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# Transforming Images of Infant Pedagogy

**Presenter: Dr Andi Salamon**

## Reflection points and resources

Yindyamarra Winhanga-nha, the aim for us all to learn the wisdom of respectfully living well, in a world worth living in, is the Wiradjuri phrase that invites respect, gentleness, and a sense of quiet that comes with slowing down (Grant, 2022).

Grant, S. (2022, September 28). Yindyamarra Pledge [Video]. YouTube. [Yindyamarra Pledge](#).

Early childhood education is founded on rights-based philosophies that promote social justice, democratic communities, participation, and agency of societies' youngest children. Pedagogy brings the philosophies to life through theories, methods and practices via two main lines of thinking .... one is as a leader of children (which the word breaks down to be) AND (as Alma Fleet tells us) the study of teaching and learning.

Fleet, A. (2019, October 17). What's pedagogy anyway? Introducing the history of pedagogy. [Video]. YouTube. [What's pedagogy anyway? Introducing the history of pedagogy](#).

Praxis can be defined as transformational activity. It's what happens when individual people act with certain dispositions toward the greater good. Kemmis (2012) describes praxis as happening in the living process of an individual's history, and at the same time as a contribution to the history we share with others. That what EC and infant pedagogy is about, the work of professionals toward a bigger purpose, toward a bigger aim to promote and enact education as being for the good of each person and for the good of humankind (Kaukko et.al., 2020).

Kaukko, M., Francisco, S., & Mahon, K. (2020). Education for a World Worth Living In. In Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis in Critical Times (pp. 1-13). Springer.

Kemmis, S. (2012). Phronēsis, experience, and the primacy of praxis. In E.A. Kinsella & A. Pitman (Eds.) Phronesis as professional knowledge: Practical wisdom in the professions (pp. 147- 161). Brill Sense.

There are hundreds of different images of the child. Each one of you has inside yourself an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to a child. This theory within you pushes you to behave in certain ways; it orients you as you talk to the child, listen to the child, observe the child.

Malaguzzi, L. (1994). Your image of the child: Where teaching begins. Child Care Information Exchange, 52-52. Available at <https://www.reggioalliance.org/downloads/malaguzzi:ccie:1994.pdf>

Taken for granted beliefs about babies act as unspoken narratives that can influence our practices in positive and negative ways. Educators seemed to believe babies were better able to 'manage' their physical and cognitive learning independently, for example, sensorimotor play, free movement and physical exploration. Educators also believed babies were more dependent on them for social and emotional learning, for example, being more needy and not to be trusted alone with other babies for fear of hurting each other and stepping in quickly in relation to social and emotional support.

Salamon, A. (2019, June 24). Taken for granted beliefs about babies' capabilities. The Spoke – Early Childhood Australia's Blog.

<https://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/taken-granted-beliefs-babies-capabilities/>



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The strongest and most evocative responses, however, seemed to be with regard to how to communicate ("Terrified because they will try communicate and I won't understand") or even if they do communicate at all ("Am scared of them because they can't express themselves" and "Small ones don't communicate"). Key to these insights, is how the images educators hold of infants and toddlers manifest in their practices in ways that enable and constrain opportunities for children's optimal learning.

Stratigos, T., & Salamon, A. (2019). "What are babies meant to do with clay!?: Interwoven identities and their impact on quality pedagogy with infants and toddlers. In A. Salamon and A. Chng (Eds.). Thinking about Pedagogy in Early Education: Multiple early childhood identities. Routledge.

From before birth, humans process and regulate what they perceive through their senses in parts of the brain that are closely related to physical and biological systems. At its core, the brain stem and the limbic area work together to help regulate arousal, emotion (Siegel, 2014) and ultimately attention. Infants' physiological and cognitive systems are thus inextricably linked and understanding how is beneficial to any adult who aims to better support infants to develop dispositions of curiosity, agency and interest in their surroundings.

Siegel, D. (2014, 9 December). Name it to Tame it. [Video] YouTube. [Dan Siegel: Name it to Tame it](#)

"you're asking me to speak to why we need to listen to the voices of infants and children ... such a little question and such a big question – little question because it's really speaking to the starting point for any work with an infant or child that directly impacts them is a starting point where they are entitled to be part of a process that includes them in that transaction" (Bunstan, 2021).

Bunstan, W. (presenter). (2021, January 4). Clients in their own right [Audio podcast episode]. In Centre for excellence in Child and Family Welfare – expert led practice Podcast series. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kl2R4ust8ck>

Infant meaning making centres around everyday experiences and, rather than playing with objects, babies play with what they know about their perceptual and relational world. My study in naturalistic Australian ECE settings found that engaging in group play-based learning experiences of pretend play and playfulness, elicited observable cognitive social and emotional behaviours in 6 –12-month-old infants. The behaviours were initiated by some infants weeks later.

Salamon, A. (2022, March 14). Infants play with emotion: How to 'pork it up' with your baby. Play and Learn Together Blog. <https://www.playandlearntogether.com.au/play-blog/infants-play-with-emotion-how-to-pork-it-up-with-your-baby>