

Inclusion through relatedness: Learning 'with'



**Inclusion Support Facilitators
encountering the Early Years
Learning Framework**
Dr. Miriam Giugni

Contents

Foreword	3
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6
Part One: What do we want for children?	9
Becoming ‘another’ in relatedness	10
Part Two: Encountering with the framework from diverse ISF perspectives	13
Beginning with the concepts – Belong, Being and Becoming	14
Becoming ‘another’ in relatedness through diverse ISF voices encountering the EYLF	15
Glimpse 1 – A language put to practice	16
Glimpse 2 – A commitment to change	17
Glimpse 3 – Diversities and differences	18
Glimpse 4 – Questions and questioning	19
Glimpse 5 – Learning ‘with’	20
Glimpse 6 – Concepts	21
Glimpse 7 – Multiple views	22
Part Three: Engaging with worldviews, theories and philosophies about inclusion	25
Possible ways forward	27
Useful reading and resources	28
References	29

Foreword

The development of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) has opened up possibilities for all who share an interest in young children, to pause for a moment of reflection and renewal. While the introduction of the EYLF and its connection with the National Quality Framework and Standards might be viewed as an urgent imperative or a further layer of accountability and responsibility, this resource provides another perspective – an opportunity to look beyond the simplicity of compliance to a deeper understanding of the importance of the assumptions, actions and reactions that those working with children bring to each child’s encounter with curriculum.

In developing this resource, the ACT Inclusion Support Agency promotes thoughtful ways of responding to curriculum documents. They encourage early childhood educators to draw on their professional wisdom and engage in meaningful dialogue with other professionals and partners in the development of inclusive curriculum. Far from an approach that tells people what to think and how to behave, this resource reminds us to be thoughtful, collaborative and interrogative of the documents and systems that are presented to us – to take time and make space for thoughtful reflection, difficult to answer questions and big conversations. We are reminded that as capable and resourceful professionals, we can be wise and knowledgeable in our own worlds but also need to open up to the lesser

known, the unfamiliar and even the uncomfortable, if we are to sensibly address the question – “*what do we want for our children*”?

Drawing on the thinking of Karen Martin opens up possibilities for extending ways to view the world. Rather than positioning this resource as a different way to think and believe, Karen’s ideas present a furthering of our thinking – extending the idea of ‘other’ to ‘another’ and asking us to think deeply about the importance of ‘relatedness’. What can seem simply as words, can open up possibilities for conversations and fresh approaches that invite greater attention to equity and justice. It is important to take the time to discuss words and the opportunities they afford us to look at the world more broadly.

No text or document alone will change thinking or practice – it is now over to those who read this to further the conversations and promote a fair and just encounter with the EYLF for all children.

Sandra Cheeseman

Lecturer
Institute of Early Childhood
Macquarie University

Acknowledgements

This resource was commissioned by the ACT Inclusion Support Agency in partnership with the ACT Professional Support Coordinator. The ACT Professional Support Coordinator and Inclusion Support Agency are initiatives funded by the Australian Government under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.

Writer: Dr. Miriam Giugni

Miriam has been working in early childhood education for 19 years. She recently completed her PhD at the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, University of Melbourne. Her thesis focused on how early childhood educators enact equity in everyday settings and involves educators and children as co-researchers.

Thank you

Miriam would like to thank Tracey Freeburn for taking the time to read and comment on the draft of this resource. Thank you to Karen Martin for ongoing inspiration through her writings and research that always create opportunities for new 'learning with'

ACT ISA and PSC would like to thank all the reference group members from across the country who contributed to the development of this resource.

Northern Territory – Darwin

Maree Toll – ISA Manager Early Childhood Australia Northern Territory Branch

Frances Czoloszynski – ISF Early Childhood Australia Northern Territory Branch

Irene McCarthy – ISF Early Childhood Australia Northern Territory Branch

Diane Cox – ISF Early Childhood Australia Northern Territory Branch

Gloria Hackett – Coordinator ISA Early Childhood Australia Northern Territory Branch

Northern Territory – Alice Springs

Sharolyn Talbot – Assistant Manager ISF Children's Services Support Program (Central Australia) Northern Territory

Bronwyn Truscott – Manager ISA Children's Services Support Program (Central Australia) Northern Territory

Tasmania

Carole Hurst – ISA Manager Lady Gowrie Tasmania

Roxanne Ellis – ISF Lady Gowrie Tasmania

Lawrice Jack – ISF Lady Gowrie Tasmania

New South Wales

Susan Spruce – KU Children's Services Inclusion Support Facilitator for St. George/Sutherland

Jodie Coles – KU Children's Services Inclusion Support Facilitator for NSW South West

Anne Stapleton – KU Children's Services Inclusion Support Facilitator for Hunter

Tracy Chu – Manager SDN Child and Family Services Cumberland/Blacktown

Australian Capital Territory

Heather Lehoczky – ISF Communities@Work

Sandy Leitch – ISF Communities@Work

This book was written on Gadigal Country

“How do we want this, and future generations, of children to remember us?”

Martin
2005, p. 39

The aim of this resource is to offer opportunities for Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) to critically think through the many possible ways of engaging with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) in everyday practice. It is premised on building “a lively culture of professional inquiry” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 13). The business of inclusion in early childhood practice is complex work. This work requires critical engagement in contexts that include:

- ISF teams
- ISF communities
- Children’s services communities that become a collaboration of early childhood educators¹ and ISFs.

The EYLF offers many opportunities for ISFs to interact with the document as:

- A professional development opportunity for ISFs in their own teams and in the broader ISF community
- A guide for refining the focus of the role of the ISF in early childhood practice (curriculum and pedagogy)
- A guide to point toward the positive influence ISFs may have to empower early childhood practice to be focused explicitly on issues of inclusion and equity
- An opportunity to think about change in ISF practice as well as early childhood practice and,
- An advocacy tool to be used from an inclusion and equity standpoint to support and engage children’s services in quality practice.

The focus of this resource is to provoke discussion and debate about how ISFs see and experience the relationship between the role of an ISF and the EYLF. This discussion and debate may primarily begin in ISF teams around Australia, but may expand to engagement with early childhood educators, community stake holders, critical friends, families and children!

This resource is not a ‘how to do the EYLF’. Taking this approach would underestimate the diversity of knowledge and experience of ISFs and early childhood educators alike. In addition, because Australia holds the ancestry of the longest living Indigenous cultures in the world, and is a multicultural² country, the experiences, knowledges³ and practices of ISFs and early childhood educators will either reflect certain kinds of experience, knowledge and practice, or be in a position to learn from them.

This resource has been specifically designed in a way that has potential to ‘reach’ a range of ISF communities. It is written in three parts. Each part will offer a different angle and level of engagement with the EYLF in the context of the ISF role and early childhood practice in various contexts across Australia.

¹The term “early childhood educators” is used throughout this book drawing from the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 5).

²The term multicultural in this book includes those who identify as ‘White’ Australians (Davis, 2004; Mundine, in press). It also includes sexualities (Robinson, 2005) and ‘diffabilities’ (Lawson, 2001), languages (Srinivasan, 2008) class, SES and geographical region.

³You will notice words such as ‘knowledges’ throughout this book – this is deliberate to remind us that there are always many knowledges and so always new knowledges to learn.

The three parts of this resource focus on:

- **Part One: What do we want for children?**

This part provides a rationale for exploring the relationships between the ISF role and the EYLF. It begins with a 'big picture' question about what we want for children in order to enable a specific focus on why and how inclusion is central to early childhood practice. This rationale draws from Karen Martin's (2005, 2008, 2010) worldview of 'relatedness' as she offers a new way to consider practices of inclusion specifically in Australian contexts.

- **Part Two: Encountering with the EYLF from an ISF perspective**

This part of the resource offers seven "glimpses" into how ISFs from around Australia have begun to engage with the EYLF. These diverse approaches and views offer a range of possibilities for how ISF teams might learn from and with each other, particularly because Australia is highly diverse in landscape and population based on colonial and immigration practices. At the end of each glimpse you will find questions for discussion. You may like to use these to prompt further thinking and debate about inclusive practice in team meetings or with the services you work with.

- **Part Three: Engaging with theories, philosophies and worldviews about inclusion**

This final chapter engages with theories, philosophies, or 'worldviews' about inclusion. Owing to the historical and current diversities that make up Australia, opportunities to debate, discuss, dissent and learn from the worldviews, theories and philosophies presented in the EYLF are arguably necessary. Critical engagement with the EYLF through the ISF role might become a beginning for early childhood communities to grapple with the following question: "how do we want this, and future generations, of children to remember us?" (Martin, 2005, p. 39), in the hope that together we can recreate an inclusive and equitable world.

You will notice Resource links (see below for an example) throughout the resource. These resource links lead to some available options for thinking through engagement with the EYLF in the context of inclusion support. These links are just some of the possibilities available and is by no means an exhaustive list. All of the resource links in this book are free on-line. In the appendix titled 'Useful reading and resources', other potentially useful resources are listed but may incur a membership to an organisation or cost to access them.

RESOURCE LINK

Becoming, Being and Belonging: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Documents/Final%20EYLF%20Framework%20Report%20-%20WEB.pdf





Part One:

What do we want for children?

Part One: What do we want for children?

“What do we want
for our children?”

Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence
2007, p. 77-78

Inclusion requires vision, imagination and courage to make a difference in life. It is political, historical and socially produced. This section begins with the question posed above in order to prompt broad thinking about the role of the ISF. It does so to explore the ways that the ISF role can be enhanced by engaging with big ideas, and new ideas, that reach across cultures and open up possibilities for inclusion and equity. We draw explicitly on Karen Martin's (2005) writings to attempt this because they offer a new way forward for ISFs, early childhood education and inclusion and equity more broadly.

When we ask the question above, we are asking questions about inclusion, equity, quality, diversity and difference. We are asking these questions from the stand point of everyday life in children's services in the Australian context. Sometimes, asking questions about inclusion can be, mistakenly, connected to people who become regarded as 'other' in how society is structured. For example, consider how we refer to 'children with a disability' and 'culturally and linguistically diverse children'. These labels or categories can be important for some people to identify and 'know' themselves individually and/or as a cultural group. They can also be useful for identifying differences that illustrate how some people see themselves and how they position themselves in society. At the same time they can limit who some people can become and their participation in society (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2006).

Karen Martin⁴ offers an alternative to thinking about difference as 'other', and instead thinks about difference as "another" (Martin, 2005, p. 39). This shift in thinking enables another way to think about inclusion. Martin's (2005) use of the term 'another' stems from a worldview that she calls 'relatedness'.

She writes that:

To know who you are in relatedness is the ultimate premise of an Aboriginal worldview because this is the formation of identity. This is acquired through being immersed in situations, contexts of people and other elements which lead us to come to see and to come to know, and then be part of the relatedness through change and past, present and future. A child is therefore guided, or parented, through the various stages of lifehood, fulfilling the expectations and conditions, the roles, rites and responsibilities of relatedness (p.28).

If we work from principles of Martin's (2005) Aboriginal worldview of relatedness then we can open up opportunities to consider how, as an ISF, this view can be enabling to engage with the EYLF in your own professional conversations as well as conversations with the services and communities with which you work (and that work with you!).

If we consider inclusion through principles of Martin's (2005) Aboriginal worldview of relatedness then we have opportunities to begin connecting ideas together that might enable a broader practice of equity in children services and beyond. Drawing from the principles of an *Aboriginal* worldview of relatedness, does not mean that we are simply discussing Aboriginal issues with an assumption that we immediately 'know' Aboriginality because we draw from principles of this world view. Instead, by *learning* from Martin's (2005) Aboriginal worldview of relatedness, we may approach our *everyday* work differently as a result, especially in the context of inclusion. So, for those of us who are non-Aboriginal

⁴Karen Martin is an Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education at Southern Cross University in Lismore. You can find some of her publications are in the reference list.

ISFs and early childhood educators, we can draw on Martin's (2005) Aboriginal worldview of relatedness as a way of opening ourselves up to new learnings and understandings, rather than considering ourselves as knowing what an Aboriginal worldview is. We can become 'another' by drawing from principles of this view. And by doing so are invited into new thinking through Martin's (2008, p.9) 'relatedness theory'.

Consider the worldviews that are traditionally drawn upon and promoted in early childhood practices: for example - Piaget (Swiss), Vygotsky (Russian), Malaguzzi (Italian). The work of these theorists has provided early childhood practice with a Eurocentric worldview about children and their development – we tend to draw upon this worldview whether or not we are Swiss, Russian or Italian. Often we draw upon these theorists without question of their relevance to the Australian context. This does not mean that we should not draw from them or dismiss them, but instead that we can broaden understandings of our work, in the context of Australia, by looking at Australian worldviews, which should *always* stem from and be connected with Aboriginal worldviews where ever possible. So, drawing on the worldview that Martin (2005) offers us, enables a specific learning opportunity to reconsider early childhood knowledges in the Australian context specifically about inclusion.

Becoming 'another' in relatedness

For Martin (2005), "[r]elatedness is not limited to people but extends to everything in the environment: the animals, the plants, the skies the climate the waterways the land and the spirits" (Martin, 2005, p. 29). This can be thought about in our own contexts to include the places in which we live, our houses, neighborhoods, communities and so on and their situated histories. It may also include the resources that some children require to participate in the

world (e.g. this might include apparatuses in and on children's bodies such as hearing aids, medication, and wheel chairs). These resources may also become 'another' in how children belong, where and with whom.

Beginning with 'relatedness' (Martin, 2005) then, opens up possibilities for us to reconsider 'belonging, being and becoming' in our everyday work with each other, children, families and communities. As a starting point you might consider the 'relatedness' between your role as an ISF, the Principles and Practices in the EYLF document and reconsider the practices that you engage with as a result. You might revisit the questions "what do we want for our children?" (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 77-78) thinking through the significant implications the EYLF may have for early childhood practice.

Because ISFs are working in diverse contexts around Australia, the 'relatedness' between where you work (place) your role as an ISF (people) the EYLF document (things) as a learning framework is multifaceted. You are in a position to be critical about the EYLF in your specific context, remembering that Australia's Indigenous and multicultural pasts and presents, are one reason why we have inclusion support! The way society has been structured over the years since colonisation has meant that people experience life differently. Some people require inclusion into the existing society, not through any fault of their own, but because of the circumstances in which they find themselves and the way society has been structured.

As ISFs you are well positioned to engage with the EYLF, critically, in ways that can make a difference in the lives of yourselves, children, families and communities. What follows are 'seven glimpses' into the ideas, questions and practices of some ISFs who are working toward 'what they want for children' and 'how they want to be remembered'.



Part Two:

Encountering with the framework from diverse ISF perspectives

Part Two: Encountering with the Framework from diverse ISF perspectives

Beginning with the concepts – Belonging, Being and Becoming

The three concepts, *belonging, being and becoming*, are an overarching framework for connecting people, places, things and everyday life. The order of these three concepts is debatable depending on your worldview. For example, in some communities, you may have *already become* before you are born. Similarly, you may *belong before* you are born. Be critical of the order of these concepts as a beginning point in order to challenge assumptions that they are presented to you as truth. Just by engaging this kind of thinking opens up new possibilities for considering your role as an ISF and the everyday work you engage with in diverse communities.

The work of inclusion in early childhood is integral to children's experiences of becoming, belonging and being. Once again I return to Martin's (2005) worldview of 'relatedness' to consider the important part *place* plays in how children might experience belonging, being and becoming. For some communities, 'the child' is not separate from the community and its histories, so focussing on an individual child's development may seem like a disconnect. Instead, if we consider inclusion of children through 'relatedness' (Martin, 2005) we may come to see that belonging, being and becoming can take on many understandings and forms. This is an opportunity to imagine beyond the limits of our current thinking and experiences.

In a similar way, Taylor (2010) asks us to 'rethink belonging through place'. She maps out a similar

kind of 'relatedness' between people and places, (she calls relationality) to illustrate that belonging is about the places children, their families and communities inhabit. From this point of view, belonging is an experience of being somewhere, with people as well as the surroundings, animals, things, waterways, flora, living arrangements, astro turf!, and so on.

Consider 'relatedness' and 'belonging through place' in terms of the *Principles* (p.12-13) and *Practices* (p.14-18) in the EYLF. For example, *Principle 4. Respect for diversity* – the diversity of places in which children live will have an effect on how they belong and who they can become. Working from the experience of 'belonging through place' enables 'respect for diversity' of the places as much as the people: people and places are intimately connected, they become together in relatedness. Through becoming together in relatedness, the diversities and differences between children become '*another*' in communities rather than 'other' as individuals (Martin, 2005).

Belonging through place may also offer a useful way to think about the relationships ISFs have with the children's services with which you work. A starting place to think this way might be to ask the following questions:

How do you conceptualise the EYLF concepts belonging, being and becoming in your role as an ISF:

- Culturally? (your own)
- Professionally?
- Through place?

Consider the places in which ISFs work and roads that ISFs travel:



*Taren Point, New South Wales
– Eora and Dharawal country*



Crossing the Roper River at Roper Bar, Northern Territory – Yugul Mangi country



The Glebe Hobart Tasmania – Nibberloonne country



ANZAC parade roundabout Australian Capital Territory – Ngunnawal Country

Becoming ‘another’ in relatedness through diverse ISF voices encountering the EYLF

The production of this resource came from a lively teleconference, individual telephone conversations, and a raft of exciting emails between a group of people working for, and committed to, inclusion support with children. What follows is a set of possibilities that came from these communications that offer glimpses of the ways in which ISFs are

engaging with the EYLF. These ‘glimpses’ might be useful for discussion, debate and dissensus in your ISF team or in your conversations with early childhood educators and children’s services. They offer some broad themes about how inclusive practice might be critically enhanced through encountering the EYLF.

Glimpse 1 – A language to put to practice

‘The EYLF affirms what we have been doing for years. We have a language to put to our practice’

Roxanne Ellis
ISF Lady Gowrie Tasmania

Having ‘a language to put to practice’ enables possibilities for conversations between ISFs, early childhood educators and families. Putting language to practice in the diversity of places in Australia in which ISFs work and children in their communities inhabit may enable new ways of engaging with how inclusion is ‘talked about’ and ‘experienced’. This may extend to new ways of using language to reconsider how children might be included in ways that they ‘become another’ in a children’s service. Putting language to practice may also offer new insights into how inclusion practices are ‘talked about’ and

‘experienced’ through engagement with curriculum, planning, learning, development and culture.

Questions for discussion

- How have we come to a ‘common language’ in children’s services and inclusion support?
- Whose ideas are privileged? How? Why?
- Whose are silenced? How? Why?

RESOURCE LINK

Interviews with EYLF Consortium members
<http://www.cscentral.org.au/news/eylf/resources.html>



Glimpse 2 – A commitment to change

‘We need to have a
commitment to change’

Tracy Chu

Manager SDN Child and Family Services Cumberland/Blacktown

At the same time as the EYLF offers a shared language to put to practice, it also offers opportunities for change. Changes in practice are enabled, for ISF practices, as well as the practices of early childhood educators. Consider the new learning opportunities that the EYLF offers, particularly in how the *Vision, Principles* and *Practices* can become the foundations for ISF team meeting discussions. A commitment to change might mean changing how you try to ‘see’ someone else’s point of view about inclusion in early childhood pedagogy and curriculum. A commitment to change might mean engaging in ‘critical reflection’ to change the way we view things, and sharing those change processes rather than trying to change someone else. For example in the EYLF, “[c]ritical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 13). Consider the usefulness of the questions that follow this quote on Page 13 of the EYLF as a beginning for thinking about a commitment to change. Consider a commitment to change through

‘relatedness’ based on the places in which you work and live.

Changes for ISFs and early childhood educators together may also include working across two or more learning frameworks or curriculum documents depending on where you are in Australia. This will inevitably include working across cultures, which always provides rich and complex opportunities for learning and change.

Questions for discussion

- What does it take to ‘see’ someone else’s point of view?
- What kind of processes is your ISF team engaging in to explore change?
- How might focusing on creating change enable new possibilities for inclusion support?

RESOURCE LINK

Community Child Care Victoria

<http://www.cccvic.org.au/content.cfm?content=106>

IPSUWA

[http://www.ipsuwa.org.au/Resource Sheets/Early Years Learning Framework Resource.pdf](http://www.ipsuwa.org.au/Resource%20Sheets/Early%20Years%20Learning%20Framework%20Resource.pdf)

PSC QLD

<http://www.workforce.org.au/our-workforce-initiatives/professional-support-coordinator-queensland/actions/early-years-learning-framework.aspx>



Glimpse 3 – Diversities and differences

‘Each service will engage differently and we should be mindful of that’

Sandy Leitch
ISF Communities@Work ACT

‘Some of the struggles are the different levels of practices in services’

Roxanne Ellis
ISF Lady Gowrie Tasmania

‘The EYLF fits the diversity of services really well’

Gloria Hackett, Maree Toll, Frances Czoloszynski, Irene McCarthy, Diane Cox
ISF team Early Childhood Australia Darwin, Northern Territory

Children’s services are full of diversities and differences. Beginning with the places in which they are located, consider the various kinds of belongings children might experience in them. Some communities are transient because children and their families either must or choose to move around. This applies to children born in Australia as well as children who come to Australia (for diverse reasons). Children’s belongings then, can work intimately with beings and becomings, particularly in terms of inclusion. Similarly, each ISF will approach the EYLF and its usefulness in diverse ways depending where you are and who you become in your everyday work. Consider the images at the beginning of Part Two - these images offer an insight into the physical and geographical differences ISFs have around Australia. Both are rich in difference and afford a different kind of experience of the role of the ISF. Likewise, the ways in which each ISF engages with

the EYLF, (as a tool for your own learning, services learning and as a tool to be critiqued), will vary based on your worldviews, your particular understandings of inclusion, and your vision for what you want for children.

Questions for discussion

- To what extent are the politics of diversity and difference part of your everyday ISF team discussions? How? Why? Why not?
- How can we begin to understand diversities and differences more critically when challenging our own world views?
- How many diversities and differences are we open to? Can we know them all?

RESOURCE LINK

Exploring multiculturalism, anti-bias and social justice in children’s services (NSW PSC)
http://www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/Exploring_Multiculturalism.pdf



Glimpse 4 – Questions and Questioning

‘It’s part of our role to show services that it’s OK to question, even when it seems too hard. It helps support a commitment to change in the interest of children and inclusion’

Lawrice Jack
ISF Lady Gowrie Tasmania

‘What are the questions I am asking? How do they help me think about inclusion?’

Heather Lehoczky
ISF Communities@Work ACT

Practices of questioning have, on one hand, become part of how we talk about inclusion in children’s services. On the other hand, it seems that the questions we ask might not necessarily lead us through change processes. Promoting practices of questioning is one way for ISFs to consider how you engage with inclusion as an idea (i.e. what it does, why it’s hard, what others think it is and how it should be practiced) and then contextualise those ideas through the EYLF.

Because ISFs are in a ‘support’ role, often the practices of questioning can seem to be relevant for the children’s services with which you work. Refreshingly, the questions posed by Heather (above) take the practice of questioning further. When we ask ourselves ‘What are the questions I am asking? We can come to see that questioning in general is a good beginning, but critical reflection on the kinds of questions we ask might enable new possibilities for thinking about the work of an ISF and then engagement with early childhood educators. What are the questions that early childhood educators are asking of you? How might reciprocal questioning

practices enable new kinds of inclusion practices that ultimately benefit children and their communities? How might these questions differ from context to context (‘remote’ communities in Western Australia to down town Adelaide in South Australia).

Questions for discussion

- When we ask questions, what do we draw them from or base them on?
- How is culture considered?
- How is the complex make up of children’s services considered? (i.e. working conditions)
- Whose worldviews are considered?
- What kinds of research might be helpful to prompt useful critical questions?

RESOURCE LINK

Contemporary research insights

<http://www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/contemporary-research-insights.pdf>



Glimpse 5 – Learning ‘with’

‘Discussions in our ISF team focus on how to learn ‘with’ services not for them’

Heather Lehoczky
ISF Communities@Work ACT

The question of ‘who’s the expert’ (Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999) is one of the most complicated in inclusion support and in early childhood education more broadly. Returning to the ideas of ‘relatedness’ (Martin, 2005) and ‘belonging through place’ (Taylor, 2010) may call upon us to reconsider the diverse worldviews, experiences and practices of inclusion in children’s services in Australia and her histories. Learning alongside communities as a practice of learning ‘with’ as a baseline for ISF practice might enable new possibilities for engaging the complexities of inclusion support. ‘Learning with’ might enable a worldview or philosophy, that stems beyond funding needs, toward pedagogical engagement and curriculum making through the EYLF ‘with’ early childhood educators.

In some communities in Australia the conversations between ISFs and early childhood educators meander through 3rd and 4th dialects of ancient and contemporary languages. Words that may seem familiar in mainstream children’s services, such as ‘routines’, might be perceived as totally new concepts in some communities. This does not mean by any stretch of the imagination that there is a lack of knowledge, but rather ‘another’ kind of ‘relatedness’ (Martin, 2005) that offers you an opportunity to ‘learn with’ about why those words might appear to be unfamiliar and the implications of that in terms of inclusion. Consider this point: “while being literate in Standard Australian English is a desire for many, if not all, Aboriginal peoples, it is only one part of a wider repertoire of literacies” (Martin, 2005, p. 37). This view provides an opening for new questions about

the benefits as well as limits of language and literacy, particularly in English, in Indigenous and multicultural Australia (Srinivasan, 2008).

‘Learning with’ is not limited to cross-cultural knowledges (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Island and South Sea Island, refugee, multicultural etc) but also to the ‘voices of children’ (MacNaughton, Smith, & Lawrence, 2004). How might children’s expertise about their own lives, particularly children birth to two years, become significant in how they ‘become another’ in their contexts and experience inclusion?

The EYLF has openings for such ‘learning with’ – in each of the *Outcomes* there is a section that it titled “add your own examples from your context”. This opening has the potential to create an assortment of views, that may not sit comfortably together, but instead offer a diversity of insights to question, think through, reconsider and ‘learn with’.

Questions for discussion

- What do you gain by ‘learning with’?
- What might you have to change about yourself and the way you do your work as an ISF to ‘learn with’?
- What are the benefits for inclusion support when we are willing to ‘learn with’?

RESOURCE LINK

Rethinking Images of Inclusion
www.actpsc.com.au/inclusion-support/isa-resources



Glimpse 6 – Concepts

‘We feel that a big part of our work is focusing on the belonging, being and becoming concepts’

Gloria Hackett, Maree Toll, Frances Czoloszynski Irene McCarthy, Diane Cox – ISF team Early Childhood Australia Darwin, NT

Belonging, being and becoming are the central themes, as well as overarching concepts, of the EYLF. For many, the concepts belonging, being and becoming have provided new possibilities for thinking about early childhood professional identities, the experiences of children and significantly, *inclusion*. Remember the various ways in which people may experience, understand and practice these concepts. Remember to be critical about how they have been offered in the EYLF in the context of Australia’s histories and diversities. Beginning with the concepts is one way that ISFs might engage with each other, to consider the diversities and complexities of inclusion support. Taking time to consider how early childhood educators are thinking through these concepts might become ‘a springboard for questions’ (Martin, 2010 cited in Giugni, 2010, p. 27) about how ISFs could too.

For example, as part of a practitioner action research project⁵ the ISF team in the ACT is engaged with, to encounter the EYLF in the context of their everyday work, time was spent considering re-imagining the framework to suit the local context. With the concepts belonging, being and becoming overarching, Sandy’s framework (pictured) illustrates that the framework can be understood from a range of different views. In addition, the framework can ‘look’ different depending on your vantage point. Exploring these potential views and vantage points might be one way to keep the concepts alive in shared thinking and ‘learning with’.

Like the Darwin ISA team, Sandy offers us one insight into how the concepts work as ‘a big part’ of what

she does as ‘a non-Indigenous able-bodied ISF’, and how she can begin to think through encountering the EYLF in new ways.

The link below offers insights into how a group of early childhood educators have ‘visualised’ the concepts in various early childhood contexts. Each of these early childhood educators have a specific focus on inclusion, diversity, difference, equity and social justice. Sometimes ‘visual’ or thinking produced through arts based engagement with the EYLF might help ‘see’ differently and ‘speak’ across knowledges, cultures and contexts.



Questions for discussion

- How might the people in your ISF teams and communities conceptualise belonging, being and becoming?
- What are the similarities and differences? Culturally? Professionally?
- How does this impact the way you undertake your work?

RESOURCE LINK

Pathways of Possibility*

<http://www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/Publications/pathways-of-possibilities.pdf>



⁵Project title – *At least 5 ways to get somewhere in Canberra: Inclusion Support Facilitators’ encounters with rethinking practice.* ACT PSC

Glimpse 7 – Multiple views

‘I recognise that I draw from socio-behaviourist theories and I know how to work with them. But reading the EYLF prompted me to think that this theory might not be the view of the child or family or the service with which I am working. So I have to be mindful which theory works best for each person/situation. Knowledge of theory is important.’ (Think which theory will best work for them?)

Susan Spruce

ISF KU Children’s Services St George/Sutherland NSW

Theory and practice are intimately connected. There is no theory without practice or practice without theory. Some theories and practices are more visible than others. Some theories and practices appear to be valued and acknowledged more than others. Taking the time to question which theories we have access to in early childhood, and specifically those that are attached to inclusion support, might enable useful forays into asking the kinds of questions that Susan has. If inclusion is about working with diversities and differences, then our theoretical/practical perspectives might also need to be diverse. The tricky part of working with diversity of views is figuring out the extent to which we can ‘see’ someone else’s point of view. This may be possible to some extent in some cases, but trickier in others.

McLachlan (in press) offers a way of grappling with the extent to which we can understand someone else’s point of view in terms of ‘diffabilities’ (Lawson, 2001). Drawing from philosopher Emanuel Levinas

(1993), McLachlan begs us to ‘let the other be the other’ in order to embrace otherness (or differences) *without seeking to change them*. This prompts the responsibility of change to begin with us! Perhaps seeking multiple views is a first step to making change - as the EYLF (p.11) asks us to do and as Susan has illustrated so poignantly for us.

Questions for discussion

- What does it take to ‘let the other be the other’ without seeking to change them?
- How can becoming ‘another’ help engage new theoretical perspectives in your thinking?

The next section takes this thinking further and prompts critical engagement with theories, their histories and usefulness in practice.



RESOURCE LINK

Worldviews, theories and philosophies

Karen Martin

<http://www.youtube.com/user/KPVconference#p/u/23/Kw1mD7TUZFM>

http://www.youtube.com/user/KPVconference#p/u/21/ZZTtJYD_AdM

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PuJL_JeCFs

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_Vlej6i0ew

Poststructuralism

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6d-7ReYQkUc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpcCmaxThsY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqOVIE0C64g>

One Norwegian worldview

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp4Nny_rliw

Jean Piaget

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jw33CBsEmR4>

Lev Vygotsky

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hx84h-i3w8U>

Maria Montessori

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2A3-z0qdCw>

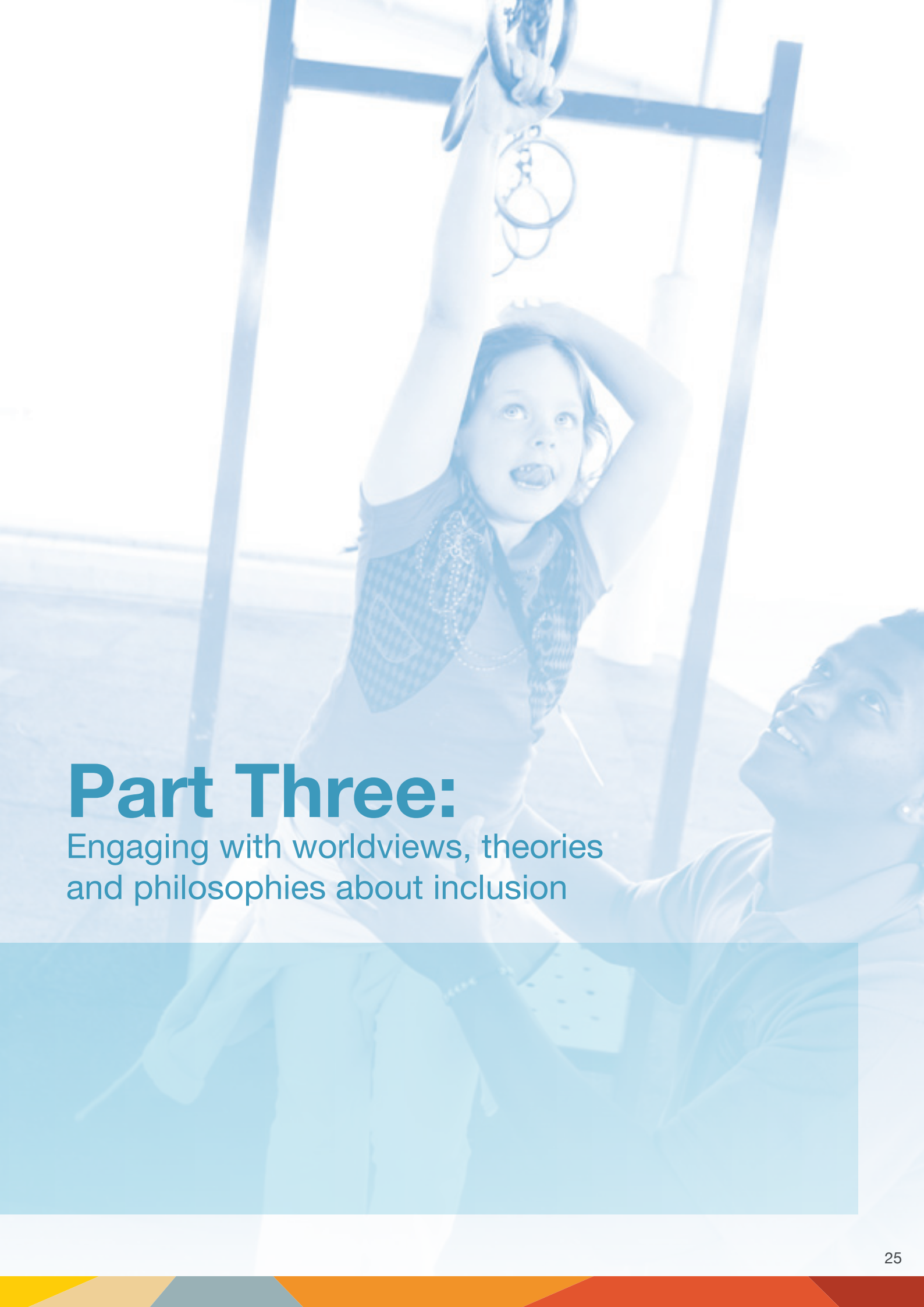
Rudolf Steiner (an Irish perspective)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxpERhyW6-A>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vclVbFQRNr0>

Anti-Bias Curriculum

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osVvqb7xZhU>



Part Three:

Engaging with worldviews, theories
and philosophies about inclusion

Part Three: Engaging with worldviews, theories and philosophies about inclusion

The EYLF offers insights into multiple perspectives on practice. Page 11 of the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) lists a *selection* of theories that might underpin practice. This list is not exhaustive. In fact there are many perspectives missing! These theories could be rethought as *worldviews* or extended to include life philosophies and practices that are not always understood as ‘theories’ in Western terms (Moreton-Robinson, 2002).

Because there are a selection of worldviews, theories and philosophies that can inform early childhood practice broadly, and inclusion support specifically, there can be many opportunities to debate different perspectives - consider Susan’s thinking on page 26 in the context of Martin’s (2005) Aboriginal worldview of relatedness.

Knowing which worldviews, theories and philosophies are used/useful and why, is part of enabling the cultural and contextual construction of curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood practice. By considering these worldviews, theories and philosophies in terms of inclusion and equity, specific to the ISF role, possibilities for being explicit about how particular practices are undertaken and why can be debated and understood in new ways. This kind of engagement with the EYLF might enable more specific culturally sensitive practices when negotiating and ‘*planning with*’ children, families and staff in early childhood communities.

Beginning questions for exploration of the theories presented on Page 11 of the EYLF might include:

- Which of these theories do you recognise?
- Which of these theories do you think best describe how you think about (rationalise) your practice?
- Which of these theories do you choose and why?
- Which of these theories do you not choose and why?
- How did you come to your choices?
- Which theories might offer new insights into your current understandings of inclusion?
- What theories and philosophies are absent? What are the implications of those absences?

These questions, and the multitude of potential responses, might become an ongoing agenda item in your staff meetings in order that a constant flow of ideas and “a lively culture of professional inquiry” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 13) might drive your everyday practice as ISFs. This might enable a shift from thinking that some early childhood educators ‘don’t understand’ or ‘need the document translated for them’, towards new questions for ISF that might include:

- What are their views?
- How did they come to have them?
- Why are they important to them?
- Where to from here? – ‘learning with’... ‘becoming another’... ‘letting the other be the other’...

Some shared practices of ‘learning with’:

- Engage with the questions on p. 13 of the EYLF;
- Establishing that there are multiple ‘entry points’ into engaging with and using the EYLF specifically in terms of inclusion and equity;
- Establishing many ways to use the questions for:
 - ISFs
 - Children
 - Families
 - Communities
 - Early childhood educators; and,
- Then making links between the similarities and differences of the worldviews, theories and philosophies that people draw upon to express their knowledges and experiences.

Possible ways forward

“How do we want this, and future generations, of children to remember us?”

Martin
2005, p. 39

When we ask the question ‘what do we want for children’ inclusion may well be a common response. When we consider the question above we begin to shift the focus back to ourselves situated in our contexts (place, people and things). By shifting the focus back on ourselves and our contexts, we can begin to engage with “the expectations and conditions, the roles, rites and responsibilities of relatedness” (Martin, 2005, p.28). In addition the expectations and conditions, the roles, rites and responsibilities of relatedness might become an underpinning for how new conversations could begin

between ISFs and with early childhood communities more broadly. As ISFs you are well positioned to be a ‘champion’ for the EYLF and what the concepts, principles and practices might enable. Being critical, learning **with** children, families and early childhood educators and how they think about and experience the framework. Receiving someone else’s worldview is as much a part of inclusion as giving another worldview. *Receiving* diverse worldviews may well be the legacy by which we want children to remember us by, because we can ‘become another’ as we ‘learn with’...

Useful reading and resources

These articles are 'accessible' to a wide range of readers and may be useful as a starting point for conversations. They will require purchase and/or membership.

- *Being white: What does it mean, and what has it got to do with working with young children?* – by Sue Grieshaber and Melinda Miller in *Every Child* v14 n1 2008
- *Other languages: A postcolonial view* – by Prasanna Srinivasan (2008)
<http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/resources/issuepapers.html>
- *Rethinking 'observation' in early childhood education* – by Kylie Smith (2003)
<http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/resources/issuepapers.html>
- *What do gay and lesbian issues have to do with early childhood?* – by Megan Miller (2003)
<http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/resources/issuepapers.html>
- *Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention: Australian perspectives* – by Sue Atkinson & Karina Davis (2009) <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/resources/issuepapers.html>

Free on-line resources

- *Early Childhood Australia*
http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/resource_themes/eylf_early_years_learning_framework.html
- *Wendy Lawson* – <http://www.mugsy.org/wendy/>
- *Child Care Staff: Learning and Growing Through Professional Development*
<http://actpsc.com.au/resources/publications/>
- *Hearing Children's Voices*
<http://www.children.act.gov.au/documents/PDF/under5report.pdf>

References

- Commonwealth of Australia. (2009). *Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*. Retrieved from http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Languages of evaluation* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Davis, K. (2004). *White early childhood educators - refocusing reflection*, Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (Issues Paper) 1-2.
- Giugni, M. (2010). *Pathways of possibility to engaging with the EYLF*: <http://www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/Publications/pathways-of-possibilities.pdf>.
- Hughes, P., & MacNaughton, G. (1999). Who's the expert: Reconceptualising parent-staff relations in early education. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 24(4), 27-32.
- Lawson, W. (2001). *Understanding and working with the spectrum of autism: An insider's view*. London: Jessica Kingsley publishers.
- Levinas, E. (1993). Time and the other. In S. Hand (Ed.), *The Levinas reader*. Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing.
- MacNaughton, G., Smith, K., & Lawrence, H. (2004). *Hearing young children's voices*. ACT: ACT Government.
- Martin, K. (2005). Childhood, life and relatedness: Aboriginal ways of being, knowing and doing. In J. Phillips & J. Lampert (Eds.), *Introductory indigenous studies in education: The importance of knowing* (pp. 27-40). Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education.
- Martin, K. (2008). *Please knock before you enter: Aboriginal regulation of outsiders and the implications for researchers*. Teneriffe, Qld: Post Pressed.
- Martin, K. (2010). *The "glass slippers" the "glass ceilings" and the "glass walls" syndromes regarding the inclusion and exclusion of young Aboriginal children and their families in ECEC services*. Paper presented at the NSW PSC ISF State Wide Training Day.
- McLachlan, J. (in press). Letting the Other be the Other: Maybe we don't need to be the same. In M. Giugni & K. Mundine (Eds.), *Talkin' up and speakin' out: Aboriginal and multicultural voices in early childhood*. Castle Hill: Pademelon Press.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2002). *Talkin' up to the white woman: Aboriginal women and feminism*. St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press.
- Mundine, K. (in press). Flower girl. In M. Giugni & K. Mundine (Eds.), *Talkin' up and speakin' out: Aboriginal and multicultural voices in early childhood*. Castle Hill: Pademelon Press.
- Robinson, K. (2005). 'Queerying' gender: Heteronormativity in early childhood education. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 30(2), 19-28
- Robinson, K., & Jones Díaz, C. (2006). *Diversity and difference in early childhood education: Issues for theory and practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Srinivasan, P. (2008). Other languages: A postcolonial view. *CEIEC Members Briefing Paper*(7.4), 1-2.
- Taylor, A. (2010). *Rethinking belonging through place*. Paper presented at the SDN Children's Services Centre Directors Retreat 7th July.

Inclusion through relatedness: Learning 'with'

**Inclusion Support Facilitators encountering
the Early Years Learning Framework**
Dr. Miriam Giugni



The ACT PSC is managed by Communities@Work. The Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, funds the Professional Support Coordinator initiative as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.