

Compassion in early childhood: Exploring the lived experience of young children

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Abstract

Compassion is a term frequently used both in the early childhood profession and more broadly in Australian society to describe desirable qualities of interactions, relationships and characteristics of programs and educators. What is meant when this term is written, spoken or theorised is not readily defined. The implications of the experience of compassion for young children under two years of age and for early childhood practice has typically been expressed in an ambiguous manner. Compassion is also a foundational concept of Buddhist philosophy, which has provided a rich source of knowledge to facilitate understandings in this area. It is in the space where early childhood theory and these philosophies interact that caregivers have discovered a rich place to explore the complexities of compassion.

In this qualitative study, hermeneutic phenomenology was used to gain insight into this space. This was achieved by examining the way compassion is manifested in the lived experience of young children (van Manen, 2015).

Personal narratives and observational data of young children in their homes and in the early childhood centre they attended were interpreted. These observations were used to illuminate the role of compassion in children's everyday lives and within the theory and practice of early childhood education. The data identified the intrinsic way the phenomenon of compassion existed within the relationships that are considered critical to the learning and development of young children

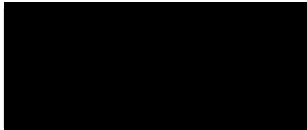
including: attachment relationships; caring relationships; connectedness with nature; pedagogical relationships; spiritual relationships; and its role in peace.

Certification

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

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