we do. It’s about viewing what we do as a passion rather than a job ... demonstrating empathy, and really caring about them [the children] - being attentive to them, to their well-being and sense of belonging, so that they feel confident and comfortable. (p. 44)

All of the above comments reflect the work of Sternberg (1988a), who has theorised that when intimacy, commitment, and passion exist in a relationship, the result is the condition that he has called “consummate love” (cited in Goldstein, 1997, p. 21). From Sternberg’s (1988a) definition, Goldstein (1997) has drawn the conclusion, “I think that if love is to be present in a classroom, it has to be present in this consummate form” (p. 21).

For Participant C, the concept of love was simply implicit to her being an early childhood care and education teacher. The following comments reflect her incomprehension that you could work in the sector without loving the children,

Well, it just happens - all the time. I mean, I wouldn't be in the job and I wouldn't be caring for the children if I didn't have that sense of aroha for whānau Māori, and tamariki Māori really - that's how I perceive it, it's part of everything I do, I do it for love - whakanui the tamariki; 'whakanui' - that means ‘make them feel good about themselves’. (p. 43)

I know that my whānau expect us to love their children, to care for them, and to treat them in a special way. I think the reason that they [our whānau] come here is because of that feeling of aroha, and how they feel their children are safe and happy here, and are going to be well cared for in a way they have chosen. (p. 32)

Participant C articulated love in relation to early childhood care and education from a Māori perspective as follows, “To settle that child’s wairua (spirit), to make them feel happy, there has to be that concept of something, and I think it has to be aroha, or love, as you might call it.” (p. 30). When I asked Participant C to share her definition of ‘aroha’, she replied,

Aroha is more than love; I think it’s that respect and caring for and looking after ... it’s deeper [and] more spiritual, more to do with the wairua (spirit) of the child. You can’t deal with children, or people really without aroha. (p. 31)

Participant C’s beliefs are reflective of an assertion by Ayers (1989), who said, “that loving children is an essential qualification for preschool teachers” (p. 32), and “…each young child has a right to be loved and understood” (p. 28) in early childhood care and education. According to Ayers (2010), “Good teaching requires most of all a thoughtful, caring teacher committed to the lives of students … Teaching is primarily a matter of love” (p. 31).
5.4 Teacherly love

As a preface to inviting the participants in my study to share how they demonstrated love in their practice, I introduced them to Goldstein’s definition of teacherly love and asked them for their perceptions of this construct. Interview question 7 is reproduced in italics below:

Lisa Goldstein (1997) has coined the phrase “Teacherly love” (p. 152) and defines it as follows,

“Teacherly love arises when a belief in the value of love in education and a deliberate decision to love students combines with a passion for teaching; and it grows as a result of the intimacy that occurs in the life of a loving classroom” (p. 152).

What is your perception of Goldstein’s definition of teacherly love?

In response to Goldstein’s (1997) definition, the majority reaction was overwhelmingly complementary of this definition; Participants B and F in particular, immediately related teacherly love to their own practice and stated respectively,

I love it, I love it; I think that is fantastic. Because if we are role models, it does show - it shows that you love the students, you love what you’re teaching, and they [the children] catch that enthusiasm. If we can keep the [children’s] enthusiasm going for learning - and a passion [for learning] - they’ll carry on learning. I love this; I agree with her [Goldstein]. (p. 38)

I actually like this lady Goldstein, and that [Goldstein’s definition] probably sums up my teacherly love. It doesn’t just happen, but the more you get to spend with the children, and the more you get to know them and their parents, the relationship grows stronger. Yeah, you do love the children you teach. (p. 38)

I believe the operative components in Goldstein’s (1997) construct are “a belief in the value of love in education” (p. 152), and “a deliberate decision to love students” (p. 152). As Participant F has noted above, “It doesn’t just happen” (p. 38). Based on my participant’s initial reaction to Goldstein’s (1997) articulation of teacherly love, I also detected a sense of relief from them that such a definition from an academic even existed, and hence, provided them with validation of their perception of the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education. My participant’s responses to a subsequent interview question, which asked them to describe when they had displayed teacherly love in their practice, have been examined in depth later in this discussion.

Of teacherly love, Goldstein (1997) has acknowledged its unique set of characteristics by juxtaposing it with ‘motherlove’ when she stated, “Motherlove is passion-filled and deep and personal and tangled... Teacherlove is more general, reasonable, neutral...” (p. 98). From her perspective as both a mother and a teacher, Goldstein (1997) has recognised that the love she experienced in the classroom - while different to that which she felt for her own children - was valid, real, and fundamental to her professional practice when she observed,
... my realization that I was feeling a kind of love for the children in the class also contributed to my feelings of professional authenticity. Teacherly love is a distinct set of feelings, the presence of which is an integral part of my professional identity. (Goldstein, 1997, p. 99)

The difference between teacherlove and motherlove was intuitively understood by Participant C, whose immediate response to Goldstein's (1997) definition of teacherly love was to draw a parallel between the recent departure of a child from her centre, and the imminent departure of her son from home,

That's perhaps where it [teacherly love] is different – [the difference] between the love of a parent and the love of us [the teachers] - because I love them, I love them dearly, and I'm sad to see them go, and I'll be always thrilled to see them again, but I also realise that they do have to go. But it [teacherly love] is a different love - it is that, 'teacherly' love - because I am not heart broken when they leave, I just see that it is another phase of life. The difference is my son wants to leave home at 22 and I am heart broken - that's a different love. (p. 38)

Like Goldstein (1997), benShea and DiGiulio (2005) have positioned love as being fundamental to teaching when they have stated, "For teachers, Love means accepting students unconditionally" (p. 53). Paradoxically, they have then qualified this expectation when they have further stated, "Teachers do not have to like each of their students. This would be a super-human expectation" (p. 53). However, they have concluded by reiterating their initial position, "But teachers must love every one of their students. That is a basic expectation" (p. 53).

I believe these seemingly contradictory statements from benShea and DiGiulio (2005) drive to the very heart of the professional dilemma many teachers feel when they consider the concept of love for children in relation to their teaching practice. Participant D reflected the challenging nature of the 'like'/'love' differentiation when she stated,

Because there are people, and there are people - and it is a natural thing that you like some people and you don't like other people - and there is no way that any teacher could love all of her students. (p. 38)

Participant D's usage of the word "love" in the above statement resonates with an observation made by Berscheid (2006) who said, "Because the word love is used in an almost infinite variety of contexts, it has an almost infinite variety of meanings"; "It is the context in which love is used that establishes its meaning" (p. 173).

In this context - the early childhood care and education environment - teachers typically have responsibility for other people's children, and hence, I argue it is not realistic, or indeed appropriate, to expect teachers to express or experience the same kind of love for the children in their care as a parent of that child would. This sentiment was reflected by Participant B, who clarified her role when she stated, "I'm not their [the children's] mother - and I don't want to be their mother - but I do want them to feel that I'm someone that they can come to and feel that they can show their emotions" (p.
32). In making this observation, I suggest that Participant B has highlighted one of the previously identified operative components of Goldstein’s (1997) teacherly love, in that she has demonstrated a “deliberate decision” (p. 152) to incorporate love into her practice.

I believe it is also important to acknowledge that all teachers, obviously, are not the same, and consequently, every teacher will bring to their practice their own individuality; their cultural heritage, their religious beliefs, and every other influence that contributes to making them the teacher they are. From whatever starting point however, I argue that all teachers can demonstrate teacherly love, if they are dedicated to doing so. Goldstein (1997) has also made what I suggest is an important point about the non-manipulative nature of teacherly love when she has observed, “All that a loving teacher can do is be committed to making the effort to love her students and provide opportunities for relationships to be established and to grow. Forcing love is foolish, misguided, insensitive and unloving [emphasis added]. Like a flower, love must be left to blossom on its own.” (p. 88)

From this statement, it is evident to me that there is no ‘one best way’ for teachers to demonstrate love in their professional practice; a position supported by Goldstein (1997) who has noted that, “I learned that loving education is not a monolithic entity: it was unrealistic to think there would be one [emphasis added] right way to incorporate love into the teaching of young children” (p. 77). With the participants in my study now being aware of the notion of teacherly love, I invited them to share any experiences they could recall when they had demonstrated teaching with love in their practice.

5.5 Teaching with love

As stated at the outset of this chapter, the overall purpose of my research was to find out from teachers how they perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. From the previously documented responses in this discussion, I contend that the participants in my study did hold a belief in the value and importance of teaching with love. My discussion will now focus on what love looked like in their practice.

In response to question 8, Describe a time when you displayed teacherly love in your practice, the immediate reaction of Participant A’s was, “Well it is on-going - of course - it’s not something that you switch on or off” (p. 40). This response is reflective of the findings in Elliot’s (2010) work with American infant and toddler caregivers when she noted that, “The job cannot be done mechanically. As Sheryl says, ‘you have to open a little. You can’t just change a diaper with no feeling … we’re not robots’” (p. 43). Participant A then reflected on how she displayed teacherly love with new children to her centre who experience difficulty settling in, and shared a specific example of doing this with “M” (name suppressed),

I just kneel at the gate with them [the unsettled child], hold their hand if they let me, see if gentle touching helps - and the only thing that I can think the little person “M” (name suppressed) experiences is he knows he’s not alone - and there’s someone there that cares
about how he feels, and won't leave him alone, and will always find his "chuggy", and his "ruggy", and his "woogy", so that's displaying it [teacherly love]; bending down, being close, and holding their hand if possible. (p. 40)

I argue that Participant A's demonstration of teaching with love (above), together with the following examples from Participants B, C, and F, all reflect Goldstein's (1997) contention that "Love for children is both an emotional and intellectual act" (p. 28). Reflecting on the emotionality of a child's experience when starting at a new centre, Participant B recalled,

I find the most important time for me [to demonstrate teacherly love] ... is the time when children are parted from their parents - especially if they are new. We once had a little girl, and for 3 months she would cry - every day. She was I think 6 months [old] when she came, so she was little - darling little girl - and I would sit with her [when her parents left] every day. Slowly, I would get various toys, and find out what she - I would ask her mum what she liked - I spent a lot of time listening to her, just sitting with her, and what I did find, when the other children came round and sat on my lap or played where we were, she would be interested in it. It was one of our longest settling periods, and also working with the mother, because mum was very upset, and it was hard - I mean my heart would break, and it's not even my child, and I felt for her. (p. 41)

In her example of the demonstration of teacherly love in her practice, Participant F also addressed a situation of comforting a child when her parent had to leave her at the centre,

For instance, a little girl [was] upset today; [her] Mummy didn't want to leave her because she was upset - so I took her and I said 'it's okay to be upset, so let's go and do this' - and she stayed with me for nearly half an hour, and I did try to put her down a couple of times, but she's like 'no, no, no', and so I just said 'come on then, let's just carry on' - and so she followed me round, and she was happy to do so, and there was no need for me to leave her crying. I think that was a teacherly love experience - just giving her the time to settle down in her own way, rather than being too busy to deal with it [the situation] because you've [also] got other children [in the centre]. (p. 47)

In recalling a recent situation when she offered comfort to a child who was waiting to go home from the centre, Participant C stated,

Yesterday, one of our children was quite upset, and I said 'bring him in here' [the centre office], and I sat him on my knee and cuddled him to just keep him calm, because it was the end of the day, he was tired, his mum was later than normal picking him up, and so that's what I did. I just looked after him and held onto him and talked to him about how she was going to be here soon, and he definitely felt comforted by that - and that's love, because I know what it is that he needs. (p. 43)
Based on my interviews with the participants in this study, I am confident in stating that these six women were all teachers who demonstrated teacherly love in their own individual approach to their practice with young children. Yet despite all the evidence I had collated in support of this opinion, some of the participants still expressed reservations about whether or not the way they responded to the children in their care was acceptable,

I cuddle the children all the time, and show them affection, and let them know that I think that they’re absolutely amazing, and special - just spontaneously throughout the day - and I don’t know if that’s right, necessarily, but I think it grows an environment where everyone really cares for each other and the children feel really nurtured and cared for. (Participant E, p. 46)

I sometimes still think, well, if a child runs up to me and hugs me and I swing them round and give them a [sic] (hug back) I think, well is this ‘professional’? And then I think, I don’t care if it is or isn’t, because this is what the child wanted, I think we must put the child’s thoughts and feelings first. (Participant B, p. 31)

The importance of having teachers who teach with love is, I believe, highlighted through recent research which demonstrated the steady increase in numbers of children commencing early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Dalli et al. 2011). Research by Brennan (2008) has revealed that children are entering early childhood care and education at a younger age, meaning they are spending more time away from their parents in group care settings even before they commence their formal schooling.

In their interviews, I read my participants a quote from Brennan (2008), and invited them to articulate their thoughts and feelings about this issue. Interview question 6 is reproduced in italics below:

_In 2008, Margaret Brennan stated,_

“Today, even very young children are spending greater proportions of their lives in public, group care environments, a circumstance that sees early childhood teachers significantly contributing to infants’ and toddlers’ first experiences of emotion, social interactions, and relationships” (p. 13).

_How do you perceive Brennan’s statement? How does it make you feel?_

I am quite sure that my participants already realised the importance of their role; however, I used the starkness of Brennan’s (2008) quote as a catalyst to bring their existing understanding into even more specific focus. The following responses from the participants reflect their appreciation of the role they play in the lives of other people’s children.

Participant C acknowledged that, “It makes me feel that we’ve got a really important job to do” (p. 35). This was a sentiment reflected by Participant A who stated, “It’s a huge responsibility that we have children [spending] up to 50 hours per week [in the centre]” (p. 35); she also stressed the importance of role-modelling “healthy emotions, social interactions, [and] relationships” (p. 35). This
notion that early childhood teachers are important role models was reinforced by Participant D, who affirmed,

I definitely agree with this statement and the way that early childhood teachers significantly contribute to infants' and toddlers' social interactions and relationships. I think that it's something very important and something that we try to do every day. We promote social interactions, we build these relationships, we definitely help them [infants and toddlers] to develop these skills, because these skills are the kind of skills for life, so definitely. (p. 36)

Participants D's appreciation of the importance of the role early childhood teachers can play in the lives of very young children is reinforced by the work of Gerhardt (2011) who has noted that the growth of a baby's brain, which is at its most rapid in the first year and a half of a child's life, "... may not progress adequately if the baby doesn't have the right conditions to develop" (p. 19). The recognition of the amount of time infants, toddlers and young children are spending apart from their parents' sparked critical comments from Participants B and F, who stated respectively, "I agree with her. I feel it's sad that it has to happen, but if it is we've got to be there with the best care we can give them" (p. 35); "I totally agree with her statement, it makes me feel very sad that so many young children are in care" (p. 36). Participant B also observed that,

I think it's sad because I believe that infants and toddlers should be home with their mothers - in a perfect world, and it would be great if they [mothers] did have longer maternity leave but they don't. So therefore, early childhood teachers ... contribute to babies and toddlers [experiences of emotion, social interactions, and relationships]. So to a certain extent as teachers of this age group we are filling a need, and we need it to be the best care that they [the children in centres] can get. (p. 35)

I found it particularly interesting that Participants B and F were, in effect, putting the needs of the children in their care ahead of their own need to earn an income; their advocacy for children, and their concern for the amount of time young children in Aotearoa New Zealand are spending in group care was clear to see. This notion that early childhood care and education is more than just a job reflects Ayers (2010) belief when he observed that, "People are called to teaching because they love children ... watching them open up and grow and become more able, more competent, more powerful in their worlds ... I teach in the hope of making the world a better place" (p. 20).

Participant F also considered the Brennan (2008) quote from a perspective that none of the other participants in my study had when she noted,

But then it also has an up-side, like, some children are better off in care because their home environment is probably even worse, so they could be learning more from being in care than being at home. So you know there is a flip side. But yes it makes me very sad - I don't like the trend. (p. 37)
Furthermore, in acknowledging her agreement with Brennan's (2008) quote, Participant F reflected that she felt the role teachers play in this aspect of infants' and toddlers' development, had not been given sufficient emphasis in her initial teacher education.

And I think it is very, very, very important that teachers are aware of the social, emotional interactions and relationships, and the important role they are playing in that, and I don't think a lot of them are - it's not covered a lot, well it wasn't covered a lot in my training. (p. 36)

5.6 The relative invisibility of love in initial teacher education and Ministry of Education documentation

When I asked the participants in my study to recall their initial teacher education, the majority reflected that little, if any, time was given to discussion about the concept of love, though one participant specifically acknowledged that the importance of establishing relationships with children was addressed. My purpose in pursuing this line of questioning was to explore the level of preparedness my participants felt their initial teacher education had given them to understand and to articulate the concept of love for children in their practice.

Participant A responded that, “... in the early 90's ... it didn’t exist. I don't recall anything pertaining to love in early childhood education” (p. 28). This recollection was echoed by Participants B, F, E and D who stated respectively, “I don't remember getting a lot of training on love at all” (p. 29); “Nothing. Nothing that comes off the top of my head” (p. 28); “I would say absolutely nothing - I don't think there was discussion about love at all. It’s one of those words that no one wants to mention” (p. 28); “Not much actually - I think that love is not the kind of word that is spoken about, especially not at university” (p. 28). Participant D also recalled that, “I remember times we would talk about relationships and the importance of developing relationships with the children, and that was always something that was talked about, but I can't remember anything about love” (p. 28).

In research conducted by Goldstein and Lake (2000) into American initial teacher education, they found that the students in their study spoke of their love for children, and that this love was a driving motivation for them to enter the sector. While I did not specifically ask the participants in my study why they had chosen to become early childhood teachers, it is my contention that their responses to my questions showed they held similar beliefs to the respondents in Goldstein and Lake’s (2000) research. Based on this finding, if love for children is a stimulus for some people to become early childhood teachers, then why is the concept of love for children not more apparent once they commence their initial teacher education programme?

I believe the answer to this question can be found in Dalli’s (2006) and Goldstein's (1997) acknowledgement that love in education is a contentious topic. As a consequence, the relative lack of focus on love in my participant’s initial teacher education may have resulted from a more general lack of academic focus on this topic. Tellingly, Goldstein (1997) has observed that, “No one has turned the lens of scholarly inquiry to focus on the dimensions and nature of teacherly love because wise scholars tend to shy away from unresearchable research topics” (p. 8). Goldstein (1997) has
asserted that this is because, “Love is difficult to define, impossible to measure, and outside the boundaries of generalizability, reliability, and validity” (p. 8).

Interestingly, while the observations from Participants A, B, D, E and F about their initial teacher education (above) are reflections from the European/Pākehā participants in my study, Participant C noted that,

Because my teacher education was coming from a Māori perspective, we probably talked about ‘aroha’ rather than the concept of love … I don’t know and I can’t remember talking about it [love] especially, but I am sure that it was innate in everything that we did - you wouldn’t deal with children without aroha. (p. 29)

Participant C concluded that, “I know that in taha Māori, aroha would be what we were talking about, and that was always interwoven with everything” (p. 29).

I also found it interesting that Te Whāriki, does not use the actual word ‘love’, and the notion is only articulated twice in the English language sections of the curriculum, “For infants: “Time and opportunity are provided for the infant and familiar adults to build a trusting and loving relationship together” (MoE, 1996, p. 51); and “Any programme catering for infants must provide: sociable, loving, and physically responsive adults who can tune in to an infant’s needs” (MoE, 1996, p. 22). In contrast, the word ‘aroha’ is used seventeen times in the Māori text of the document.

As with their initial teacher education, when I asked the participants in my study to consider whether or not they thought they were supported and empowered to love children in their teaching practice through official documentation, the majority reflected that in their experience little, if any, direct reference was made to the concept of love in the Ministry of Education material they had encountered. Participant F commented, “I don’t think they [Ministry of Education documents] really do” (p. 29); a position mirrored by Participant’s B and D who stated respectively, “I don’t think they do” (p. 29), and “I don’t think love is a word mentioned in Te Whāriki” (p. 30). From her perspective as a Manager/Centre Leader, Participant A reflected on a recent assessment by the Education Review Office (ERO) and noted that,

I can’t think of any area where the Ministry of Education documentation supports us to foster the concept of love … we’ve been ERO-ed, we’ve been audited, we’ve been relicensed and I read extensively and I don’t think there is support for love. (pp. 29-30)

Where Participants A, B, D, and F generally did not feel the Ministry of Education material they had encountered supported or encouraged them to teach with love, Participant E made the following specific observation about Te Whāriki,

I think that Te Whāriki is very strong on children’s well-being, and them being happy in a very holistic sense as well - which I think is fantastic - as well as inviting community and families into centres - I think that’s also surrounding the holistic concept of love. That would be the two areas that I would say that we’re encouraged to foster a concept of love. (p. 29)
Also in relation to *Te Whāriki*, Participant C reflected Reedy’s (2003) interpretation that the aim of the curriculum is to ensure children are nurtured, loved and respected (cited in Nuttall, 2003). Participant C suggested that love is simply innate to *Te Whāriki* when she observed, “If you look at the Māori side of it, *aroha* is woven in through [the strands] ‘well-being’ and ‘belonging’. How can you not have love in that?” (p. 29).

As cited previously in this discussion, benShea and DiGiulio (2005) have made the statement that “*For teachers, Love means accepting students unconditionally*” (p. 53); a powerful sentiment which I believe is reflected in *Te Whāriki* when it states,

> The early childhood environment should be like a caring home: a secure and safe place where each member is entitled to respect and to the best of care. The feeling of belonging, in the widest sense, contributes to inner well-being, security and identity. Children need to know that they are accepted for who they are [emphasis added]. (p. 54)

If, as I contend, the notions of ‘unconditional acceptance of children’ (benShea & DiGiulio, 2005), and ‘accepting children for who they are’ (MoE, 1996) can be considered to represent the same sentiment, then in my opinion, it becomes evident that teaching with love *is* at the heart of the curriculum. However, because the actual word ‘love’ is not present in *Te Whāriki*, it did not surprise me to hear that the participants in my study who refer to the English language sections of the curriculum had not made this connection. Participant B reflected this position when she observed, “You know there’s [the strands] ‘belonging’ and ‘well-being’, but it’s very broad - you can really take *Te Whāriki* to mean whatever you want it to mean” (p. 29).

While I argue that the potential for this misunderstanding about the articulation of love in *Te Whāriki* is problematic, I believe it is fortunate that early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand are working from a curriculum where love is interwoven throughout, albeit by implication as suggested above. I compare this relatively positive position to the work of Hopkins (1990), who observed that the training received by the ‘nurses’ [early childhood care and education teachers] in her study had emphasised the importance of keeping their feelings for the children in their care at bay; however, through re-education, the nurses “began to develop deeper relationships with the babies” (cited in Elliot, 2010, p. 57), and consequently, “As the nurses became more attuned to the babies, the children began to flourish as they were receiving a responsive connection. The nurses began to enjoy their job more and absenteeism dropped” (cited in Elliot, 2006, p. 30).

I believe a similar exercise in re-education about *Te Whāriki* would increase the recognition of the interwoven nature of love in the curriculum. While I fervently believe *Te Whāriki* is to be celebrated in its current form, I argue that teachers would feel even more supported and empowered to love children in their practice if initial teacher education and ongoing professional development reinforced to teachers that love is an underlying value of Aotearoa New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum.

While I believe such re-education would undoubtedly serve to clarify teachers understanding of the value and importance of love in their practice, I further contend that this aspect of early childhood
care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand would be even more widely recognised and accepted if teaching with love was explicitly articulated in the English text of the document. As Goldstein (1997) has suggested with simple eloquence, love provides "a firm foundation on which to base an early childhood curriculum" (p. 28).

5.7 Tensions between teaching with love and professional teaching practice

As a consequence of my participants' perception that love was relatively invisible in their initial teacher education and Ministry of Education documentation, I was interested to learn if they thought any tensions existed between the concept of teaching with love and 'professionalism'. Participant E was emphatic in her feeling that tensions do exist - not only arising from parents' expectations of teachers, but also from the different beliefs about love held by teachers. Her immediate response to question 3, Do you feel there is any tension that exists between the concept of love in early childhood care and education and professional teaching practice? was, "Definitely, definitely" (p. 30).

I think there's a lot of people that feel - like some of our colleagues - that love has no place in early childhood; that to be seen as a professional, you can't love the children or have love for families, and that love is a very personal emotion that can't be part of professional practice. I don't think that's right. I think a lot of parents have got a funny idea about that as well too actually. There's this little boy who came last year to the centre - he was a baby; his mother said that we were not to cuddle him too closely or give him any kisses - not that I would kiss a child anyway - but you know she made it very, very clear that she did not want any kind of close relationship with her baby whilst he was in the centre; that we were to act as carers and professionals, which I thought was very interesting. So I think there's a lot of tension around the idea of love. (p. 30)

Dishearteningly, I felt, Participants B and F disclosed that in their early teaching experiences, they had been actively discouraged from incorporating love into their teaching practice. Participant B recalled, "When I did my teacher registration ... we were discussing it [loving children] one day, and she [the mentor] said it's not my job to make a child happy" (p. 29); while Participant F reflected,

Yes, I remember when I first started [in] early childhood education ... I was told not to cuddle the children. If they came for a cuddle then [I was told] to cuddle them and put them down on the ground as soon as possible; definitely no kissing their heads or showing any sort of affection. (p. 31)

Participant F also recalled that the teacher who was training her "explained it as that it [loving children] is not your job - that is not part of what you need to be doing ... so I worked like that for a while, but I've reversed back" (p. 32).
Participant F concluded,

I can't personally teach children without showing them affection or giving them a hug if they want to, and if they want to sit on my knee for five or ten minutes then so be it. So, yes I think there is [tension]. I think they [the general public] see professional teachers as just being teachers; just there to teach the children and not really showing them affection or love. (p. 32)

I was particularly intrigued by the above narratives from Participants B, E, and F - especially so as the examples they shared resonated with the similar experience of my own which I recounted in my introduction to this thesis. Like me, all three teachers found their personal and fundamental beliefs about the importance of teaching with love challenged by others in the profession. In my own example however - while I was shocked to learn that everyone in my team did not share my previously unspoken assumption that love for children was implicit in their practice - nobody had actively attempted to dissuade me from my view. I felt saddened therefore, that two of the participants in my study had encountered more experienced teachers who had explicitly told them they were to stop demonstrating love in their practice.

Without the opportunity to speak directly to the teachers encountered by Participants B, E, and F about their opposition to teaching with love (above), I am unable to offer any conjecture as to why they felt this way. While Cygnaeus (1910) has postulated that "Every teacher has to blaze with the spirit of sacred love"; and "That kind of love towards pupils has to smoulder in a teacher's heart" (cited in Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, p. 1), it is possible from the examples presented in this study to contend that more than a century after Cygnaeus (1910) made this utopian statement, not all teachers feel this way. Furthermore, I believe it is reasonable to speculate that a contributing factor to this situation is the lack of visibility of love in initial teacher education and Ministry of Education documentation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

5.8 Creating partnerships and continuing dialogue with parents and whānau

Having found that each participant in my study did, in their own style, teach with love, I wanted to know if they had articulated this aspect of their practice with the parents and whānau of the children in their care, and if so, how. As an extension of this question, for those participants who had entered into this dialogue, I also wanted to know how that discourse was maintained. The reason why I asked these questions was because while teachers obviously realise that they are not the child's parent, I believe parents need to know that in their professional capacity, teachers, such as those in my study, are interacting with the children in the centre with love in what I have termed, loving teacher-child relationships.

As defined in the introduction to this thesis, loving teacher-child relationships encompasses the notion of unconditional love for children. It embraces respect for and acceptance of each child for who they are and what they bring to early childhood care and education. Loving teacher-child relationships embodies a belief in children's right to be loved by their teachers, and teachers' rights and responsibilities to love children in an educational context through their practice and ongoing

66
dialogue in partnership with parents and whānau. In the words of Gerhardt (2011) "It is perfectly possible for the care and regulation of small babies ... to be done by any adult who is attuned and available, and committed to providing continuity of care for the infant" (p. 207). From this, I believe that Gerhardt (2011) is saying anyone can look after young children, if they have the right qualities. It does not have to be the parent; the child will be okay if they are looked after by a teacher who loves and cares for them. This position is reflective of Sims' (2009) concept of allo-parenting, where responsibility for children's well-being is shared between multiple adults.

Of the participants in my study, I found it interesting that even though love for children was evident in their practice, when they reflected on the extent to which this was shared with new parents and whanau, only one could readily provide an example of when she had done this. Participant A stated, "I do explain a lot about our role, as [being] a kind, exciting teacher who cares deeply for their precious children" (p. 48). In contrast, Participants C, E and B, respectively, felt that as love was such an innate aspect of their practice, it was tacitly recognised as such by parents and whānau, and as a consequence, none had previously given conscious thought to speaking about love in an educational context overtly, "... I know they [parents and their children] come here for whānau" (p. 48); "Whānau is about love" (p. 48); "I think that the parents who come here understand that their children ... will be respected and cared for at all times, and that is just an absolute given" (p. 49); "I don't know that you have to explain it [love] - I think that parents can tell if you genuinely love their child" (p. 48).

When Participant D spoke about her approach to inducting parents and whānau, she explained that, “When we get new families to the centre, we definitely talk to them about the programme, and we talk to them about what they can expect for the children to happen during the day in terms of routines” (pp. 48-49). Participant D said she believed the parents at her centre expected the teachers to "provide great care to the children, and great education" (p. 49), although she acknowledged that, "I haven't actually had to explain the concept of 'love'" (p. 48).

Encouragingly, I felt, when Participant F reflected on whether or not she articulated teaching with love to the parents and whānau of the children in her care she took it as an opportunity to challenge her existing practice when she observed,

I'm just trying to think - when a new parent comes in - I don't [talk about love] - we reassure them, and let them know that we're settling them [the child] - because a lot of our job is settling, so - we say we'll call them if their child's really upset. I don't really mention anything in those terms, I don't think I do - I might have to look into that! (p. 49)

Through my participant's responses, their feeling that teaching with love was simply an implicit aspect of their practice has emerged as a pre-eminent theme, as was their impression that parents and whānau intuitively understood, appreciated, and expected this to be the case. Not surprisingly therefore, when I asked the participants in my study about how they continued their dialogue with parents and whānau about teaching with love, their responses focussed primarily on sharing the children's daily experiences - the implication being, I felt, that through this form of ongoing
communication, and by showing a genuine interest in the child, parents and whānau could see how much their child was cared for, and, by 'default', loved. Participants B and D, respectively, reflected this when they stated,

I always tell them [the parents] what the children do during the day - if they've done anything funny, or something clever, or something humorous - they get the learning stories. I always try to speak to the parent when the child comes and when the child goes. (p. 50)

I think it depends how love is perceived by parents and by teachers - but I think that through keeping everyday communication open, and definitely letting parents know that we care about the children: we talk to them about the children's day, we are curious about the day or night at home, we want to know as much as we can about the children so that we can provide better care, and I think that's what's most important - that both parties know we're there for the same reason - and that's to provide the highest possible quality care and education for the children. (p. 50)

Of Participant F's ongoing dialogue with parents and whānau, she mused, "About the concept of love - I think that the fact that I'm willing to talk about their child, and I'm interested in what their child's doing [shows love] (p. 50); while Participant C was unequivocal when she stated that, "We don't talk about it [love] - it's just expected, it's expected that at this centre, this is a place where their children will be loved and cared for - the Māori way of doing things" (p. 50). Like Participant C, Participant E also acknowledged that, "I don't think that we talk about it [love]" (p. 50); however, she qualified this statement when she continued,

... but I think when we share experiences, and special things throughout the day, and invite them [parents] to be a part of the centre, we're showing care, and a kind of love. But no, I don't think it's a word that we really use. (p. 50)

In response to this last observation, when I asked Participant E if she thought she would consider using the word love more regularly with parents and whānau in the future, she responded enthusiastically, "Yes, I do. I think it's actually really important" (p. 50).

As Määttä and Uusiautti (2011) have suggested "...love cannot be ignored when reflecting good teacherhood" (p. 1). I believe that if teachers are to establish a platform from which to engage in ongoing dialogue about love, it is vital for them to overtly communicate the value and importance of loving teacher-child relationships with parents and whānau. I also believe that if teachers engage in such regular dialogue, it is possible not only for the level of contention surrounding the topic of love to be eroded, but also for teaching with love to be acknowledged and accepted as a legitimate component of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand by all the multiple layers of love.
5.9 Conclusion

The intention of this study is to determine how teachers' perceive the concept of love for children, and what love looks like in their practice with children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. By analysing the key findings from my research interviews I have identified the pre-eminent themes with a primary focus on the 'teacher' layer of the multiple layers of love.

I found that the participants in my study did value love as a legitimate component of their role, recognised its importance, and incorporated teaching with love into their daily practice, though it was evident that there was uncertainty about whether or not this was 'right' or 'professional'. I found that this uncertainty was a cause of tension for my participants in their practice. The next chapter presents these findings, together with other recommendations, and suggestions for future research.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

This chapter presents the key findings of this research and makes recommendations for teacher education and teaching practice. The limitations of the study are acknowledged and suggestions for future research are made.

6.1 Preface

In this thesis I asked: In what ways do teachers’ perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand? This question was addressed through a literature review, a qualitative case study, and an analysis of the findings from that case study which were supported by the ideas and theories identified in my literature review. I have argued that in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand, children have the right to be loved by their teachers, and teachers have the right and responsibility to love children as a legitimate facet of their teaching practice. Using the two models I developed for this research, the multiple layers of love, and loving teacher-child relationships, I have explored meanings and theories of love, the key relationships in a child’s life through which that child may experience love, and the thoughts, feelings, and insights of teachers in early childhood care and education.

The journey I have undertaken as this thesis has evolved has proven revelatory to me. My decision to research the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education was not met with universal positivity by others with whom I shared my convictions about love as a subject for Masters’ study. Indeed, my proposed research topic was greeted with scepticism by some colleagues who frowned and suggested that this subject would be difficult to investigate; they also prophesied the potential negative reactions from both parents and the wider sector to this line of investigation. This reaction, while discouraging, was not surprising to me. Through both my previous study and my ongoing experience in the sector, I was already aware that the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education can be a contentious topic that academia has tended to shy away from due to its amorphous nature (Goldstein, 1997). Undeterred, I persisted in my belief that this was a topic suitable for academic investigation.

My search for a credible definition for ‘love’ took me beyond the borders of education and into the fields of psychology and psychiatry. I believe that this cross-border investigation has strengthened my understanding of the concept of love for children, and was absolutely necessary for me to feel empowered to position love as a subject worthy of research. Gaining a greater appreciation about the beneficial consequences to children’s development from receiving love made me even more determined to undertake this study.

It has always been my fervent belief that love is vital in supporting children to grow healthy in mind, body and spirit (Hughes, 2010); a sentiment reflected in Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996). Given the increase in the amount of time young children are spending away from their parents in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand, I believe it has been timely to undertake this research, and that my study will prove to be a valuable addition to the existing body of work in this field.
6.2 Key findings

It became evident to me very early in my research for this thesis that love is not easy to define because it can be interpreted in a multitude of ways, it being the context within which the word love is used that prescribes its meaning (Berscheid, 2006). Nonetheless, from my critical examination of relevant literature and my exploration of the various aspects of love in early childhood care and education, I have identified a number of key findings.

I found that the participants in my study did teach with love and felt that love was implicit in their practice. When the participants in my study were introduced to Goldstein's (1997) teacherly love they embraced the definition as a legitimisation of their practice, and as permission to continue to teach with love. Paradoxically, my participants' belief in the implied nature of love in their practice resulted in their lack of overt communication about love with the parents and whānau in their respective centres.

I also detected an underlying tension between the compatibility of teaching with love and my participants' notion of professionalism in early childhood care and education. The majority reflected that little, if any, time was given to discussion about the concept of love in their initial teacher education, and I have concluded that this contributed to the tensions that my participants were feeling.

Based on my experience in the sector I found in benShea and DiGiulio's (2005) assertion that “For teachers, Love means accepting students unconditionally” (p. 53) a definition for love that I believe is appropriate and which can be non-controversially associated with early childhood care and education. I have argued for a direct parallel between this statement and the position in Te Whāriki that “Children need to know that they are accepted for who they are” [emphasis added] (MoE, 1996, p. 54), because I believe the two statements reflect the same sentiment. It is my contention therefore that when Te Whāriki is interpreted in the context of benShea and DiGiulio's (2005) above assertion, the significant finding from this research has been to conclude that love is inherent in Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum.
6.3 Recommendations for teacher education and teaching practice

I have previously suggested that "... the time has come for the early childhood profession in Aotearoa New Zealand to articulate love as an accepted, legitimate and integral facet of early childhood education, so that political and public perception of the profession is accepting of loving teacher-child relationships" (Hughes, 2010, p. 27). I believe a practical step towards this would be to give the word love the same emphasis in the English text of Te Whāriki as the word aroha already has in the Māori language section (Part B) of the document. Currently, ‘aroha’ appears seventeen times in Te Whāriki, while ‘love’ does not appear at all. As Participant C in my study observed from her cultural perspective, “If you look at the Māori side of it, aroha is woven in through [the strands] ‘well-being’ and ‘belonging’. How can you not have love in that?” (p. 29).

The first of two key recommendations from this research therefore, is to argue that teachers would feel even more supported and empowered to love children in their practice if initial teacher education and ongoing professional development reinforced the findings from this thesis that the concept of teaching with love is a core value of Te Whāriki. An increased recognition of the underlying presence of love in Te Whāriki would require, at a minimum, the achievement of the following milestones:

- It would first be necessary to agree to the premise that the core value of love is interwoven throughout the English language text of Te Whāriki.
- Attendant with this is the need for an agreed and publically accepted definition of love in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and clarity about what love looks like in professional practice. In the words of hooks (2000), “Imagine how much easier it would be … if we began with a shared definition [of love]” (p. 4).

If consensus on the above key points were able to be achieved then tangible changes could be made to initial teacher education and ongoing professional development. I believe that as a starting point, teachers need to be taught about the key relationships in a child’s life through which that child may experience love, as represented by the multiple layers of love. From this, teachers could then be:

- Taught the value and importance of love in early childhood care and education.
- Taught that the teacher layer of the multiple layers of love is complimentary to all the other layers.
- Taught about teacherly love and loving teacher-child relationships, the beneficial consequences to children from these models, and how they can be incorporated into daily teaching practice.

As part of this education, teachers also need to be empowered to articulate these understandings with parents and whānau in the context of the educational setting. While such a repositioning of love in initial teacher education and ongoing professional development would undoubtedly serve to clarify teachers understanding of the value and importance of love in their practice, the second key
recommendation from this research is to argue that the value and importance of teaching with love must be made evident to all the layers of the multiple layers of love.

I contend that the majority of the teachers I interviewed in my research did not appreciate that a core value of Te Whāriki is love. It is therefore not realistic to expect the other layers of the multiple layers of love to share the understanding that love is inherent in Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum unless it is made more apparent. If this insight were to be more widely accepted I believe it could contribute to a situation envisioned by Dalli (2006) "... in which love and care becomes part of a newly theorised discourse about professional practice" (p. 11). Goldstein (1997) has foreseen the political ramifications that might ensue from Dalli's (2006) vision when she stated,

The decision to teach with love has the potential for impact beyond the classroom walls. If broadly adopted, loving teaching would have implications for teacher education, and for school reform. It is also possible to imagine reshaping educational policy, social policy, and even government legislation, around the notion of placing love for children at the center of our practice. (p. 165)

I argue that through the implementation of my recommendations for teacher education and teaching practice, it is possible for the level of contention surrounding the topic of love to be eroded. The implementation of my recommendations might also lead to a situation in which love is acknowledged and accepted as a legitimate facet of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The relative lack of research on the topic of teachers' perception of the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education might be considered to be a limiting factor because I was not able to identify other studies in this field in an Aotearoa New Zealand context. As a consequence, it was necessary for me to search for similar studies undertaken in other counties. While broadening the scope of my investigation did enable me to obtain international material for comparison, the amount of existing research that I was able to locate on this topic was not extensive. It is acknowledged that the studies I found (three American and one British), though extremely relevant to my research, ranged from 1989 to 2010 some of which might be considered to be a little dated.

Of the information I gathered from my research participants through the semi-structured interview process, while I was greatly appreciative of the insights they shared, on reflection I could have paid more specific attention to why they had chosen to become early childhood teachers. As I did not know specifically why my participants had come into the early childhood education sector it was not possible to draw direct comparisons between this aspect of their teaching journey and those of participants in the other studies I examined. The interview process and consequent clarification of data, although giving me access to thick, rich narrative from my research participants, might have been enhanced had I been able to observe their teaching practice. While I have noted these limitations, I found the relative dearth of existing literature to be an exciting and self-motivating opportunity to pursue potentially ground-breaking investigative research into this topic.
6.5 Suggestions for future research

Based on my investigation into the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education, and given the paucity of existing research and literature that I found in relation to this topic, I concur with Goldstein’s (1997) assertion that research into love as an aspect of teaching is an area of relatively uncharted territory. From this, I argue that there remains significant scope for further investigation into this aspect of teaching, and propose the following research topics for consideration:

• Research into an agreed definition of teaching with love in the early childhood care and education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand.
• Research into how users of the English language text of Te Whāriki view the presence or absence of the interwoven nature of love in the curriculum.
• Research into teacher’s initial and ongoing dialogue with parents and whānau about love in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.
• Research into the reasons why people enter the early childhood care and education profession in Aotearoa New Zealand; how accurate is Ayers’ (2010) assertion that “People are called into teaching because they love children” (p. 20)?

I believe the above research suggestions, pursued either individually or collectively, could contribute towards the fostering of a pedagogy of love.

6.6 Significance of the study

As noted in the key findings section of this thesis, this research has highlighted the need for a definition of love which can be non-controversially associated with early childhood care and education. I argue that the absence of such a definition and a lack of clarity as to how love can be appropriately demonstrated in teaching practice is reflected in the relative invisibility of love in initial teacher education, ongoing professional development, and Ministry of Education documentation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I found it significant that three of the six qualified early childhood teachers who participated in my study expressed reservations about whether or not the way they responded with love to the children in their care was ‘right’ or ‘professional’, and I believe this uncertainty was a cause of tension for them in their practice. The significance of this study lies in my contribution to discourse about love in the early childhood care and education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I have endeavoured to promote an awareness of the role a loving teacher can play in the lives of children through my development of the following two models:

• The first model is a visual representation of the key relationships in a child’s life through which that child may experience love. I have called this the multiple layers of love.
• The second model is an approach I have entitled loving teacher-child relationships, which encompasses the notion of unconditional love for children. It embraces respect for and
acceptance of each child for who they are and what they bring to early childhood care and education. *Loving teacher-child relationships* embodies a belief in children's right to be loved by their teachers, and teachers' rights and responsibilities to love children in an educational context through their practice and ongoing dialogue in partnership with parents and whānau.

By reviewing *Te Whāriki* in relation to the work of a range of theorists (Ayers, 2010; benShea & DiGiulio, 2005; Goldstein, 1997; hooks, 2000), I have drawn the conclusion that love is inherent in the early childhood curriculum. I believe that if this conclusion were to be accepted it would have significant implications for teacher education and teaching practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, and be a key contributory factor towards a pedagogy of love.

**6.7 Final reflections**

This research journey has proven both challenging and rewarding for me. As my thesis has evolved, I have presented some of my findings at conferences, and have been overwhelmed by the validation my work has received. As a result I find myself passionately echoing the aspirational sentiment of Page (2008) who has stated, "I want to push the boundaries of 'care' and 'love' further ... I want to suggest that the work of early childhood professionals involves not only 'care' and 'education' but 'love' care and education" (cited in Nutbrown & Page, 2008, p. 18).

I know I have grown personally and professionally through my investigation of the ways in which teachers' perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. From this experience I feel confident to envision a future in which *loving teacher-child relationships* are embraced as an entitlement of children and their teachers in early childhood care and education, and in which children have the right to be loved by their teachers, and teachers' have the inviolable right and responsibility to love children as a legitimate and integral facet of their teaching practice.
Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet for the Centre Manager/Owner.

Appendix B: Information poster for the Centre Manager/Owner.

Appendix C: Consent form for the Centre Manager/Owner.

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet for the early childhood teacher.

Appendix E: Consent form for the early childhood teacher.
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet for the Centre Manager/Owner.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
For the Centre Manager/Owner

Project title: Towards a pedagogy of love: An investigation into how teachers’ perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Researcher: Rachel Hughes

My name is Rachel Hughes. I am a lecturer at New Zealand Tertiary College and have been involved in early childhood care and education for over 20 years. I am currently undertaking a Masters of Education at the Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland. As part of the qualification I am required to undertake a research project which will be supervised by Dr. Adrienne Sansom and Diti Hill.

The aim of this project is to investigate in what ways teachers’ perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education. The participants involved in this study will be six qualified early childhood teachers from a range of early childhood care and education centres in central Auckland.

I am asking for your permission to access teachers in your early childhood care and education centre to conduct an interview about how they perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education. The interview will take place in a private office either at your early childhood care and education centre or at New Zealand Tertiary College and will take approximately one hour depending on how much information the participant wants to share. I will digitally voice record the interview with the participant’s permission. The participants may be asked for a follow up interview of 30 minutes to clarify interview material.

This project represents the opportunity to support vital research in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The results of this study will help the New Zealand early childhood sector to understand how children’s right to be loved, and teachers’ rights and responsibilities to love children, can be supported in early childhood care and education. If you are or become concerned about any staff member’s participation in this project please feel free to contact me (details below).

The data collected from participants will be stored separately from their Consent Form for a period of six years in a locked cabinet at the Faculty of Education, Epsom Campus, The University of Auckland.

The data will be used for the completion of my Masters of Education thesis; additionally, it may be used for further study, future academic publications, articles, and conference presentations. I will digitally voice record the interviews and transcribe all the recordings myself. Those participants involved in the study will be offered a copy of the transcript, but not the digital voice recording, to have the opportunity to check the transcripts of their interviews prior to any analysis.
If you agree to be involved, names or contact details of your early childhood care and education centre and participants will not be recorded on the interview transcripts. It is recognised that confidentiality and anonymity could be problematic given the collegial nature of the early childhood educator community and every effort will be made to disguise the identity of each participant.

Pseudonyms will be used to preserve the anonymity of participants and early childhood care and education centres in the research project, however anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number of participants and participating early childhood care and education centres. This information will also be clearly explained to participants in their Participant Information Sheet and in the Consent Form prior to their participation in the research.

After six years all paper data will be destroyed by shredding, digital voice recordings and files will be deleted. Participants have the right to withdraw from this study up to one month after the interviews are conducted.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. If you elect to participate in this study please contact me, Rachel Hughes, by phone on 09 520 4000, ext 745, or email rhug035@aucklanduni.ac.nz. I will then provide posters to be displayed in the staffroom to recruit voluntary participants, and copies of the Participant Information Sheet so that potential participants can be informed of the research project. I will request each potential participant to contact me via the details provided below. I will then send each potential participant a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent Form which the potential participant will need to read, sign and return to me in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided. Once the Consent Form is received I will contact the participant to set up an interview time and location convenient to you and your centre.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in the research project. I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards
Rachel Hughes

Contacts for further information:

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Email: rhug035@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Head of School:
Professor Judy Parr
Ph.: 09 623 8899, ext 88998
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Academic Co-Supervisor:
Diti Hill
Ph.: 09 623 8899, ext 48584
Email: d.hill@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph. 09 373-7599, ext 87830/83761. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON ............ for (3) years, Reference Number ....../......
Appendix B: Information poster for the Centre Manager/Owner.

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

A Masters of Education student at the University of Auckland is seeking participants to be involved in a research study.

**Project title:** Towards a pedagogy of love: An investigation into how teachers' perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

**Criteria:**
- Participants must be qualified early childhood teachers.
- Participants would be required to be available for an interview of approximately one hour with a follow up meeting of 30 minutes if necessary.
- Interview responses would be digitally voice recorded.

**Benefits to research participants:**
- Taking part in the research is an opportunity to offer your own thoughts, beliefs and values on the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education;
- An opportunity to support research that has the potential to create effective change for children, teachers and parents/whānau in the early childhood sector.

**Supplementary Information:**
- Copies of the Participant Information Sheet which provides more detail about the research project are available from your Centre Manager.

If you are interested, please contact Rachel Hughes on 09 520 4000 ext 745, or email rhug035@aucklanduni.ac.nz.
CONSENT FORM
For the Centre Manager/Owner

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Towards a pedagogy of love: An investigation into how teachers' perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Researcher: Rachel Hughes

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to the researcher conducting interviews with teachers employed at my early childhood care and education centre.
- I grant assurance that participation or non-participation in the study will not affect the teacher's relationship with the early childhood care and education centre.
- I understand that all the data collected from participants will be stored separately from their Consent Form for a period of six years in a locked cabinet at the Faculty of Education, Epsom Campus, The University of Auckland.
- I understand that confidentiality and anonymity could be problematic given the collegial nature of the early childhood educator community and every effort will be made to disguise the identity of each participant.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings (please circle one if you wish to receive a summary of the findings, and provide your contact details below)

(please provide your postal address)

Name __________________________________________
Signature __________________________ Date _________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON ........... for (3) years, Reference Number ....../......
Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet for the early childhood teacher.

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
For the Early Childhood Teacher

Project title: Towards a pedagogy of love: An investigation into how teachers’ perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Researcher: Rachel Hughes

My name is Rachel Hughes. I am a lecturer at New Zealand Tertiary College and have been involved in early childhood care and education for over 20 years. I am currently undertaking a Masters of Education at the Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland. As part of the qualification I am required to undertake a research project which will be supervised by Dr. Adrienne Sansom and Diti Hill.

The aim of this project is to investigate in what ways teachers' perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood education. The participants involved in this study will be six qualified early childhood teachers from a range of early childhood care and education centres in central Auckland.

I am asking for your permission for me to conduct an interview about how you perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education. The interview will take place in a private office either at your early childhood care and education centre or at New Zealand Tertiary College and will take approximately one hour depending on how much information you want to share. I will digitally voice record the interview with your permission. You may be asked for a follow up interview of 30 minutes to clarify interview material.

This project represents the opportunity to support vital research in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The results of this study will help the New Zealand early childhood sector to understand how children's right to be loved, and teachers' rights and responsibilities to love children, can be supported in early childhood care and education.

The data collected from participants will be stored separately from their Consent Form for a period of six years in a locked cabinet at the Faculty of Education, Epsom Campus, The University of Auckland.

The data will be used for the completion of my Masters of Education thesis; additionally, it may be used for further study, future academic publications, articles, and conference presentations.

I will digitally voice record the interviews and transcribe all the recordings myself. You will be offered a copy of the transcript, but not the digital voice recording, to have the opportunity to review the transcripts of the interviews for accuracy prior to any analysis.
If you agree to be involved, your name and any contact details will not be recorded on the interview transcript. It is recognised that confidentiality and anonymity could be problematic given the collegial nature of the early childhood educator community and every effort will be made to disguise the identity of each participant.

You will be asked to provide a pseudonym to preserve your anonymity in the research project, however anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number of participants.

After six years all paper data will be destroyed by shredding, digital voice recordings and files will be deleted. You have the right to withdraw from this study up to one month after the interviews are conducted.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary. I have sought assurance from your Centre Manager that participation or non-participation in the study will not affect your relationship with your place of employment. If you elect to participate in this study please contact me via the details provided below. I will send you a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent form, which you will need to read, sign and return to me in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided. Once I have received the Consent Form I will contact you to set up an interview time and location convenient to you and your centre.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in the research project. I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Rachel Hughes

Contacts for further information:

Researcher: Rachel Hughes
Ph.: 09 520 4000, ext 745
Email: rhug035@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Academic Supervisor: Dr. Adrienne Sansom
Ph.: 09 623 8899, ext 48400
Email: a.sansom@auckland.ac.nz

Head of School: Professor Judy Parr
Ph.: 09 623 8899, ext 88998
Email: jm.parr@auckland.ac.nz

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON .......... for (3) years, Reference Number ....../.....
Appendix E: Consent form for the early childhood teacher.

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

CONSENT FORM
For the Early Childhood Teacher

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Towards a pedagogy of love: An investigation into how teachers’ perceive the concept of love for children in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Researcher: Rachel Hughes

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I agree that my participation in this research is voluntary.
- I understand that assurance has been given by my Centre Manager that my participation or non-participation in this study will not affect my relationship with the early childhood care and education centre.
- I agree to participate in an individual interview that will take place in a private office either at my early childhood centre or at New Zealand Tertiary College that will last approximately one hour.
- I agree to a follow up interview of 30 minutes to clarify interview material if required.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this study up to one month after the interviews are conducted and to withdraw any data traceable to me.
- I understand I am free to ask questions at any time before or during the study.
- I agree to be digitally voice recorded.
- I understand that all the data collected from participants will be stored separately from this Consent Form for a period of six years in a locked cabinet at the Faculty of Education, Epsom Campus, The University of Auckland.
- I understand that my name and any contact details will not be recorded on the interview transcript.
• I understand that confidentiality and anonymity could be problematic given the collegial nature of the early childhood educator community and every effort will be made to disguise the identity of each participant.

• I understand that I will be asked to provide a pseudonym to preserve my anonymity in the research project, but that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number of participants.

• I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings (please circle one if you wish to receive a summary of the findings, and provide your contact details below)

(please provide your postal address)

Name ________________________________
Signature ___________________________ Date __________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON .......FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER ....../...
References


Hrdy, S. (2013). Personal conversation with Professor Emerita Sarah Hrdy when she was a visiting guest at the Symonds Street and Allen Road Early Childhood Centres, 21 November 2013, City Campus, The University of Auckland, New Zealand.


