

Relationships: Shaping Infants' and Toddlers' Identity

KU Children's Services Infant
and Toddler Project



*Artwork by Jilan, KU Killara Park
Preschool.*

Proudly a not for profit organisation



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KU Infant and Toddler Project

Structure

- ▶ Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- ▶ In-residence
- ▶ Project Mentors
- ▶ Online closed community



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Self Reflection

Identity

- ▶ What relationships shaped your identity?
- ▶ What experiences have shaped your identity?

Professional Identity

- ▶ What experiences have influenced your professional identity?
- ▶ Who influenced your professional identity?



Context

Infants and Toddlers

- ▶ “Evolving individual identity” (Lally, 1995).

Educators

- ▶ “Participate either knowingly or unknowingly in the creation of a sense of self and that attention must be paid to that unique responsibility” (Lally, 1995).

Project Underpinning

Emmi Pikler

- ▶ Paediatrician in Budapest Hungary after WWII
- ▶ Renowned for individual, respectful, affectionate care of infants and toddlers

Magda Gerber

- ▶ Founded parent based program RIE
- ▶ Recognised RIE principles support the care and



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Reconsidering our pedagogical choices

Our questions

- ▶ Educators presence and sensitive observation
- ▶ Provision for active participation and initiation
- ▶ Trust to explore a safe environment without being interrupted
- ▶ Consistent and respectful discourse



Educators presence and sensitive observation

Our thinking

- ▶ “I feel like we are now the child and they are the teachers. They are teaching us and showing us what they can do.”
(Educator, KU Ultimo)



Educators presence and sensitive observation

- ▶ “When a space and time is provided for the infant to develop and one observes the capacity of self reliance in the child, our image of the infant changes from one of the child needing us to guide him to his capacity, to the image of the child as active, independent and capable without our presence and help in all instances.” (Tardos)

Active participation and initiation

Our thinking

- ▶ “Children are extending on their own learning, they are doing this for themselves. They are intrinsically motivated self learners, who also show each other.”

(Educator, KU ANSTO)



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Active participation and initiation

- ▶ “Babies are interested in *all* aspects of their lives. They want to be included in each step of a task that involves them and be invited to participate as much as they are able. When we teach a baby that he should *not* pay attention to activities he’s an integral part of, how do we then expect him to develop a healthy attention span?”

Trust to explore without interruptions

Our thinking

- ▶ “The children don’t need exercises they invent their own. They are doing what is right for their body at that particular time, they are listening to their body and developing their self confidence.”
(Educator, KU ANSTO)



Trust to explore without interruptions

- ▶ “Infant expert Magda Gerber taught that babies do not naturally become bored. Adults do. Babies are entranced by the way their bodies can move, and the sights, sounds, smells, nooks and crannies of life that we adults take for granted. They need uninterrupted time to experience those things and assimilate them.” (Lansbury, 2014)

Consistent and respectful pedagogy

Our thinking

- ▶ “We are asking some hard questions, and thinking about all of our actions.”
(Educator, KU ANSTO)



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Consistent and respectful pedagogy

- ▶ “Very young children... and the elderly are the most vulnerable members of society, so it’s only logical that they should be treated with even *more* thoughtfulness and respect than those capable of expressing their needs or fending for themselves. Unfortunately, society doesn’t always follow logic. Instead, we think nothing of abruptly scooping infants and toddlers up, shuttling them around, poking and prodding without even a word of warning and talking over them



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Identity

- ▶ “Identity is not fixed. It is shaped by experiences. When children have positive experiences they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of belonging.”
(EYLF, 2009)

