

# Interaction

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 2, FALL 2014

## Pedagogical Leadership and Rough and Tumble Play

UN Convention on the Rights  
of the Child turns 25

Maternal Separation Anxiety



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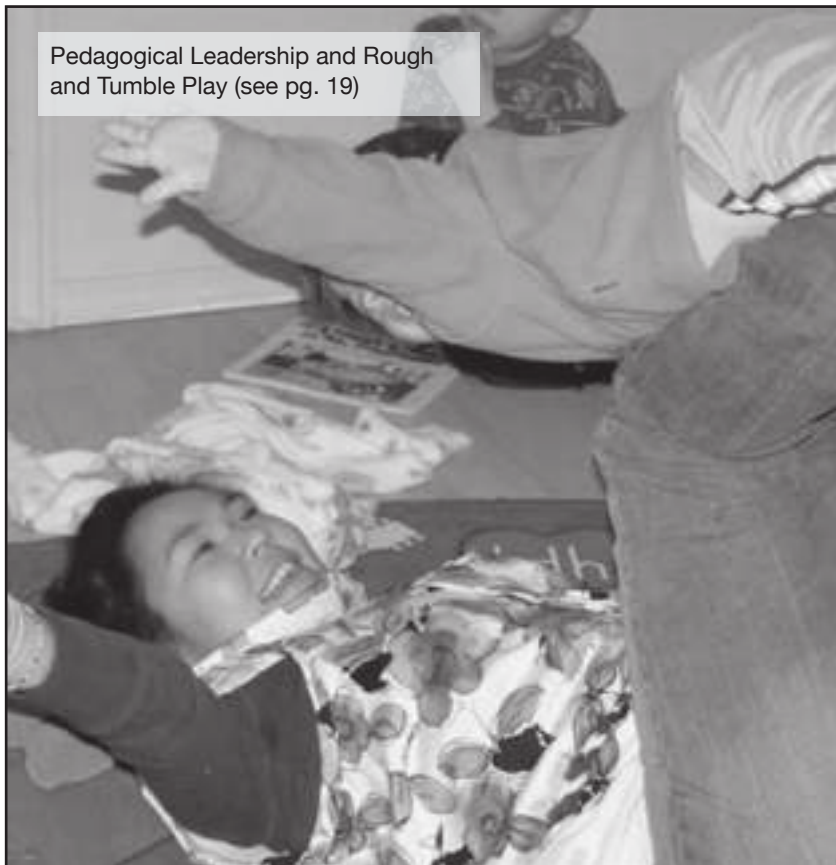
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Pedagogical Leadership and Rough and Tumble Play (see pg. 19)



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One new resource sheet accompanies this issue:

#104 – *Primary Care*



The photo for the front cover was taken by Jan Blaxall of Toronto Ontario.

# Interaction

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 2, FALL 2014

PUBLISHED BY THE CANADIAN CHILD CARE FEDERATION, 600-700 Industrial Avenue,  
Ottawa, ON K1G 0Y9; Tel: (613) 729-5289 or 1 800 858-1412; Fax: (613) 729-3159;  
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Design	Fairmont House Design
Advertising	Claire McLaughlin
Translation	Diane Archambault/Min'Alerte Inc. Martine Leroux/SMART Communication
Printing	PSI Print Solutions Inc.

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CCCF is about the value of children. We value children.

In order to protect and enhance our children, to promote their safety and their healthy growth and development, we are committed to providing Canadians with the very best in early learning and child care knowledge and best practices.

Publication Mail Agreement #40069629  
GST Registration No. – 106844335 RT  
ISSN 0835-5819



## Behind the Scenes

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the significance of play in the lives of children, acknowledging play as a specific right, in addition to and distinct from the child's right to recreation and leisure. Early childhood educators have long recognized the power of play and the importance of play to young children's development; the benefits of physical play are well documented.

But unstructured play and especially rough and tumble play may be under threat in society where early childhood environments are becoming more and more structured into recreational activities rather than open-ended free play.

When we see puppies or cub bears rolling around and nipping and clawing with their siblings, we delight in watching this kind of physical play. But as caregivers, we are conflicted over whether this is right or not for children. And so we question our practice and must look deeper into our pedagogical approaches in order to show leadership in what we know is best for children's well-being—in both our experience and education on early childhood development.

How do early childhood educators and program directors defend and support rough-housing in their childhood setting to staff and parents who feel the child care provider's first job is to protect their child from harm? How do we lead our centre and practice towards this learning process?

This issue of *Interaction* delves into pedagogical leadership and rough and tumble play—how we lead the learning process of our own philosophical approaches to quality child care.

The IDEAS section looks at Maternal Separation Anxiety and of the first caregivers' experience in managing and easing that with families.

And finally, join us November 13-15 in Winnipeg for **Childcare2020 – a National Conference** on child care policy in Canada. Stephen Lewis will be the keynote speaker. Join a growing community of early childhood educators, academics and researchers, policymakers, advocates, and parents—from urban, suburban, rural and Indigenous communities across Canada—all working together for a better system of early childhood education and care.

**Claire McLaughlin**, Editor  
cmclaughlin@cccf-fcsge.ca



## INSIDE THE FEDERATION

# The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Turns 25 Years Old

by Robin McMillan

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the world's most endorsed human rights treaty. Canada ratified the Convention on December 13, 1991. Since then, a number of laws, policies and practices affecting children have advanced children's rights to protection, development and participation in decisions affecting their lives. In fact, the Convention has inspired a process of social change in all regions of the world, by reframing children's basic needs as rights that must be protected and provided for rather than as optional, charitable acts. The Convention makes clear the idea that a basic quality of life should be the right of all children, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few.

## How practitioners can make the difference

The CRC reaffirms children's rights of provision and protection, and with the inclusion of participation rights for children, it recognizes children as developing persons who are capable of eventually participating in civic life. *Article 29* of the CRC addresses the goals of education, which include the development of children to their fullest potentials and their preparation for responsible life in a free society. In response, practitioners should promote responsible citizenship of young children through education, and support the child's understanding and experiencing of rights and responsibilities within the limits of their capacities.

## Learning Activity: Respect and Listening to Others

Promote the capacities of children to show respect by carefully listening to others. Sit in a circle with the children, and have a special rock or stick handy to pass around. Explain that the person holding the rock or stick gets everyone's attention. We show that person respect by not speaking and by carefully listening to what he or she has to tell us. Ask the question: What would you like to say right now about something really special to you? Ask for a volunteer to start and allow for responses. This Learning Activity gives preschool children an opportunity to learn about listening to others.





## INSIDE THE FEDERATION

For more learning activities and information about the CRC, visit <http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/topics/childrens-rights/>.

In past years, CCCF has selected a right each year to spotlight for practitioners. For the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the CRC, we would like to hear how *you* have upheld the CRC in your practice. Was there an article that resonated for you and encouraged you to use a rights based approach within your program? What kind of learning activities do you feel provide a great opportunity to showcase a rights-based approach?

**Join the discussion on CCCF's Facebook page and CCCF's Pinterest boards starting on National Child Day, November 20 and post or pin your contributions.**

### Rights CCCF has selected over the past few years

**2013** - Article 19, the Right to Be Protected from Being Hurt and Mistreated, in Body or Mind

**2012** - Article 30, the Right to Practice Own Culture, Language and Religion

**2011** - Article 24, the Right to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Health

**2010** - Article 13, the Right to Freedom of Expression

### Board of Directors

CCCF is pleased to announce the CCCF Board of Directors for the term of November 15, 2014 to November 14, 2015 as follows: Joan Arruda (ON), Linda Cottes (ON), Cynthia Dempsey (NB), Marni Flaherty (ON), April Kalyniuk (MB), Christine MacLeod (BC), Christie Scarlett (AB), Linda Skinner (ON), Taya Whitehead (BC).

Thank you to everyone who took the time to vote and participate in the AGM democratic process and we thank all of the nominees who put forward their names for election.

### Welcome to New Member Council Representatives

CCCF welcomes two new representatives to its Member Council table, effective August 1, 2014: Rosetta Saunders of the Alberta Child Care Association; Jodie Kehl of the Manitoba Child Care Association.

We also wish to thank the outgoing representatives Margaret Goldberg and Julie Morris, respectively, on behalf of CCCF during their tenure. Their great work and contributions over the years has been invaluable.

### Dominion Learning Institute of Canada

We are looking forward to continuing our work with the Dominion Learning Institute of Canada to provide content for a national portal for professional development resources. This new Web based resource will provide the early childhood learning sector with access to many diverse professional development learning opportunities. Many learning modules and resources are based on CCCF resources, as well as other those from many other leading Canadian researchers and experts in our field.

### National Conference: ChildCare 2020

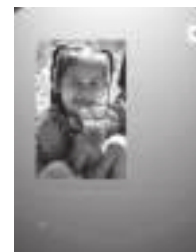
It's been 10 years since Canada's early learning and child care sector met nationally and not coincidentally in Winnipeg, where the sector will gather again for ChildCare 2020. The CCCF is contributing to this important conference, which will bring together people from across Canada to discuss the state of early childhood education and care, to hear Stephen Lewis speak and to engage in critical and necessary conversations about the future. Join us November 13-15, 2014 in Winnipeg.

### Annual Report

CCCF's **2013-2014 Annual Report** is now available. For an electronic copy, visit the CCCF website at [www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca](http://www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca).

### 2013-2014 Funders

CCCF thanks and acknowledges the generous support of its funders this year: The Muttart Foundation, Public Health Agency of Canada.

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## FROM WHERE I SIT

# A Time for Big Ideas

by Christopher Smith

Muttart Foundation

The upcoming National Child Care Conference in Winnipeg (Childcare 2020) marks the first time in a decade that early childhood education and care stakeholders from across the country will have the chance to come together to share their thoughts and ideas on how to advance the field.

Much has changed since they last met, also in Winnipeg, in 2004. And it is perhaps fair to say that the past may well be 'a foreign country'. A fledgling national early learning and child care strategy has come and gone, a global economic recession been largely weathered, provincial governments from across the political spectrum voted in and out of office, and a federal government, with a focus on the economy and a more limited view of federalism, elected, re-elected, and re-elected again.

The past decade has been one, to use a playful metaphor, of swings and roundabouts. The sense of loss that followed the abrupt cancellation of the national child care strategy in 2006 has been replaced, in some quarters at least, by a guarded optimism as provincial and territorial governments, of different stripes, look to develop their own early education and care landscapes with some new ideas to the fore.

And yet, 10 years after the 2004 meeting in Winnipeg, the same deep-rooted challenges that characterized early childhood education and care a decade ago are still largely with us. There are too few regulated services to meet demand, the services available are often prohibitively expensive for young families, their quality remains modest, the workforce (outside of

kindergarten) is poorly paid and under-resourced, and there remains a divide between services for very young children and those closer to school-age.

The enduring nature of these challenges speaks to our larger collective unwillingness or inability to rethink how we approach, support and deliver early childhood education and care. The findings from comparative research show that if done well it can meet a range of goals: child development, family support, social and community development, and gender and economic equality. And yet, across Canada services are frequently neither designed nor resourced to meet these higher aspirations nor, for that matter, the more mundane demands placed upon them.

The upcoming national conference provides those closest to the field with an opportunity to explore the big ideas that can lead to real change. In so doing, they must resist the twin temptations of pouring old wine into new bottles or simplifying the complexity of early education and care for short-term gain. In this spirit, three areas, at minimum, will benefit from a spirited and informed exploration.

First, how can the federal government be brought back to the early childhood education and care table? What model of federalism appears most likely to advance early education and care – a collaborative one with joint federal-provincial leadership and funding or a more open one with the provinces charting the directions and the federal government a passive funder?

Second, what new relationships are required between community-based services and public education systems? What does the meeting place for these differing organizational cultures and service delivery models need to look like to support the early learning and care of young children and their families?

And third, how does the early childhood education and care workforce need to be developed to respond to the growing demands placed upon it? What competencies do staff require and what level and types of formal education and professional learning are needed? How can staff salaries, benefits and working conditions be better matched to the nature and value of the work?

In the best interests of children and families, let the discussions commence.

Christopher Smith is the Assistant Executive Director with the *the Muttart Foundation*, a private charitable foundation incorporated in 1953 by Merrill Muttart and Gladys Muttart. The Foundation continues to support the work of the charitable sector in Alberta and Saskatchewan as well as at a national level. Through its own charitable activities and its funding programs the Foundation works with other funders and charitable organizations to improve the early education and care of young children and to strengthen the charitable sector.





## BOOK REVIEW

# I'm Ready! How to Prepare Your Child for Reading Success

by Karen McLaughlin

*I'm Ready! How to Prepare Your Child for Reading Success*

by Janice Greenberg and Elaine Weitzmann

A Hanen Centre Publication

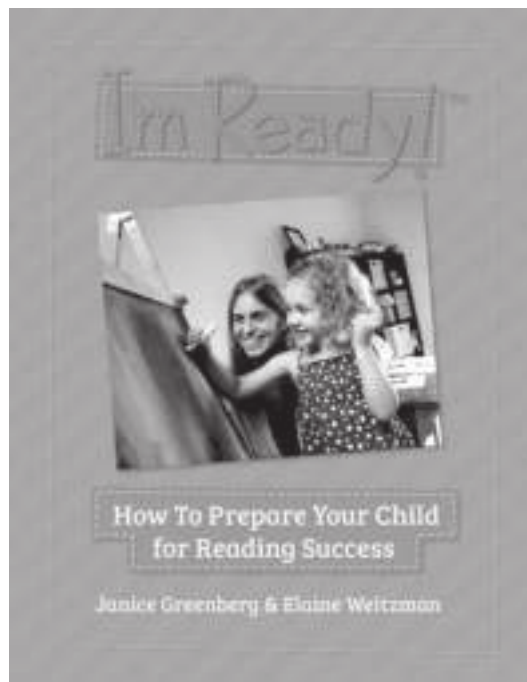
Hanen Early Learning Program, 2014. First Edition

ISBN 978-0921145-9

[www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org)

The Hanen Centre's latest publication entitled "I'm Ready! How to Prepare Your Child for Reading Success" by Janice Greenberg and Elaine Weitzmann is a guide for both parents and teachers of young children who are interested in the optimal development of emergent communication and skills of their preschoolers and kindergarteners. This book, like all the materials and resources published by the Hanen Centre, is based on comprehensive and current research on how best to maximize the early learning potential of children's language and communication skills. Rather than promoting a clinical approach to addressing developmental language delays, the centre realizes the crucial role parents can and should have in promoting emergent skills through a naturalistic social learning model, whether the child is typically developing or not. As any teacher or ECE working with children with special needs knows, the same naturalistic interventions that we use can and should be applied to young children regardless of whether they have a delay or not.

This guide is written primarily for parents of young children, but any school or child care environment would benefit from having a copy for their staff to review, and to show and lend out to parents. It provides concrete examples of how parents and teachers can intentionally embed oral and visual language awareness into every day interactions, activities, play and routines. It emphasizes, through examples, the importance of



quality interactions, and shows how taking the child's lead, following the child's interests and being an observant and active, engaging listener promotes language development and emergent reading in young children.

The handbook is well organized into five clear areas of language promotion, and it uses acronyms to reinforce teaching methods. It consists of six short, easy to read and understand chapters with many pictures accompanied by clear and simple bullet points and summaries. Therefore it can be utilized as a handy reference guide, for parents of any socio-economic background and for any busy teacher or early childhood educator.

I recommend this guidebook because the teaching methods are simple and easy to practice, since they can be practiced throughout the day, during normal daily experiences, and in almost all routine daily practices and contexts. What I most liked about this book is that it sends the message to parents that their role in the education of their children is crucial, because one-on-one interaction (such as bedtime story reading) is important for optimal development. It also reminds early childhood educators and teachers of the importance of social learning, and it invites us to be even more cognizant of how we can embed literacy into our program planning as well as in our personal interactions with young children.

Karen McLaughlin is an ECE with 25 years in both home child care and centre-based care. She currently works in a K5 classroom with the Toronto District School Board. She is finalizing her Masters in Early Childhood Education, specializing in child care and public policy in Canada. Karen has three daughters.





# Child Care Professionals Lead by Example by Testing Their Centres for Radon

by Erica Phipps

Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment

*"It certainly made me aware of a whole new risk that I had not really considered. I had heard of radon before, but I had never really moved that to my workplace."*

*"I certainly would like to see [action on radon] a little more prevalent in our community."*

*"I wouldn't want to work in a centre that had [radon] and didn't do anything about it. And I wouldn't put my children in the centre either."*

These are the words of some of the child care professionals who took part in a vanguard initiative on radon in the child care sector, led by the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) and the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF), with support from Health Canada.

Six child care facilities in Winnipeg took part in the initiative. They were given free kits to test their facilities for radon, as well as outreach materials to help raise awareness among client families about the importance of testing for radon in the home. The aim of the project was to highlight and explore the influential role that child care professionals can take in protecting children from this invisible health risk.



Children at vanguard child care facility in Winnipeg learn about radon.

Radon, a radioactive gas that comes from uranium in rock and soil, can build up to harmful levels indoors, where it is a potent source of lung cancer risk. Long-term exposure to elevated radon is a leading cause of lung cancer in Canada, second only to tobacco smoke. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, long term exposure to high levels of radon causes 3,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

"Our sector is all about caring for kids. When I first learned about the health risks of radon exposure, I knew we needed to take action," says Don Giesbrecht, CEO of CCCC. "Child care professionals interact with young families every day. We're well-positioned to help make sure families are aware of radon and know how to test their homes. We can also safeguard kids by making sure they are not exposed to elevated radon during the hours they spend at the child care centre."

Four of the six participating child care centres have already tested for radon, and all have shared information with families. They distributed brochures, discussed radon with parents, and showed parents and kids what a radon test looks



like. One of the centres hosted the national launch of Home Safety for your Kids' Sake: Check it Today, a national campaign led by CPCHE in collaboration with Health Canada, the Canadian Lung Association, Parachute, and the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs.

"We applaud the participating centres for their leadership," says Erica Phipps, CPCHE's Executive Director. "They showed that child care professionals can make a difference by testing their facilities and increasing awareness among families about this little-known but important health risk."

Participants also commented on how best to ensure that all child care centres are tested for radon, with some calling for mandatory testing or the incorporation of radon testing into licensing requirements.

"It's like carbon monoxide detectors," said one participant. "We never had them before and then finally we were forced to have them, so everybody got them. And you know meanwhile they only cost \$40 or \$50, and yet people didn't do that before it was made *expected* of us. So... I think unless [radon testing] was made mandatory or there was some kind of assistance in ensuring that it was done, I think it would be unlikely to get done... when it should be."

While some of the participants reported having some anxiety about testing their centres for radon, in the end they noted both the ease and importance of conducting the test. "There was nothing difficult about it," said one participant. "I think the process was really simple," said another. "I am glad I did it."



Radon detector

A do-it-yourself radon test kit, available for \$30-\$50 at most hardware and home improvement stores or online, will tell you if the level of radon in your home or child care facility is too high. Experts recommend a long-term (3 month) test conducted in the cold weather months when doors and windows are mostly closed.

When asked whether the project made her feel differently about her role as a child care professional, one participant replied "I think it did just because I really did not know anything about radon before this. So it made me think about how I need to get that information out to people because of the effects that it actually can have on children especially. It has made me plan in the back of my head to not just do it through this project, but to do it on an annual basis to share the information that I've learned. Hopefully, people can learn what they need to protect themselves."

Visit CPCHE's [www.reduceradon.ca](http://www.reduceradon.ca) webpage for more information on radon. Interested in other ways to create healthier child care environments? Check out CPCHE's Checklist for child care settings.

Erica Phipps is Partnership Director for the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE).

#### November is National Radon Action Month!

TAKE  
ACTION  
ON RADON

[www.takeactiononradon.ca](http://www.takeactiononradon.ca)

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# Children's Human Condition in Child Care Services

by **Suzanne Major, B.A., C.Éd., M.A. Épe, PhD**

There are many reasons to be proud of modernity and its creativity, productivity, and inventiveness in all fields and disciplines. Against this backdrop, the designers of the RECE movement (Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education) are taking a new look at early childhood education, which, for over 50 years, has delivered modern child care services to a significant proportion of children aged 0 to 5. These researchers from all disciplines are investigating children's modern human condition. No one doubts the good intentions behind the decision to enroll young children in child care services. That said, it must be acknowledged that the educational structure initially designed for children aged 6 to 12 was simply replicated in the 1960s for much younger children, who follow the same schedule and activity periods and put in educational days lasting 10 to 12 hours. The designers of RECE are proposing to examine children's modern human condition from a new perspective.

First, let us remember what young children are. At birth, their knowledge is limited to their intrauterine sensorimotor experiences and the delivery experience. During their waking moments, their eyes – which are both wide and wild – convey a depth of being. As we look into their eyes, we are struck by our responsibility to guide the development of their thinking and awareness. These beings face the laborious task of calibrating their bodily rhythms, both circadian (heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, hormone production) and biopsychological (sleep-wake, hunger-satiety, motor, and physiological rhythms), and of tuning their emotional and affective energy (attention-withdrawal, behavioural patterns, agitation-attention, mimicry)

(Montagner 2006). This process requires patience, eagerness, and over five years of interaction with others. They have everything to learn. As they progress, they learn to communicate by three months. They learn to stand and walk by 12 months. They start to speak by 15 months. They discover their inner voice by 30 months and have learned to control some of their impulses by about 36 months. They have learned to impose their will and make some personal choices by 48 months. At five years, they have reached a plateau in their development and acquired a certain awareness of others.

It should also be noted that newborns come into the world with the human ability to experience emotions. As of birth, they can feel fear, insecurity, or rejection. They can feel embarrassment or sense disturbance in their environment from 12 months. They start to acquire self-awareness around 18 months and can compare themselves to others around 36 months. At 48 months, they already know how they rank in others' eyes. This knowledge is not intellectual in nature but rather sensorimotor. Through their interactions and, more specifically, their gaze, attention, and verbal and physical interventions, others convey a complex series of signs designed to reinforce or discourage behaviours and thereby tacitly guide children's development. Newborns can only process interaction with a single individual at a time. After a few weeks, they can process interaction with two people at a time, and, later, with a few more. Other people are mediators who teach children how to discover, and make sense of, their external world. When young children are uncertain, they always seek out the gaze of their loved ones for reassurance and guidance with respect to the behaviours to adopt. Not everyone is a loved one. Around five years of age, they can advance on their own, stumbling at times to be sure, but certainly having acquired an entirely new level of independence.

It must be remembered that newborns go on to run the gauntlet of childhood infections and illnesses. They are also subject to the vagaries of prodigious physical growth and sharp hormonal changes. In addition to their unique genetic heritage, they find themselves endowed with a set of personality traits they had no part in choosing. They inherit climatic, geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic environments. They cannot choose where they are born but may have the chance to change their circumstances later in life. The family surrounding them at the very start of their lives is their door to the universe.

From time immemorial, parents have desired things for the children. In the modern world, since the end of World War II, parents have wanted their children to come into this world healthy of body and mind, to survive infections and illnesses unharmed, to learn to read and write, and to make an honest living. The ideal children were chubby and had pink cheeks and





an innocent look. Today, parents want their young children to be intelligent and independent, to become aware at an early age of their duties and responsibilities to their families and preschool institutions, and to meet adults' expectations by achieving the specific educational objective set for them. Ideal contemporary children, with their backpacks, shoulder bags, and electronic and sports equipment are sharp and slim and have lost any trace of innocence. They are, of course, of their time, but are they different? Have they lost something other than their innocence?

Does it go without saying that babies and young children scream, cry, and throw tantrums? Is it natural to have behavioural problems? Why are there cultures where children do none of this? When early childhood education became institutionalized and young children started being placed in child care services, a major upheaval resulted that has been affecting their lives and development ever since. The researchers involved in the RECE have drawn a portrait of the changes that occurred and identified some of the elements of children's new condition.

The first phenomenon in this condition involves the "moral disqualification" [transl.] and "precariousness" [transl.] of children (Major 2014). Young children who grow up surrounded by people who give them unconditional love have very different living conditions than young children who grow up with people who treat them like their peers and compare and evaluate them against their peers. When they look into the eyes of the adults around them for reassurance and guidance, the self-image reflected back from their loved ones and that reflected back from their child care educators are quite different. Parents cultivate a "pedagogy of listening, ethic of sharing, and education of diversity" [transl.] (Dalhberg and Moss 2007). Parents are attentive and respectful of their offspring and accept them as they are, unconditionally. Educators, on the other hand, "refer to standardized education and to competition. They expect children to meet the institution's needs" [transl.] (2007). They expect children to meet educational objectives and developmental benchmarks.

Parents cultivate "a language of assignment of meaning" [transl.] (2007) while educators use "a language of evaluation" [transl.] (2007). Parents follow their children's development very closely and know their history in detail, while educators simply compare them to the other children. Parents participate actively in the "process of creating meaning" [transl.] (2007) while educators cultivate a "process of classification" [transl.] (2007). Parents know what is significant to their children and are attentive to their smallest signs of success or talent. Educators monitor their socialization and integration. Notwithstanding the above, children are not inherently subject

to "moral disqualification" in relation to their peers. They are as they are, and all hopes are permitted. They are involved in an ongoing process of development. From the educator's perspective, they must learn certain things, which they will or will not succeed in acquiring. They must progress from one stage of development to another within pre-determined time frames. They are evaluated and labelled. They may be disqualified, or even referred or rejected. Loved ones know that their children have their whole lives to learn, while in child care services, their status is precarious. They must manipulate objects, use games, and do activities of increasing difficulty and must successfully progress from one age group to another before reaching five years.

The world of the family cultivates a process of acculturation, of diversity predictive of life, of creation (Moss 2008, Tobin 2007, Maris 2010). The institutional world uses "finalities of evaluation in the form of scales, grids, and standards predictive of underperformance or intervention" [transl.] (Moss 2008, Tobin 2007, Mayall 2007). The family exposes children to different contexts and understands the process of perception, assimilation, and accommodation over time. The family knows that almost all children eventually acquire the basics. Child care services set objectives and arrange educational environments designed to measure and evaluate. In addition to portending failure if objectives are not achieved within the set time, evaluations do not take into account the circumstances in which young children develop.

The family sees to overall development based on an individual pace as well as personal potential and talents (Farquart and Fitzsimons 2008, Brougère and Vandenbroeck 2007). Child care services see to development by stages based on scientifically determined benchmarks and education by age group (Hohmann and Weikart 2000, Post and Hohmann 2004). Children in their families evolve through an overall and contextualized education process that provides a rationale for their achievements and situations, while in child care services, they are subject to a decontextualized educational process in which they alone are responsible for their situation. They succeed or fail.

There exists within the family setting a democratic and philosophical process in which children are supported in an active role and active resistance (Morin 2008, Mayall 2007, Turmel 2008). They participate in their education and make choices. Their family knows them well and provides experiences based on their areas of interest. On the other hand, the institution maintains children in "a passive role, discourages resistance, and defines the child as a product" [transl.] (Morin 2007, Mayall 2007, Turmel 2008). Children must submit and obey. They must be socialized and resemble the ideal of the



modern child – intelligent, sharp, aware, independent, and slim. They cannot express their anger and refuse to participate in the educational process without attracting intervention by specialists and risking, as punishment, being labelled and ostracized.

Increasingly, young children are developing in an educational context marked by the modern stresses of precariousness and insecurity. They are not surrounded by loved ones, and when their gaze seeks encouragement and direction, they are unsure of making such contact. They are growing up in an artificial environment in which all material conditions are chosen for them and in which they are confined. They could not be farther from life in the back garden, in the alley, on the farm, at the seaside, or by the woods where they are free to look at what they wish and develop their thinking. They have lost their human freedom – the freedom to follow their impulses, develop their interests, and become familiar with nature. They can no longer play. They must be educated and can no longer live for today but must live for tomorrow [transl.] (Farquart and Fitzsimons 2008, Kim and Lim 2007) so they are prepared to start school. They can no longer think for themselves. They must, henceforth, simply follow.

Suzanne Major, B.A., C.Éd., M.A. Épe, PhD, doctoral candidate (dissertation completed). Lecturer and director of the certificat Petite enfance et famille: éducation et intervention précoce [early childhood and family: education and early intervention certificate] of the faculté de l'Éducation permanente [faculty of continuing education] of the Université de Montréal.

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# Sweet Peas Pirate Adventure

## An Emergent Curriculum Story

by Julie Hansen

Inspiration appears in the most unexpected places. One beautiful summer morning, children from the Sweet Peas Infant Toddler program were out for walk in the neighbourhood when we passed a local marine supply store. Two of the children appeared intrigued by an eclectic window display filled with flags, mugs, maps and books. This brought out the children's interest and we soon had contagious excitement imagining the world of pirates.

Whenever we would happen to walk past the store on our daily excursions, the children's enthusiasm over the window display was evident. As we approached the store they would shout "Pirates Pirates". The teaching team noticed this keen interest in the pirate materials and incorporated that into our program planning. We provided pirate Halloween costumes, made treasure maps, sang pirate songs and had a selection of pirate books and puppets in the program. The children's excitement and interest went on for weeks. On one of our walks an employee from the marine store noticed the group looking in the window of the store. He came out of the store and began talking to the children, sharing stories with us about the collection in the window and telling the children about

his grandchildren. On subsequent visits, the shopkeeper would come out and share special items of interest with the children such as treasure maps, a pirate fountain and a book all about pirates. We decided this would be a wonderful opportunity for us to share the children's love of pirate lore with our community. A mainstay of the Sweet Peas Cottage Child Care philosophy is the ideal that even though children maybe small they are valued members of the community. As educators we strive to create experiences that support the children in our programs interacting with our neighbours, becoming actively involved in local events and creating lasting relationships with our community partners. Establishing relationships with members of our community is a priority which provides irreplaceable experiences for the children.

Over the next week, the teachers planned parades for the Infant and Toddler program. We all dressed up like pirates, each child was given their own special pirate name, and a large pirate flag hung from one of our strollers as we walked through our community of Lower Lonsdale in North Vancouver. Everyone who saw us seemed captivated by seeing all the children dressed as pirates. People were waving and greeting the children as we walked by. To our surprise there was a tall ship anchored at the

pier in our neighbourhood. We pretended it was a pirate ship and had a treasure hunt, culminating with a walk down to see the tall ship. During our parade adventure, we stopped in to see our friend at the Marine store. We wanted him to share the children's joy in the parade so we brought him a special pirate hat to wear. From that day forward he has been known as Pirate Dave at Sweet Peas Cottage Child Care.



The teachers took pictures to document all of the excitement, wonder, learning and amazing discovery that took place during this magical emergent curriculum experience. In October, we hosted a pumpkin carving night for the parents and families in the Infant Toddler program. Creating special occasions for parents and family members to spend time with their children, interacting with each other, exploring our environment, and communicating with the educators is very important to us. At the event, families

were able to see a slide show of all that went on during the Sweet Peas Pirate Adventures. It was a wonderful way to celebrate and share such a glorious joy filled experience in our program.

Julie Hansen has been an Early Childhood Educator for 14 years and is presently the Infant Toddler Supervisor at Sweet Peas Cottage Child Care. She is the founder of Inspired ECE consulting services and has held professional development workshops for ECEs and Family Child Care Providers since 2007.





## Maternal Separation Anxiety: An Interview with Palmina Ioannone, Ph.D

by *Connie Winder*

The concept of separation anxiety is familiar to most people working with young children. John Bowlby (1969) theorized that human infants form attachments to their first caregivers and they experience varying levels of anxiety during periods of separation. Developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth (1978) later explored and documented children's reactions to being separated from and reunited with their mothers in her exploration of children's attachment to their caregivers. The field of early childhood education (ECE) has incorporated research findings related to Bowlby's theory of attachment into practice. Pre-service ECEs learn about children's attachments and related separation anxiety in their preparation for the field and child care settings take the implications of this research into account when welcoming children into care planning and implementing transitions in child care. But what about the anxiety parents feel when they begin leaving their children in the care of others? We know far less about the anxiety parents feel when separated from their young children despite the fact



that few of us have not experienced this anxiety, either as parents ourselves or as child care providers witnessing parents' distress, or both. In order to find out more about the research related

to the distress parents sometimes feel when separated from their children, I interviewed Palmina Ioannone, who has done research in this area (see her brief biography at the end of this article).

Below is an edited summary of our conversation.

## What is maternal separation anxiety?

Maternal separation anxiety is a construct that involves a mother's experience of worry, sadness and/or guilt during short term separations from her child. Ellen Hock, at Ohio State University first coined the term. She developed the Maternal Separation Anxiety Scale (MSAS) to measure the unpleasant emotional state experienced by mothers during short term separations from their young children. It is important to understand that parental separation anxiety is usually normal and healthy and, according to attachment theory, arises from parents' desire to protect their young children. Excessive anxiety, however, can interfere with normal functioning and be maladaptive and detrimental to parents' mental health. For instance, it

has been associated with depression, and mental health issues can have negative repercussions for parenting behaviours, parent-child relationships, and children's development.

## What got you interested in this area of research?

As a practicing early childhood educator (ECE) I paid quite a bit of attention to issues surrounding children's adjustment to being separated from their parents, but I also observed that parents needed considerable support around separation issues too. Particularly when I worked in infant and toddler care, I found I needed to spend quite a bit of time re-assuring parents. I noticed that some parents' adjustment appeared to be synchronized with their child's adjustment to child care but other parents' anxiety levels seemed to remain elevated even when their children's adjustment to child care

was very positive. In addition, after the birth of my first child, towards the end of my maternity leave, I wondered how I was going to navigate this transition back into the workforce. I worried about how responsive someone else would be to my infant son. When I looked into the literature I found that maternal separation anxiety was a somewhat neglected area of research. There was little written about best practices to support parents in their transition into the workforce.

## Are there factors that make it more likely that mothers will experience separation anxiety and if so what are they?

Yes, there are a few factors that have been associated with maternal separation anxiety. They include maternal factors such as the mother's attachment relationship with her own



**A third set of factors involves the amount and quality of social support that mothers have. Social support includes things like partner/spousal support with parenting, child care availability and quality and general social support (e.g. friends and family). This was an area I was most interested in for my research because it has implications for child care and there was little research focused on social support and its relationship to maternal separation anxiety.**

mother, her attitudes towards work outside the home, mothering, the value and importance of exclusive maternal care, her age, education level and the number of children she has. For example, older mothers with higher education levels have been observed to have lower maternal separation anxiety when compared to younger mothers with less education.

A second set of factors involves the child. Children with more difficult temperaments or whose mothers perceive them as having more difficult dispositions or temperaments are more likely to have mothers who experience higher levels of separation anxiety. Mothers of babies who suffer from colic or have other health related vulnerabilities are more likely to have higher levels of maternal separation anxiety too.

A third set of factors involves the amount and quality of social support that mothers have. Social support includes things like partner/spousal support with parenting, child care availability and quality and general social support (e.g. friends and family). This was an area I was most interested in for my research because it has implications for child care and there was little research focused on social support and its relationship to maternal separation anxiety.

### What did you find in your research?

I examined factors (maternal, infant and social-contextual) related to maternal separation anxiety before and after return to work. The study involved 195 mothers who were interviewed and assessed at one month, six months and fifteen months postpartum. This data was part of a larger data set from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth



Development. All mothers returned to full time work within six months of the birth of their child and all the infants were enrolled in full time child care between six and fifteen months.

I found that maternal anxiety decreased during the first year postpartum and the predictors of maternal anxiety differed in each postpartum assessment period. It makes sense that maternal separation anxiety typically decreases as children grow and become less vulnerable, and less in need of parental protection. And parents

have more experiences leaving their children and returning to find everything is fine.

In terms of the factors related to maternal separation anxiety, I found that at one month mothers' attitudes about the risks of employment and their levels of social support were related to experiences of maternal separation anxiety. Mothers who believed that their employment might be harmful to their children were more likely to experience separation anxiety when compared to mothers' who believed that children can benefit from their mothers' working.





**Caring and sensitive practices in child care settings can support families as they adjust to child care. I think it is important to recognize that it is not just children that need to adapt to child care. Families are adjusting too and as child care staff, we need to be sensitive to parents' separation anxiety as well as children's issues.**

Maternal attitudes towards work and the risks their employment might pose for their children continued to be related to levels of maternal separation anxiety at all data collection points (1 month, 6 months and 15 months post-partum).

At six months the child's temperament, or mothers' perceptions of the child's temperament, also played a role. Mothers' who rated their children as having a difficult temperament reported higher levels of maternal separation anxiety. At six months mothers' levels of social support no longer appeared to be related to their levels of separation anxiety.

By fifteen months maternal attitudes about employment continued to be related to maternal separation anxiety as were mothers' perceptions of their children's difficult temperaments but

at this point, mothers' perceptions of the level of parenting support they received from their husbands was also related to their separation anxiety levels. Mothers' who reported spousal support in parenting were less likely to experience maternal separation anxiety.

### **What did you conclude from these findings?**

Well, I was a bit surprised that social support, particularly satisfaction with the quality of child care, was not more predictive of maternal separation anxiety. I had hypothesized that high quality child care might buffer the maternal separation anxiety associated with the perception of having a child with a more difficult temperament. I concluded that factors in the mother-child dyad (e.g. maternal attitudes towards work and perceptions of the

child's temperament) were related to experiences of maternal separation anxiety and that levels of social support played a more minimal role in the first year post-partum.

### **Why do you think child care was not particularly influential in terms of maternal separation anxiety?**

The research I reviewed suggested that maternal separation might be a distinct and stable dimension of mothers' representations of their relationships with their young children. If anxiety is a stable part of the mother's relationship with their child, then environmental factors, such as satisfaction with child care would be less influential. It is important to note that even though data indicate that there is considerable



consistency within individuals; maternal separation anxiety tends to decrease over time, as the child ages. Another reason that child care did not appear too influential in the research I conduct was because the quality of child care was generally very high for all participants, so perhaps the lack of variability in this factor contributed to it being a less significant factor.

### **Why do you think it is important for child care providers to be aware of maternal separation anxiety?**

I think it is important to recognize that all mothers experience some form of separation anxiety and that it is a healthy and normal part of human experience. There appears to be considerable variation in how much anxiety mothers experience, how they cope with it and how it affects maternal- infant mental health. Caring and sensitive practices in child care settings can support families as they adjust to child care. I think it is important to recognize that it is not just children that need to adapt to

child care. Families are adjusting too and as child care staff, we need to be sensitive to parents' separation anxiety as well as children's issues.

### **Are there things child care providers can do to ease feelings of anxiety mothers' experience?**

It is important that the source of support offered to families matches the stresses they are experiencing. Our practices need to be as individualized with adults as they are in providing comfort, care and support to children. Having said that however, there are things we can do to ensure that all parents and family members have access to the reassurance they may need. For instance, having open communication and having policies and practices that welcome parents' calls and visits – just to “check in” – are a good first step. Sometimes parents may need reassurance that the feelings of sadness, anxiety and guilt they are experiencing are normal and shared by many parents. It can be comforting when child care providers understand the loss parents may experience when they begin to share their caregiving responsibilities with people outside their families.

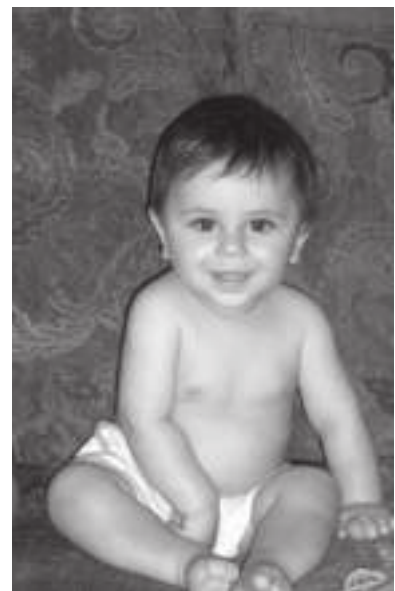
Being sensitive to parents' perceptions that they “miss” things in their children's lives and development (e.g. developmental milestones such as standing, and first steps, etc.) is important too. It is important to talk to families about these things and find out their preferences regarding when and how you will communicate about these things.

Also, if staff notice that parents' negative feelings and anxieties do not diminish over time it can be helpful to offer contact information for trusted

counselling resources. Access to supportive counselling may help to prevent more serious mental health issues, such as depression. Having said that, I need to point out that it is important not to “pathologize” parents' normal and natural anxiety. Patience and reassurance are key. Talking about these issues with families necessitates a great deal of sensitivity and care on the part of staff members. It is essential to establish trusting relationships with family members before initiating these conversations.

### **What else do we need to learn about maternal separation anxiety?**

There are many interesting areas for further research. For instance, the majority of the research has focused on maternal separation anxiety and we know very little about fathers and their perspectives and experiences with regard to being separated from their children. We also know very little about the ways in which culture contributes to the experience of maternal separation anxiety.





## Can you suggest some further reading on this topic?

Sure. Below are some key readings that informed the research I did.

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**Palmina Ioannone** has 20 years of experience working with young children, families, and early childhood professionals in various settings including schools, childcare centres and family support programs. She has a PhD in Human Development and Applied Psychology with a Specialization in Early Childhood Education from the University of Toronto/OISE, a M.A in Child Studies from Concordia University and a B.A in Psychology from McGill University. Palmina has taught a variety of early childhood education courses in Ontario and Quebec. Prior to her full time position at George Brown College, she taught at Ryerson University in the Early Childhood Education Department. In addition, Palmina has extensive experience in supporting students in field practice. Palmina has been involved in a variety of applied research projects in Canada and the U.S. including numerous studies on parenting for Invest in Kids and the Toronto First Duty Project - a pilot project integrating kindergarten, childcare, and family support through schools.

Palmina is a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE). Her special interests include parenting, school, family and community partnerships, and early childhood teacher education and professional development.

**Connie Winder** is the managing editor of the IDEAS Journal. She has held several research and outreach positions in the field of children's mental health and taught in the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College for 20 years. Currently she works as a program reviewer in the college's Office of Academic Excellence. She is a registered ECE with an MA and a PhD in Applied Psychology and Human Development from the University of Toronto/OISE, and a BA in Early Childhood Education from Ryerson University.



The Canadian Child Care Federation publishes IDEAS twice a year in partnership with George Brown College's School of Early Childhood and the Child Development Institute. For submission to IDEAS please contact Connie Winder. Phone (416) 415-5000 extension 3018, fax (416) 415-2565, email cwinder@georgebrown.ca

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# Pedagogical Leadership and Rough and Tumble Play





## PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

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# Play and the Socially Competent Brain

Sergio M. Pellis and Vivien C. Pellis

Little Freddie throws little Johnny onto his back on the ground, then sits on his chest and uses his knees to pin down Freddie's arms. Aggression? Far from it, this is a classic piece of rough-and-tumble play, a form of rambunctious play fighting that is common not only to human children, but also to a wide variety of non-human animals. Studies have shown that young animals will seek out the opportunity for such play and, once playing, will emit all the signs of positive emotions. At the same time, their brains will be flooded with chemicals such as opiates that are associated with pleasure. It is therefore understandable why rough-and-tumble play is an activity that is sought out and valued. But is it all fun and games, an activity that can be dispensed with, and its joys rekindled elsewhere in activities that have a more obvi-

ous academic or physical return? Much of the experimental evidence from research on non-human animals suggests not – despite appearances, this rough housing form of play seems to be important for the development of social skills. Closer consideration of the Freddie and Johnny encounter above reveals how this may be possible.

When Johnny lands on his back, there is a thud and then a shot of pain. When Freddie holds Johnny down on his back, Johnny is prevented from retaliating. How much pain is acceptable? How long is it fair for Johnny to be held, pinned to the ground? Two features emerge from these questions. First, for rough-and-tumble play to be playful and remain so, there has to be a sense of fairness in the interaction. That is, it has to

be reciprocal, with partners taking turns in gaining the advantage over each other. Second, in every moment of the encounter, there is ambiguity as to whether there is fairness. The need for the participants to play fairly and the ambiguity in assessing that fairness provides a context, like no other, for training social skills: subtle cues and contexts need to be evaluated continually. Like any skill, the more practiced, the better. If this analysis is correct, it would follow that those with such play experiences should be more socially skilled and more attuned than others, with less play experience, to subtle, social cues. Indeed, there is some evidence from studies on humans to support this notion. Similarly, in non-human animals, in which direct experimentation is possible, it should also be the case that the experience of rough-and-







tumble play leads to greater social competency. Further, this greater social competency should be related to changes in those areas of the brain that mediate such matters. There is strong evidence in support of this also.

#### What the playful rat reveals

Rats are highly sociable animals that live in large colonies that contain many adult males and females and their young. In these colonies, females are subordinate to males. Among the males, one rat is typically dominant, with the others subordinate to him. While females tend to remain in their natal colonies, males have two options: they can remain in their natal colony, which would probably result in their maintaining a life-long subordinate status, or, by moving away, they can hazard a chance at becoming a dominant male, by breaking into another colony or founding their own. As dominant males get priority access to food and receptive females, this is obviously a risk worth taking. Thus, a rat's social life is quite complicated. When, for example, should male rats assert dominance, when is it best that they act the subordinate and when is it a good time to attempt to change their status? In this complex world, it would be reasonable to expect rats to make good use of their time as juveniles, in order to build up the social skills needed to confront such issues as dominance hierarchies. And they do.

Studies have shown that juvenile rats spend up to an hour a day engaging in play, and most of this is of the rough-and-tumble variety. However, if they are prevented from engaging in such play, they grow into adults that are socially incompetent. For example, rats that have been deprived of play overreact to benign social contact; this, in turn, can elicit an attack. When moving into an established colony, they also fail to display the subordinate signals appropriate to their rank and so will continuously draw upon them-

selves attacks from the dominant male. And when it comes to sex, rats that have been deprived of play are unable to coordinate their own movements with those of their partner. In doing so, they fail to copulate. But could it be the lack of play that is responsible for these grievous social errors?

The most compelling evidence that this is the case comes from studies in which a juvenile rat is housed with an adult. This experimental set-up enables them to sleep together, to groom one another and to explore their environment together. However, because adult rats do not find juvenile rats attractive play partners, they do not play together. Thus, a juvenile housed in this manner will obtain all the other social experiences any young rat would have, except for social play. Such a juvenile grows into an adult that exhibits the same deficits in social behavior as one that is deprived of all social contact. It is thus reasonable to conclude that it is the absence of experiences derived from engaging in rough-and-tumble play that leads to social incompetence.

Rough-and-tumble play begins around the time of weaning (approximately 23 days) and continues passed sexual maturity (around 60 days), but is at its most frequent in the juvenile period (30-40 days). Rough and tumble play is not only most frequent in the juvenile period, but it is also organized in a different manner to that which occurs before or after. This exceptional form of play, we believe, provides rats with the experiences needed to enhance their social competence.

At all ages, in rough-and-tumble play, rats compete for access to the nape of their partner's neck, which if successfully contacted is gently nuzzled with the snout. At all ages, rats also use a variety of defensive maneuvers to block this contact, which they then follow with a counterattack.

In the juvenile period, the most common way for a rat to defend against having its nape nuzzled by another is for it to roll over onto its back and then use its limbs to hold off its partner before attempting to press its own attack. We will better understand the peculiarity of the juvenile's preference for using this supine defense if we consider the most commonly used tactic of infants and adults. In this tactic, the defender only rotates the upper part of its body, leaving one or both hind feet firmly planted on the ground. From this standing position, the defender faces its partner and can ward off further attacks, by using its forepaws, or it can destabilize its partner by pushing with its hip or rearing up and using the full weight of its body to push over its partner. That is, from this standing position, the defender has more options for further defense and for launching counterattacks. Even though juveniles can and do use this tactic, by preferentially using the supine defense, they relinquish many of the advantages they would otherwise gain if they were to use the standing defense.

Its partner, the juvenile rat on top, is also inclined to behave in a way that relinquishes its own advantage. When it is on top, an attacker is in a position to hold and control the defender with its forepaws, but sometimes, the juvenile on top will stand on the supine animal with all four of its paws. Doing this obviously reduces the stability of the animal on top and its ability to prevent the defender from gaining the upper hand. In the juvenile period, rats are more likely to adopt this unstable position. Thus, at this age, both attackers and defenders engage in behavior that decreases their control over their own and their partners' bodies. These actions appear to exaggerate the juveniles' experience of unpredictability, and, we believe, provides them with training for learning how to interpret loss of control as well as how to recover from such losses. Therefore, to summarize what we have





learned thus far: play deprivation in the juvenile period leads to social incompetence. Further, play in the juvenile period is organized in a manner to exaggerate the occurrence of experiences needed to train social skills. There are also special brain mechanisms that ensure that the content of play has this juvenile-typical organization in the juvenile period and not at other times.

The evidence for the importance of play is even better. The area at the front of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, is often referred to as the 'executive brain' because it is the area that weighs all the information and options provided by the rest of the brain and decides what to do. A major portion of the executive brain is devoted to dealing with the social world, and people (and rats) with damage to this area are socially incompetent.

Indeed, children with autism have difficulty maintaining reciprocity during social interactions, and, not surprisingly, cannot sustain rough-and-tumble play.

Recent studies have shown that the experience of rough-and-tumble play has an influence over the development of the cells of the prefrontal cortex. Furthermore, the cell networks in the brains of rats that have had the experience of play compared to those that have not are better organized to conduct their social functions. Thus, in the juvenile period, play is unique in its organization and has an influence on the development of those areas of the brain associated with social skills. Depriving young rats of play leads them to become socially incompetent and normally reared rats with selective damage to these brain areas are as socially incompetent as are rats

deprived of play. The evidence seems inescapable – the experience of rough-and-tumble play is important for the development of social skills. But is what is true for rats also true for people?

#### **The making of a socially competent human**

As already mentioned, people with developmental disorders, such as autism, as well as those that have experienced a normal childhood, but have later suffered brain damage to the prefrontal cortex, are compromised in their social competence. Studies done on young children have also demonstrated that training in playful contexts that require the use of social skills can improve overall maturity as well as the function of the prefrontal cortex. Whether human or rat, the prefrontal cortex is important for social competency.

It has been shown that when children that engage in more play than others are then tested at a later date, they are seen to be better able to solve social problems. But is it really play experience that makes a difference? An intriguing study suggests so. Video-taped sequences of both aggressive and playful fighting taken from those occurring spontaneously in the school ground were randomly organized and shown to test subjects, with their task being to label the sequences as either playful or serious. When young boys were so tested, they were, in most cases, able to identify the sequences correctly. The performance of the men tested was not as robust as that of the young boys, but it was still better than chance (that is, greater than 50:50). The real surprise of the experiment was in the performance of adult women. They performed at about chance, suggesting that they were guessing. The even bigger surprise came when the performance of the women was examined more closely. While women who had grown up in households with brothers performed as well as the men, those who had had no direct experi-



ence of rough-and-tumble play scored virtually every encounter as serious fighting! These results indicate that it is likely that the experience of play enables one to better distinguish subtle social cues such as facial expressions, bodily comportment and so on.

While it is not possible to conduct the definitive experiments with people, experiments with rats and the evidence acquired from people from differing perspectives all point in the same direction: that the experiences derived from rough-and-tumble play in the juvenile period (pre-pubertal childhood) are crucial for the development of the social brain.

Sergio Pellis and Vivien C. Pellis are neuroscientists at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

See [www.ipaworld.org/res/res\\_magazine.html](http://www.ipaworld.org/res/res_magazine.html) for notes on further reading.

## PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

# Rough and Tumble Play: Reflecting on Practice

by Jane Hewes

*This article draws from the research and science from the accompanying article, Play and the Socially Competent Brain (see previous article in this issue), by Sergio M. Pellis and Vivien C. Pellis, and applies it to child care practice in early childhood settings. In essence Hewes looks at pedagogical leadership as it pertains to rough and tumble play in a reflective piece.*

Rough and tumble play can be challenging to support in an early childhood program – it is rowdy, noisy, boisterous, rambunctious, vigorous, and full of risk taking. The Pellis' make a compelling case for early childhood educators to consider a more intentional approach to planning for rough and tumble play. Though their insights are based on animal research, they note that the research on rough and tumble play in children points to similar benefits. What are the implications of these findings for everyday practice in early learning and child care?

Several key ideas serve as starting points for reflection:

### 1. Rough and tumble play involves complex social communication

As the Pellis' discovered, rough and tumble play in rats has an observable impact on the development of the parts of the brain responsible for social behavior. They propose that rough and tumble play may also contribute significantly to young children's social competence, playfully exercising the child's capacity to interpret and respond to subtle

social communication cues. Much of the communication in rough and tumble play is non-verbal, meaning that adults must watch closely to follow the body conversation. Rough and tumble creates many opportunities for social problem solving. Recently, children in our child care lab school were confronted with the dilemma of how to communicate clearly when the play was going too far. Saying "stop!" was a necessary part of the play. "Stop – for real!" was adopted by the group as a message that signalled the play was becoming too rough.

### 2. In rough and tumble play, children explore their own strength in relationship to others

The Pellis' describe rough and tumble play as being *reciprocal*, meaning that the players are continuously coordinating their movements in response to one another, seeking to maintain a balance of power. The rats switch roles frequently, taking turns at being on top, sometimes deliberately disadvantaging themselves in order to give another player the upper hand. Close observation of young children's rough and tumble play reveals that they exercise



considerable self-restraint in order to keep the play going, adjusting, balancing and coordinating their actions with the other players. If a player pushes too hard, it ends the play. The Pellis' argue that rough and tumble play creates a context for children to explore fairness and fair play. It is intriguing that this results from play that appears to be aggressive.

### 3. Women sometimes have difficulty distinguishing rough and tumble play from fighting

As the Pellis' report, research indicates that women who have not experienced rough and tumble play themselves may have difficulty distinguishing it from fighting. This is an issue in a largely female profession, where ensuring the physical, social and emotional safety of each and every child is almost a sacred trust. Research on early childhood educators' beliefs and practices reveals that we do value rough and tumble play and appreciate its social dimensions, but we are unsure of how to manage it in a group setting. Not surprisingly, our biggest fear is that the play will get out of hand and that children will be hurt. Our intention, our instinct is always to protect. We are concerned about condoning aggression. The result is that at best, early childhood educators to tolerate closely supervised, moderately rowdy rough and tumble play; at worst and in many programs, it is banned entirely. There is growing awareness that overprotection may not be a good thing for young children in the long run.

As early childhood educators, it is critical that we understand the social nature of rough and tumble play, and that we can explain its social benefits clearly to parents and program administrators. These benefits may seem contradictory: it is remarkable that play which looks aggressive actually builds social empathy and understanding. Some additional information about rough and tumble play in children:

- Rough and tumble play is a way of expressing care and friendship, particularly for young boys.
- Children tend to engage in rough and tumble play with their

friends, not with children they don't know or like.

- Rough and tumble is more common in boys than girls, though not all boys participate and some girls may participate frequently.
- There is some evidence that children are better at distinguishing what is play and what is fighting than adults.
- Less than 1% of rough and tumble play episodes result in real fighting. This does not mean that children don't occasionally get hurt in rough and tumble play, but it results from exuberance, boisterousness or enthusiasm, not the intention to hurt. There is important social learning in these experiences.
- Rough and tumble play is often combined with *dizzy play* – twisting, spinning, leaping, rolling, twirling, and some somersaulting – which is beneficial for developing spatial awareness, balance and coordination.
- Elements of rough and tumble frequently appear in sociodramatic play, for example, when children play at being superheroes.
- There are gentle forms of rough and tumble or *roll and tumble* play that also appear in children's spontaneous free play, for example when they pretend to be kittens or puppies or baby animals.

### Recognizing the difference between rough and tumble play and fighting

- Watch children's facial expressions. Listen for laughter. The *play face* is an identifying feature of rough and tumble play. The play face is smiling. In fighting, facial expressions are angry.
- Children engage voluntarily and they return eagerly to the play, deriving great pleasure and joy from the experience. The play is sustained.
- Look at who is playing. Are they friends?
- Are the players switching roles? In play fighting, children willingly take turns controlling the action. Real fighting is usually about total control.

### Planning for Rough and Tumble Play

It is important for early childhood educators to plan intentionally for rough and tumble play, critically examining assumptions and take non-granted responses. Some educators have found it useful to designate certain times/spaces for rough and tumble play, though this tends to take control of the play away from the players. It may also be effective to take a less structured approach, recognizing and honoring the dimensions of rough and tumble play as they occur spontaneously in children's free play.

Some starting points:

- Educate yourselves and your team. Choose a short article to discuss at a team planning meeting (see suggestions below). Reflect individually and collectively on your own experiences with rough and tumble play as a child. Who is comfortable with this kind of play? Should this kind of play be supported in early childhood programs? Why or why not? How can you support one another to move beyond your own assumptions and fears?
- Consider developing guidelines for rough and tumble play in your program. Consult children. Talk to families. Be aware that there may be a wide range of responses, hesitations and concerns about rough and tumble play. Start slowly. It's ok to be cautious to start.
- Look carefully at your indoor and outdoor environments – where can rough and tumble play take place safely? Matted or carpeted areas are ideal indoors; a patch of grass is best outside.
- Strengthen the friendships between children that are necessary for rough and tumble play. Talk about fairness and fair play.
- Become an observant participant. Watch the play closely. Learn to read the signs that indicate it is play. Use children's expertise when you are unsure. Ask children "Are you still





playing? Is everyone having fun?" Encourage children to make the fair play rules. Support social problem solving here as you would anywhere else.

- Recognize that some children may gravitate towards this kind of play and do it easily; others may be less interested, and some may be very interested, but less skilled. Support children who are struggling to participate or who are unable to read the social cues.

#### Additional reading and resources

Bonnett, T. (2011). Taking all risk out of children's play: Is this risky business? *Interaction*, 25(1), 8-9.

A brief and useful article proposing a guided approach to risk taking in early childhood care and education.

Carlson, F. M. (2009). Rough and tumble play 101. *Exchange*, July/Aug (188), 70-72.

A 3-page introduction to rough

and tumble play in early childhood programs, addressing misperceptions, outlining benefits, supportive environments and policies, and describing the differences between playfighting and real fighting.

Carlson, F. M. (2011). *Big body play: Why boisterous, vigorous, and very physical play is essential to children's development and learning*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Specific to the early childhood and child care context, this book expands on the introductory information in the article above, and is full of practical strategies on managing rough and tumble play.

Hart, J. L., & Tannock, M. T. (2013). Young children's playfighting and use of war toys. In R. E. Tremblay, M. Boivin & R. Peters (Eds.), *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood*

*Development [online]* (pp. 1-6). Montreal QC: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development and Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development.

A more academic read, reviewing current research on the nature and benefits of playful aggression.

White, J. (2013). Some results and Spinning: The serious work of children's neurological development. *Exchange*, May/June 2013(211), 76-78.

Another brief article, highlighting the benefits of dizzy play for the development of balance, coordination and spatial awareness.

Jane Hewes is Chair of the Early Learning and Child Care Program at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta. She has a longstanding interest in children's spontaneous free play. Her most recent research and writing is on play and early learning pedagogy. Jane is a former member of the Board of the Canadian Child Care Federation. She recently served on the Working Group Pool of Experts for the General Comment on Article 31 (the right to play) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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## PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

# Personifying Pedagogical Leadership

by Corine Ferguson

As a recent Masters' studies graduate, the opportunity to examine early learning perspectives in such great depth was a bit like viewing life at 35,000 feet awhile. In those moments of generous time set aside for deep exploration and rich reflection—one gains appreciation for just how complex and multi-faceted the subject of early childhood really is. What was not anticipated was how much this depth of study would challenge current thinking about pedagogy and how entrenched over time practitioner's perspectives become—even when there is a sense that practice is always evolving. So where does one go from there in rethinking perspectives of pedagogical leadership where frequently more questions arise than answers come?

Somehow despite being steeped in reams of compelling theory with no shortage of perspectives to ponder, there comes a sense of living in an “unsettled” space about beliefs and knowledge. In university, one of the analogies presented that really served to describe this process was that of tangled spaghetti which references the cycle of ‘deconstruction’ of prior knowledge when revisiting pedagogical theory and practice.

*“The image of knowledge becomes the “rhizome” (or in Malaguzzi's phrase - the tangle of spaghetti). The rhizome shoots in all directions with no beginning and no end, but always in between, and with openings towards other directions and places.” (Moss, 2006).*

In Alberta, further churning philosophical perspectives is the reality of also being immersed in burgeoning pedagogy relative to defining and developing a new early learning and child care framework intended to support and guide practice with young children. As an organization tasked with supporting leadership practice how then does one begin to transcend all of this new learning and information into a process that meaningfully engages others on a similar journey exploring and embracing the notion of pedagogical leadership? In the words of Freire (in Paulett 2010):

*“Education is not simply about the transfer of knowledge but is a transformative experiential learning that empowers people to make change in the world.”*

In the role of facilitator, what the daily experience of working alongside hundreds of programs has illuminated, is in order to facilitate transformative learning, change is most effective when supported through relationship-based practice. In establishing strong peer relationships, we are then able to shift from the

simple act of transferring knowledge to a series of dispositions that support a process of ongoing reflective practice and learning. Many of these characteristics are actions identified with ways of being supported, by Curtis and Carter (2006) in the Saskatchewan Early Learning Program Guide, as well as dispositions also associated with the new early learning curriculum framework—highlighted as prominent ways to foster pedagogical leadership.

### Engagement – Are you connected?

In a profession where adult/child ratios have such significance, the greatest challenge is often compelling professionals to engage beyond what they know and practice daily. Engagement into the broader realm of professionals creates and nurtures a sense of greater community where

dialogue and sharing of bigger ideas and perspectives can ignite and engage possibility. A place where one can ask questions and formulate increased understanding of emerging concepts that guide and influence practice and pedagogical theories. In the Saskatchewan Early Learning and Program Guide educators are “encouraged to develop dispositions or outlooks that support their joy in teaching.” One of the principles noted by Curtis and Carter (2006) to encourage this passion speaks to “opportunities to collaborate with other educators for support to discuss



Representation of Malaguzzi's image of knowledge as a tangle of spaghetti.



*professional topics.*” To facilitate leadership, first their must be “engagement.”

## **Inquiry - Do you have an inquiring mind?**

Often our first introduction to pedagogy begins with providing foundational knowledge for those entering the field. At that time, early perspectives are formed and are very influential given their limited time and experience in practice. Once out working in the sector, most professionals are then eager to put theory to practice, incorporating program philosophy, routines, as well as peer influenced perspectives in guiding their own application of knowledge. Over time these practices soon become habitual. So much so, that as practitioners we operate from a place of actions being instinctually performed with little thought or reflection. As such, how regularly do we stop to consider current discourse?

In the dispositions defined by Curtis and Carter (2006) it notes the importance of “time for self-reflection on what is happening and taking opportunity to examine personal responses and the need for a learning attitude.”

Practice allows the opportunity to challenge theory everyday and as necessary to inform and influence ever-changing pedagogy. In taking a page from the new early learning curriculum evolving in Alberta, how do we as educators take the ‘learner as researcher’ approach in expanding our knowledge beyond current practice that at times holds us back from new and interesting discoveries?

To support pedagogical leadership one must be inquisitive to go deeper in unpacking prior knowledge and exploring bigger ideas.

## **Provocation - A positive or negative element?**

For many, provocation often conveys a perception of challenge when in fact it can frequently serve as the impetus for propelling one toward positive action or change. When we factor in morals, values, cultural diversity, familial beliefs and dispositions, is it any wonder that at times provocations present themselves as challenges? Often, topics such as child guidance, rough and tumble play, seasonal celebrations, food and nutrition can bring with them considerable debate or inconsistent practice amongst caregivers that for some are deemed controversial. In those moments, is our tendency to revert to personal biases, or to pause and ponder a sense of exploration as to where momentary provocations may lead?

Over time, patterns can become habit forming. Pedagogical leadership encourages us to pause, ponder and rather than

react to what is deemed predictable - to respond to what is possible. Supporting programs toward change often means learning to identify triggers in order to alter predictable patterns. In one of the influential writings of Paulett (2010), she notes “It is important to embrace the *uncomfortable* that comes with the realization that they can never fully know the ‘Other’ nor should they aspire to. *One must always examine their own attitudes and actions.*”

Embracing pedagogical leadership means being willing to explore and tackle the complex, current, and at times controversial issues which can, as a result, lead to impactful discoveries of self and pedagogical practice.

## **Responsiveness – Do you respond or react?**

Having committed to the process, one then needs to become comfortable letting go, and letting be in the moment, allowing a sense of responsiveness to be one’s guide. In recent studies exploring early literacy, this was best described as “getting lost in flow.” In exploring pedagogical leadership the disposition of responsiveness allows spontaneity to provide natural learning opportunities where we can operate from a place of genuine action as opposed to reaction of predictable outcome. In this way, we begin to embrace, as defined by Curtis and Carter (2006), “expectation of continuous change and challenge to make frequent decisions in the learning context” as an exciting way to co-construct children’s learning.

To support pedagogical leadership, one must trust that in enacting a responsive demeanor, powerful learning for both children and educators will inevitably follow.

Most of all, in supporting pedagogical leadership there needs to be a “willingness to take risks and make mistakes” which, as noted by Curtis and Carter (2006), “will encourage professional growth, and act as a model to children as they learn.” In viewing pedagogy as a journey of life-long learning, as opposed to thinking of knowledge as a final educational destination only, then are we able to exemplify true pedagogical leadership.

Corine Ferguson is the Executive Director of the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement – leading the organization in its development and operation since its inception in 2004. In this role, Corine has enjoyed working in partnership with the sector to provide capacity building strategies, resources and professional development opportunities specific to early learning and care services across Alberta. Having recently completed a Masters’ degree specializing in Early Learning Education Corine describes herself as a life-long learner and passionate advocate of quality care for children and families.

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## PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

# Rough and Tumble Play How Important is it?

by Jan Blaxall, MASC., R.ECE, AECEO.C

As we come to better understand the development of the young child's brain and the types of experiences that provide the best environment for well-being and learning, many traditional practices and beliefs about learning are being challenged. The optimal early years curriculum takes the form of something with which we are all very familiar as Early Childhood Educators. It is *play*.

*A huge amount of existing scientific research — from neurophysiology, developmental and cognitive psychology, to animal play behavior, and evolutionary and molecular biology — contains rich data on play. The existing research describes patterns and states of play and explains how play shapes our brains, creates our competencies, and ballasts our emotions. (National Institute on Play)*

One form of play stands out as ideal – rough and tumble play! One of the more surprising findings is that a form of play which is often discouraged in child care and educational settings is actually important and possibly even necessary to enhance outcomes in a range of developmental areas.

For many educators, rough and tumble play creates discomfort and concern that it is too aggressive or may escalate into an out-of-control melee. Active play with physical contact is often discouraged or may be restricted altogether. However, there is increasing evidence that rough and tumble play offers many opportunities for enhanced overall well-being and development.



### What is rough and tumble play?

Rough and tumble play includes wrestling, play fighting as well as “running, chasing, use of open-handed slaps, pushing or pulling another player, using a loud or roaring voice, making hitting motions, and jumping on, throwing or kicking an object” (Tannack, 2008), as well as chasing, tagging and fleeing (Carlson, 2009). Children willingly engage in rough and tumble play, “have a playful purpose and are not intending to cause harm to another player” (Tannock, 2008).

It is important to recognize that rough and tumble play is not the same as aggression. Carlson (2009, p.71-72) explains differences between rough and tumble play and aggression or fighting.

In rough and tumble play children's expressions often characterized by smiles; they are often laughing.	In real fighting, children's expressions are characterized by frowns as well as tears.
In rough and tumble play, the children involved are willing participants. They join the play readily and eagerly and remain as long as the play sustains.	In real fighting, one participant is usually dominating another one.
In rough and tumble play, the children keep returning for more.	In real fighting, as soon as an episode resolves, the unwilling participants often flee.



Carlson notes “that most children are quite adept at recognizing that the play *is* rough and tumble and not real fighting, and they respond accordingly in order to sustain the play. Actually, children are better at discerning rough and tumble from real fighting than are their teachers” (2009, p. 72).

## Benefits of rough and tumble play

We are aware of the importance of active play for physical health at all ages, and concerned about children’s health issues, such as obesity and diabetes, which can result from more sedentary lifestyles. Dr. Mark Tremblay, Chief Scientific Officer, Active Healthy Kids Canada, explains that in addition to being fun, active play has been shown to improve a child’s motor function, creativity, decision-making, problem-solving and social skills (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2012).

## Emotional Benefits

With respect to emotional well-being, the evidence continues to build that physical activity enhances emotional development and mental health. “The majority of findings from a recent systematic review indicate that exercise improves self-esteem in children and youth ... It is postulated that high self-esteem may actually protect children and youth against mental health issues while contributing to personality, social and cognitive development... (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2009, p. 23). The following year further benefits were identified, including body image, self-esteem and self-efficacy (sense of competence) which contribute to improved psychological well-being. Physical activity also reduces depression and anxiety levels, and leads to a reduction of peer victimization (Active Healthy Kids Canada 2010).

For young children, touch is essential. It maintains relationships and calms negative emotions and tense bodies. The physical nature of rough and tumble play provides opportunities for children to have their vital touch needs met through the play (Carlson, 2009). This may be especially important for boys, who are less likely to be emotionally connected in non-physical ways.

When children are playfully involved in large muscle usage, as in rough and tumble play, stress hormones are reduced, according to a recent medical study. Researchers concluded that physical activity, which buffers children from the effects of daily stressors, is an important factor in contributing to children’s mental health. “These results suggest exercise promotes mental health by regulating the stress hormone response to stressors.” (Endocrine Society).

Physical activity and exercise also reduces stress through a second process. Physical activity helps to bump up the production of neurotransmitters in your brain, called endorphins,

which are responsible for a pleasant feel good emotional state (Mayo Clinic).

When you exercise, your brain releases a chemical called **endorphins**, which may make you feel happier. It’s just another reason why exercise is cool! (Kids Health)

[http://kidshealth.org/kid/stay\\_healthy/fit/work\\_it\\_out.html#](http://kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/fit/work_it_out.html#)

## Self-regulation develops through rough and tumble play

There is a strong link between rough and tumble play and self-regulation or executive functioning, states Dr. Sergio Pellis, a researcher with the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience. He views play and specifically rough and tumble play as an optimal means of developing self-regulation and building the executive functions of the brain, such as language, concentration, memory and adaptability (Pellis, video).

When you picture a group of children engaged in rough and tumble play, there are continuous demands on children to stop and start, to change speed and direction, positioning, etc. in response to the behaviours of others. Language and social cues are important for children to participate successfully. Thus, it is not surprising that this type of play offers so much opportunity for assessing, planning and reacting, all while having fun.

## Social skills through rough and tumble play

Carlson (2009) elaborates this process and the social benefits observed in children engaged in rough and tumble.

*Through the (very) physical interactions required in rough and tumble play, children are learning the give-and-take of appropriate social interactions. Successful participation in this play requires children to become adept at both signaling and detecting signals – a social skill they will need and use throughout their lives. When detecting these signals, they are learning to read and understand the body language signifying the play should come to an end. The play also requires children to alternate and change roles. Sometimes one child chases; at another time the child is chased. Because this give-and-take mimics successful social conversations and interactions, the social roles practiced and learned in rough and tumble play provide children with the social knowledge needed for future relationships (p. 70-71).*



## A bruised knee can mend, but bruised courage lasts a lifetime

(Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964)

In active play, children learn from the feedback of peers, rather than adults. Pellegrini & Bohn-Gettler (2013) argue that social skills are learned more effectively than through adult teaching because of the high level of motivation to resolve conflicts and remain in the play. The nature of play produces many more conflicts to be resolved, so that there is much more opportunity to imitate and develop the needed social and conflict resolution skills.

The benefits of rough and tumble play may be especially important to children with poor social skills related to ADHD. Play for these children often results in negative interactions, including aggression and rejection (Six and Panksepp, 2012). These researchers suggest that rough and tumble play experiences can build and refine the social brain during the first few years of children's lives and reduce the number of negative

play outcomes. They suggest that the benefits of early play—improved self-control and attention and reduced hyperactivity—may even prevent at least some diagnoses of ADHD as children age.

**“There are positive lessons to be learned by children who engage in rough and tumble play.**

Through this kind of play, children develop social awareness, cooperation, fairness and altruism. As they grow up, kids participate in another form of rough and tumble play, through sports and games. ...**lack of experience with rough and tumble play hampers an important part of social intelligence** – the give and take between people, which is necessary for us to operate successfully in the world”

National Institute for Play

## Rough and tumble play as physical story-telling

Kim Bezaire, ECE professor, is another play expert who has studied rough and tumble play, which she describes as physical interactions “when no one is getting hurt and everyone is smiling.” She too advocates the physical and socio-emotional benefits of play. Further, through her observations of children playing in rough-and tumble play, she became aware that children were playing in role (superheroes, pirates, police, princesses, etc.) with dialogue, plot and distinct characters. Bezaire has identified a clear link between make belief play, developing story telling skills and emerging literacy skills. She encourages us to recognize that rough and tumble play may be a form of story-telling in young children, especially for boys.

Bezaire warns against banning rough and tumble play or supervising and controlling the play so closely that children are not allowed to engage deeply in it. She cautions that if educators limit or cut off rough and tumble play, we might be limiting very important kinds of play with children (Bezaire, video).

## Rough and tumble play helps keep children safe

In play, children are exposed to situations which may pose risks. They will need to judge for themselves the degree of risk. Increased experience leads to increased knowledge and judgment which prepares them to be more independent. These experiences help them to learn what they are capable of doing on their own, and when they need to ask for assistance. This enables them to manage risk and stay safe. “Children who learn about exploring and managing risk at a young age will have more confidence to continue to do this throughout their childhood” (Early Childhood Forum 2008).





## Providing for rough and tumble play

Because the preschool period is a critical period for children to develop both physically and emotionally, rough and tumble play for preschoolers is invaluable.

Carlson, 2009, p. 71

Rough and tumble play should not just be tolerated, but planned for and encouraged as any other type of play and curriculum component. Children understand this. Adults need to understand this also.

Rough and tumble play can happen anywhere. That's the beauty of this type of play. It requires no equipment, no prior knowledge or skill set and no one environmental design. It is truly an emergent form of play, occurring spontaneously and universally whenever children gather.

One simple suggestion is to divide a playground into sections, where one section is open for rough and tumble play. Children can choose to play there knowing that there will be high levels of activity and physical contact. Having smaller groups outside at one time can also make active play less overwhelming and more inviting for all children.

The physical area designated for active play needs to be safety-proofed (Carlson, 2009, p. 72).

- Are all hard edges rounded instead of pointed?
- Is the area free of tripping hazards?
- Is there enough space for the children to move around comfortably?
- Is there an indoor or outdoor safety surface to absorb the shock of falling?

There needs to be a sense of safety, created by a clear set of guidelines and close supervision by adults who respect children's needs to play with gusto. Suggested rules include:

- No kicking
- Tags with open hands only
- No choking
- Keep hands away from hair and heads

Smiles stop - Play stops (Carlson, p. 72)

Make sure that children understand the importance of responding to the signals of peers. Body language, such as hands up or a verbal code (Freeze!) can aid in easy-to-understand messages of discomfort. Because rough and tumble play is such a physical activity, children have lots of opportunities to learn about their bodies and their touch preferences and to learn to respect the bodies, preferences and feelings of others.

Like any other form of active play, rough and tumble play must be closely supervised by adults, who respect this type of play and are able to intervene quickly if needed.

## Conclusion

Rough and tumble play should be a regular and embedded form of play for young children in early learning settings.

*Children – both boys and girls – seem to love the experience of this very rich big-body play. Once you learn to recognize what it looks like and how to keep it safe, you can feel good about allowing and supporting it within your program as a developmentally appropriate and important part of children's naturally occurring play (Carlson, 2009, p. 73).*

The time has come for all of us to make rough and tumble play a part of our planning in children's lives.

*"We have a responsibility to get out of our children's way and give them the time, space and freedom to run around, direct their own activities and learn from their mistakes. The reward will be increased confidence, a sense of adventure and, perhaps most importantly, a love for being active." Active Healthy Kids Canada (2012)*

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## PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

# Leading the Way and Supporting Big Body Play

## Pedagogical Leadership and Rough and Tumble Play

by Frances Carlson

The desire for practices that will result in the highest quality early education and care for young children is at the forefront of many conversations across early education communities all over the world. Many feel that an understanding and implementation of pedagogical leadership can affect this level of quality and bring about the changes needed to ensure all children receive this high quality of care and early education. So, what is pedagogical leadership, and how does it specifically impact the way center administrators lead their early education programs? According to Coughlin & Baird (2013):

*Pedagogy* can be defined as the understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that supports that understanding of learning. Essentially it is the study of the teaching and learning process. *Leadership* is often defined as the act of leading or guiding individuals or groups. If we are to combine these two we are offered the notion of *pedagogical leadership as leading or guiding the study of the teaching and learning process* (p.1).

Fonsen (2013) found that, for pedagogical leadership to be effective, the director must be able to:

- share leadership and trust with the teachers;
- ensure everyone in the organization is able to share the responsibility of the program's quality; and
- exhibit professionalism in the way he or she carries out the leadership role.

In my work as an educator, author, and child care administrator over the past 32 years, I have practiced pedagogical leadership, especially in my work with implementing rough and tumble play in early care and education programs. My work has centred not only on what young children would do in my centres, but also on *why* they should do it. When training administrators in how to support a program of big, rowdy, rough play, I have focused on how they should support it within the context of their current programs, how they can forge policies and procedures that are supported by both established early learning standards and legislated rules and regulations, and how they can and must foster partnerships between themselves and teachers, as well as between the program and the families the program serves.

### Sharing Trust and Leadership

The first step in pedagogical leadership involves the centre administrator and the program's teachers sharing a belief in the practice. This shared belief will not be the result of a memo, a staff meeting, or an e-mail. Instead, this shared belief will be the result of many opportunities for all to share experiences, commonly held beliefs, and research. To implement a program of big body play (Carlson, 2011) for example, both the administrator and teaching staff should reflect on their own childhood experiences with rough body play, as well as on the experiences with young children in their care. They should acknowledge the positive outcomes of such experiences and the potential hazards and risks involved when children play this way. Next, both administrator and the teachers should reflect on what they feel in their heart about the way young children play and what they already share as a commonly held wisdom about children's play and their development. Last, the administrator should make available to all teaching staff the current and benchmark research that supports the cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and language benefits for children when they play roughly with their bodies. These oft-held conversations and times for reflection are absolutely necessary for the administrator and teachers to share beliefs, and trust each other to implement any programmatic changes that result from these conversations. Time is often stretched in centres, though, and so technology can be used to assist in these times for reflection and sharing. Create a blog or a wiki that all can access, and encourage all to take advantage of these sites to share at a time convenient to them.

### Shared Responsibility for Program Quality

The second component of pedagogical leadership is the shared responsibility for program quality. Again, using big body play as an example, the administrator should not make programmatic decisions in isolation, and then informing teachers and families through an e-mail or a sign on the front door. Instead, bring the question to the table – in a staff meeting, perhaps – and allow everyone the opportunity to problem-solve and offer opinions about the best way to proceed. If the director and teachers have already established shared leadership and trust through the process outlined



above, then teachers will feel more responsibility for the overall program quality because each was instrumental in determining how that level of quality can be achieved. In my experience, teachers know their own classrooms better than anyone, and their experience and expertise will typically result in excellent suggestions in establishing new policies or procedures, as well as in the best ways to implement a programmatic change. Without this shared responsibility for program quality, there ultimately is no program quality.

### Directors as Professionals

The last component of pedagogical leadership is the professionalism with which the administrator collaborates and forms bonds with the families the program serves. To do this well, view families as equal partners in program quality, much the same way you have now learned to view the teaching staff. Acknowledge that families do want best practices for their children and are partners in the excellence the program achieves. Communicate often with face-to-face conversations, documentation of children's learning that you display in entryways and in corridors, with password-protected websites where specific program information can be shared, and with invitations to staff development opportunities so families can learn what we are learning. Realize that families should have some say in the policies programs develop, and should be given ample (at least two weeks) notice about programmatic changes. Share with families the same research you share with teachers to help grow a shared belief about what the program does, and why.

Operating an early care and learning program through the lens of pedagogical leadership must seem like a time-consuming process, one full of conversations and differing points of view. It is. In a program led by an administrator who practices pedagogical leadership, the focus isn't on the director being "in charge" but, instead, on the director leading a charge of developing trust and a shared belief in quality and what quality looks like, entrusting teaching staff to be equally responsible for program quality, and conveying a sense of professionalism throughout. The result will be a program where all stakeholders – administrator, teachers, and families – share beliefs about what their high-quality program can look like and be, and everyone works together in collaboration to achieve it. Young children deserve no less.

Frances Carlson has a bachelor's degree in English from North Georgia College and a master's degree in early childhood education from Concordia University. She has worked as the center administrator for child care programs in Oklahoma, Italy, and in Atlanta, Georgia. She has led four child care programs through the NAEYC Accreditation process. Currently, she is Lead Instructor for the Early Childhood Care & Education Department at Chattahoochee Technical College in Georgia, and was recognized for excellence in teaching by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) and by the Lighthouse Institute. She authored the NAEYC books, *Essential Touch: Meeting the Needs of Young Children* (2006) and *Big Body Play* (2011), and directed and produced the DVD, *Expect Male Involvement: Recruiting & Retaining Men in ECE* (2009) and *An Afternoon with the Experts: Gartrell on Guidance* (2014).

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## PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

# Pedagogy: A Hot Topic

by Brigitte Insull

Having spent 40 years working in the child care environment I have to say that at no time has early learning received as much attention as in the last decade. What shifts if we see children as competent and capable? What if hallways *are* meant for running? Why should we talk about pedagogy?

So how do we come to best understand early learning in terms of children's play and that learning and play occur in simultaneous harmony within meaningful social relationships. I believe that this is where our desire to explore pedagogy comes to the forefront. Play is, and pedagogy are, about possibilities and both are ever-evolving.

Historically, the term pedagogy comes from the Greek and refers to the art of teaching...the method of teaching...the act of imparting knowledge and skill. As we have moved to a greater understanding of this term so have we moved to better understanding the principles, style and values that we embed into our pedagogy. For example, research and reflection by Early Childhood Educators into children's ideas, thinking and interests has impacted greatly on current practice. The overwhelming transition from theme-based practice to a more emergent practice is evidence of this. How we document children's work in a pedagogical manner is another example of this shift. How we work in collaborative harmony with children to establish an environment and community that is comfortable and meaningful for all members is yet another example. We understand that well-designed environments don't just happen; they evolve over time.

And so we begin to see our pedagogy develop. We begin to reflect on everyday experiences...to follow the thinking of the children and educators in an effort to see the "extraordinary in the ordinary". (Shafer, 2002) As we identify with and use the term "pedagogy", I believe that





we have a professional responsibility to it. I am personally inspired by the group established through the Manitoba Child Care Association: The Pedagogical Leadership Group. True to the meaning of pedagogy, this group seeks to promote a reflective, comprehensive and critical awareness of children's thinking. This group has also developed a format for sharing their learning with each other at regular meetings through the year. They have also offered workshops for the community at large under the title of "Pedagogy, The Art of Leading".

For me, pedagogy is about thinking, questioning, more questioning, collaboration, reflection, play, deep exploration, time, community... and more. I believe in and practice a pedagogy that gives all participants a voice and ensures meaning and comfort. A pedagogy of inclusion that celebrates each member's learning journey and participation. A pedagogy of "fascination" – the simple joy of looking and feeling...undisturbed... for a really long time...in nature!

Ask yourself how many times you "stop" something during the course of a day...I believe we call these "transitions"...sigh! Or perhaps we call things too risky, or dangerous, or there is just no time. What could be more important to an infant noticing a sunbeam, a ray of light dancing on the ceiling or the feel of mud squishing through their tiny toes for the first time? That moment is their emerging world, the one that they are creating a theory about and when we give ourselves permission, not just to allow it, but rather to truly embrace their fascination and joy. Only then do we begin to understand how pedagogy is about possibilities!

Perhaps it is also a pedagogy of silence: knowing when not to interrupt the child's inherent ability to learn and make connections without a barrage of questions aimed at them. Or knowing

how to pause and give a child's question time to linger; to hang in the air like words in a cartoon bubble. We are, of course, well-intentioned in replying with an answer but as Jon Cree (Forest School Canada) points out five seconds is not long enough; lingering allows children time to ponder on their own.

Take a moment and listen to the Harry Chapin song "Flowers are Red". It is such a wonderful reminder of how teaching and learning have evolved and the value that we now choose to place on the reciprocity between children and adults, rather than on who hold the power.

So, how might one begin their pedagogical journey of new learning? One tool that I have found particularly useful is the "Thinking Lens" from Deb Curtis, Margie Carter and Anne Pelo. This tool asks us to look through a lens of inquiry in order to firstly know ourselves, to examine the environment, to seek the child's point of view, to find and embrace the details that engage your heart and mind, to expand perspectives through collaboration and research and to consider opportunities and next steps. This tool is aptly named and truly moves us to ask how our pedagogy invites curiosity and wonder.

When I facilitate thinking,  
when I engage minds,  
when I listen to questions,  
when I ask questions,  
when I encourage risk,  
when I support struggle,  
when I cultivate dreams,  
when I learn and wonder every day  
I teach.

Brigitte Insell is the Executive Director of the Seven Oaks Child Day Care Centre, Inc. in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and has supported early learning for the past 37 years. She is also an Instructor with Red River College and collaborates with numerous committees related to early learning, inclusive practice and reconnecting children with the natural world.

## ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

### CANADA

At the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's annual general meeting (AGM), held Sept. 28-29, 2014 in Charlottetown, P.E.I., the Surrey Board of Trade submitted a resolution, Reforming Canada's Child Care Plan. The Surrey Board of Trade received the unanimous support from the nation's business leaders to have the Canadian Government work with the provinces and territories to fully examine the potential impact on productivity and the Canadian GDP of a countrywide system of child care with possible implications for child care rates and spaces.

### ALBERTA

The Ministry of Human Services is sponsoring Grant MacEwan University and Mount Royal University as community partners to develop a "made in Alberta" curriculum framework for child care educators working in centre based child care and family day home settings with children zero - five years of age.

Government of Alberta has extended the wage enhancement to cover the extra hours that school age staff work with a wage top-up. This enhancement provides a wage top-up for eligible paid program staff and child care providers over and above the base wage paid by the employer. The wage top-up is considered a 'wage' under the *Alberta Employment Standards Code*. Effective September 1, 2014, eligible certified staff working in out-of-school (OSC) programs can claim and receive wage top-ups up to 181 hours per month, year round.

### BRITISH COLUMBIA

Since spring 2014, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development has announced 12 new Early Years Centre sites to open across the province.

During the teachers' strike in BC in September, the province offered parent financial support of up to \$40 per day per child 12 years and under. The B.C. government's promise to give \$40 a day to parents for the teachers strike in September was met with mixed reaction. Finance Minister Mike de Jong offered the subsidy to parents of public school students for as long as the labour dispute continued. Payouts began at the end of the strike.

The Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning in BC, otherwise known as the \$10/day Child Care Plan now has organization support representing close to two million people and is in partnership with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC.



## MANITOBA

The Province of Manitoba announced a new five-year plan for ELCC in May called, *Family Choices: Manitoba's Plan to Expand Early Learning and Child Care*. The five year plan intends to create 5,000 new and newly funded spaces and invest an additional \$25 million to continue building and expanding 20 early learning and child-care centres. For child care providers and staff the plan is supporting higher wages for workers through regular operating grant increases to centres including a two per cent operating grant increase for wages starting in January 2015. It will also be developing a special, new wage-enhancement grant in specific support of long-term early childhood educators working in centres. Other goals in the plan are to provide new supports for licensed home-based child-care providers, improving the online registry and child-care website to be more parent-friendly and creating an Early Learning and Child-care Commission to look at the future of child care in Manitoba. The Manitoba Child Care Association launched its revised Human Resource Management Guide for Early Learning and Child Care Programs in August 2014. Read it at: <http://mccahouse.org>

## NEW BRUNSWICK

Newly elected New Brunswick Liberal Leader Brian Gallant is promising to create 6,000 child care spaces at a cost of \$120 million over five years. Gallant says more families would be eligible for financial help through the province's Daycare Assistance Program by raising the maximum net income allowed, which currently stands at \$41,000. The Liberals say they would also create a registry of available child care spaces so that parents can find care for their children more easily. Other plans of the Liberal government in the province would also help offset the cost of infertility treatments and adoption expenses by introducing tax credits.

## NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

The government of Newfoundland and Labrador is creating a new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to integrate early learning activities with the formal education system. The new department will be responsible for the continuum of learning from infancy through high school. It brings together the teams that will lead initiatives in early childhood education, the introduction of full-day kindergarten and other advances throughout the primary, elementary and

secondary systems. Previously housed in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the new department brings together units with similar educational responsibilities, and them to enhance its focus on the important child protection mandate.

Parents in western Labrador continue to struggle to find affordable child care, and the region's largest employer has hit a roadblock for a potential solution. Building Blocks Daycare in Labrador City has 60 spaces, but Hiscock said the waiting list to get a child into care has 120 names on it. The Iron Ore Company (IOC) of Canada completed development of a space for child care, but the company has been unable to find a third-party group to run the not-for-profit centre. Marsha Power-Slade, an IOC spokesperson, said now the company has given up the search, saying they've exhausted their partnership talks with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the College of the North Atlantic, industry and local stakeholders to explore every avenue possible to make this project a reality. The company said it will continue to hold on to the space and consider any proposal to run the centre that comes across their path, but the 60-child space will remain vacant until then. For parents without this centre, it has become too expensive to work because child care expenses are so high.

## NOVA SCOTIA

The Nova Scotia government took immediate action after several child care centres across the province violated child care regulations. The department of education and early childhood development reported that inspections found two child cares had failed to report suspected cases of child abuse in the last two years, despite the law requiring that abuse be reported. Karen Casey, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, mandated that suspected child abuse must now be reported directly to the minister within 24 hours. The province released a list of violations, which included complaints of workers using physical punishment, harsh language and a child wandering away from a child care. The province is also reviewing child care regulations.

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The Departments of Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and

Employment have launched the 10-year foundational *Right From the Start Early Childhood Development Framework* and two-year action plan in February 2014 in order to address child care shortages and provide child care professionals to the Northwest Territories. The action plan sets out to review how funding subsidies are distributed to all licensed Early Childhood programs with the aim to improving overall efficiency, equity, transparency, and streamlined reporting. The plan also aims to increase the number of qualified early childhood professionals in licensed programs, through ongoing annual professional development, support and training, scholarship incentives, and development of a credentialing system to track Early Childhood Professional Education levels offering a wage top-up subsidy for licensed centre Early Childhood Educators.

## ONTARIO

With the final phase of the full-day rollout happening this September in Ontario, school boards report that over the past five years of implementation, they've learned that teachers in Grades 1 and 2 now find their lessons no longer work for children steeped in play-based learning — kids who are more confident, ask more questions and who are used to setting the agenda in the classroom. The Ontario government now plans to expand play- and inquiry-based learning throughout the elementary years as part of its new action plan. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association spokesperson stated that they need to revisit the curriculum for grade one and subsequent grades. The province's education ministry cited that during consultations to develop its action plan, a major theme was to extend the play-based learning of full-day kindergarten into elementary education. Rather than being teacher-driven, these students want to explore answers to questions and issues they are interested in.

## QUEBEC

Quebec Liberal leader Premier Philippe Couillard is planning on indexing child care fees to income: the wealthy would pay more, the poor would pay less. As of October 1 of this year, the rate rose from \$7 to \$7.30 a day. Many political parties, child care and social groups



all criticized the idea saying that \$7-a-day child care is a great deal for the value of the services, but are frustrated that the additional fees would go to the government and not the child cares. CPE association spokeswoman Gina Gasparini argued that the public child care system is one of the only revenue-generating government-funded programs in Quebec, but constitutes just one per cent of the government budget.

## CALENDAR

### NOVEMBER

7-9

#### Vancouver, BC

The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Provincial Training Conference. *Hand in Hand: Health and Wellness for All with Quality Care*  
[www.acc-society.bc.ca](http://www.acc-society.bc.ca)

13-15

#### Winnipeg, Manitoba

*ChildCare2020 – From Vision to Action*  
 National Child Care Conference. *Help put child care back on the public agenda*  
[www.Childcare2020.ca](http://www.Childcare2020.ca)

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#### National – Canada

National Child Day – Events and activities to celebrate children all across Canada.  
[www.facebook.com/groups/5657406573/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/5657406573/)

### APRIL

30 - May 2, 2015

#### Richmond, British Columbia

ECEBC's 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference:  
*Strengthening Connections Through Our Cultures and Practices*  
[www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca)

### MAY

21 – 23, 2015

#### Winnipeg, Manitoba

MCCA's 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference at Victoria Inn, Winnipeg  
[www.mccahouse.org](http://www.mccahouse.org)

### JUNE

5-6, 2015

#### Dartmouth NS

Provincial Conference and Trade Show  
 Featuring Teacher Tom (Tom Hobson) and Christine McLean  
[www.nschildcareassociation.org](http://www.nschildcareassociation.org)

## RESEARCH UPDATES

### Booster Seat to Seat Belt Transitioning

According to a recent study by Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of groups working to prevent accidental childhood injuries, 9 in 10 parents are moving their children from booster seats to a seat belt before they reach the recommended height, weight or age.

The report, “**Buckle Up: Booster Seats,**” funded in part by a \$2-million grant from the General Motors Foundation, also finds seven out of 10 parents do not know a child should be at least 57 inches (4-foot-9-inches) tall to ride in a car without a booster seat.

The laws in Canada mandate a child to meet just one of the following three requirements before they're allowed to ride without a booster seat, with a regular seatbelt.

- At least 57 inches / 4'9" in height
- At least 80 pounds
- 8 years old

Read the report at <http://www.safekids.org/research-report/buckle-booster-seats-september-2014>

### Money or kindergarten? Distributive effects of cash versus in-kind family transfers for young children OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers

*OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*

Author: Förster, M.F. and Verbist, G.

Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Read the report at: [www.keepeek.com/](http://www.keepeek.com/)

This report compares the distributive patterns and redistributive effects of “cash benefits (e.g. child allowances) versus in-kind support (e.g. care services such as kindergarten)”. Public support to families with pre-school children can be in the form of cash benefits (e.g. child allowances) or of “in-kind” support (e.g. care services such as kindergartens). The mix of these support measures varies greatly across OECD countries, from a cash / in-kind composition of 10%/90% to 80%/20%. This paper imputes the value of services into an “extended” household income and compares the resulting distributive patterns and the redistributive effect of these two strands of family policies.

### Caring for children in Europe: How childcare, parental leave and flexible working arrangements interact in Europe

Report brief by Barbara Janta of the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC) examines how paid work and the care of children are reconciled by families in European Union Member States. It analyses how child care, parental leave and working time instruments are combined and used in a complementary way. Our research shows that high participation rates in formal child care settings are not a prerequisite for high levels of female labour force participation. However, formal child care has positive consequences for children, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, whereas lack of or limited formal child care options can have negative consequences for female career development.

Published May 2014: <http://europa.eu/epic/studies-reports/docs/rr-554-dg-employment-childcare-brief-v-0-16-final.pdf>