

Rudolf Steiner University College

Master Programme in Waldorf Education

Master Thesis

**Professional Care in
Waldorf Nurseries**

By Nicole Schreyeck

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We survive by being able to learn
how to behave in almost any ecological niche,
and by being able to construct our own niches ...
If this is our evolutionary strategy,
it makes sense to have babies
who are brilliantly intelligent learners
and grownups who are devoted to helping them learn.

Allison Gopnik, Andrew Meltzoff & Patricia Kuhl, 2001, p.9

... Children. The belief, love, and hope
of all human beings connect themselves
to them, wherever they appear.

Helmut von Kügelgen, 1979, p.361

Abstract

Nursery care or education is a new and under-researched academic field in Germany and more so in the Waldorf movement. This study examines Waldorf nursery practices and the conceptualisations nursery caregivers hold of professional care and professional attachment. The literature review investigates the conceptual background of the study as found in various academic fields, portraying images of the child under three, the caregiver, and professional care in anthroposophy, philosophy, developmental psychology and current educational research. The research design incorporates stimulated recall methods using gestures as a methodological tool towards ethical knowledge generation in this sensitive research field. Findings are presented and discussed in light to the concepts of attachment security, education for freedom and education as self-education. These three concepts serve as a conceptual framework and guide the research focus. Contributions are made from the Waldorf educational niche to current educational discourses of attachment security in nurseries and the discourse on professionalism. A contribution to the current educational discourse of care versus education is made in seeing care *as* education.

Key words: attachment security, education for freedom, education is self-education, gestures, professional care, professional attachment, individualisation, socialisation of trust and care, stimulated recall methods, Waldorf nursery care or education

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose of the thesis

Professional care for children under three has been a ‘hot’ and controversial topic in Germany and even more so in the Waldorf educational context, following a federal policy decision to triple nursery capacity from 2007 to 2013 (FAZ, 2007). This rapid growth came with the urgent need for new conceptualisations and methodical/didactical know-how, since such care was an under-represented field in the academic community (Gutknecht, 2010).

Waldorf kindergarten teachers were faced with the challenge of assuming responsibility for babies, infants and toddlers, not without some deeply felt reservations. The image of infant care in the nuclear family was part of the traditional Waldorf educational philosophy, following the belief that mothers are the ideal and best carers for a vulnerable infant. These beliefs and images induced fear and hesitation within the Waldorf kindergarten community. Nevertheless the small child was taken in by caregivers possessing a wealth of conceptual background for kindergarten children, but little professional background for children under three and no methodical/didactical experience. The first special training programmes for Waldorf nursery caregivers started in around 2006, some of them filling the methodical/didactical knowledge gap and incorporating impulses from Emmi Pikler, a Hungarian paediatrician, who conceptualised professional care in an orphanage under different conditions. Lack of ‘common ground’ and the differing amount of incorporation of methods from other sources, such as personal experiences of maternal care or kindergarten education caused debate. This led to conflict-laden and problematic situations in and among the Waldorf training centres, as well as in the nurseries. The debates were often informed by images of the child, the caregiver and professional care deriving from personal and sociocultural beliefs, as typical for discourses in the nursery movement (Degotardi & Pearson, 2014; Elfer, 2007). These debates are still ongoing.

This is a situation I have experienced first-hand from many angles, in my role as a Waldorf nursery caregiver, having been a member of one of the first training programmes and in charge of opening a nursery in my area. As a nursery caregiver trainer, I conducted training courses in one of the 11 German Waldorf educative seminars from 2011 and have been a

member of the AKK (Arbeitskreis Kleines Kind), the association concerned with the child under three in the German association of Waldorf kindergartens, since 2012.

The debates are driven as well by fears about how professional care can take on the challenge of creating habitats for small children in educational institutions. It is the challenge of understanding the particular needs of infants and toddlers, understanding the phenomenon of attachment, and welcoming into the kindergartens new parents leaving us their beloved small ones with trust and hope, that we “do the best we can” to care for them. It is to take on the responsibility of providing a quality of care that is worthy of raising the next generation. To embrace professional care as a cultural task and responsibility, connected to the sociocultural aspect of education, to educate, nurture and care with the awareness to build future generations (Ensign, 1996).

My empirical research led me into two German nurseries where the caregivers appeared to have taken on this responsibility of creating welcoming habitats for children as a shared responsibility. Waldorf nursery education has developed and I hope to document part of this process. A further purpose of this study is to investigate into the conceptual background of Waldorf nursery care and challenge some of the existing beliefs, by shedding a light on current theorisation, as well as on the actual practices, in order to contribute evidence-based new knowledge to the ongoing debates. Waldorf nursery conceptualisations and practices are not heard of in the academic world and are only perceivable to ‘insiders’. To investigate into this ‘hidden knowledge’ can make Waldorf education more visible and provide a valuable and interesting contribution to current educational discourses and academic research, addressing the challenges of professional nursery care. Conversely, Waldorf nursery caregivers can be empowered to find a voice, take a stand and be part of the ongoing nursery movement discourse.

1.2 Research design and research question

To examine the care provided by caregivers in Waldorf nurseries, I take as a point of departure the notion of ‘*professional care*’. I regard professional care for children under three as a distinct area of education in professional settings such as nurseries. This analytical focal point inquires into nursery care with the particularity that nursery education is configurational for all further learning. A central aspect of professional care is reflected in the concept of

professional attachment, in contrast to the attachment that children experience in their families. To expand on the notion of professional care, I use three main concepts to elaborate and specify its meaning, serving as a conceptual framework to guide the research focus. The concepts were constructed based on a literature review that included Waldorf educational conceptualisations and developmental psychology.

The first concept is the Waldorf educational notion of an 'education for freedom'. This notion is central to Waldorf education. It refers to the caregiver's aim to educate in order to respect the child's individuality and to nurture future autonomy and freedom of personality. In regard to the child under three, this notion is connected to the inhabitation process, as understood in the Waldorf educational concept of reincarnation and the assumption that the first three years is a transition period, carried out in three steps: learning to walk, to talk and to think (Steiner, 1983, 1987a, 1989b). The notion of an 'education for freedom' refers to **individualisation** processes, closely linked to socialisation or enculturation processes, seen as configurational for all later development.

The concept of 'attachment security' is gained from attachment theories and research deriving from developmental psychology, and it highlights the evolutionary need of babies, infants, and toddlers to be securely attached, cared for and protected. Attachment security is seen as a basic need and a vital developmental ingredient of care and education. Seen as a basis for lifelong learning, the first attachment experiences are estimated to influence and give distinction to all future attachments and have configurational consequences for physical, emotional and cognitive development. I will relate this concept to ethical considerations of **a socialisation of trust and care**, processes to enculture the child into the community.

The final concept is the Waldorf educational notion that 'education is self-education'. Looking at the perspective of an education for freedom in a broader sense, it underlies the Waldorf nursery caregiver's concept of professional development as well. Steiner's view on caregivers in the first three years is the self-educating and developing role model, based on the basic educational principle of 'imitation and role model' in the first seven years. I will relate this concept to ethical considerations such as self-development through the encounter with the child and to the concept of **professionalism**.

Based on this conceptual framework, my research has been designed to address the following research questions:

Research question

- *What are Waldorf nursery caregivers' conceptualisations and practices of professional care for children under three?*

Sub-questions

- *What are their conceptualisations and practices to provide attachment security?*
- *What are their conceptualisations and practices in regard to the Waldorf educational notion of an "education for freedom"?*
- *What are their conceptualisations and practices in regard to the Waldorf educational notion of "education is self-education"?*
- *How can this knowledge contribute to current educational discourses on nursery care?*

To pursue these questions, I have adopted a qualitative research design in which observations and semi structured interviews were used to collect data. In the empirical analysis, I have used a focus on gestures, and their relations to different images of the child and the caregiver, as an analytical tool to explore notions of professional care.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Literature review

The literature review covers three core areas, in order to identify theoretical perspectives and concepts that helped to situate my thesis within existing literature and contribute to my empirical analysis. This involved to highlight the conceptual background of Waldorf nursery care and to identify key issues, discussed in academic research related to professional care. As outlined in my introduction, I want to challenge existing images and beliefs; therefore I will analyse images of the child, the caregiver, and professional care. In the first core area, I review images of babies, infants, and toddlers as presented from various academic fields including Waldorf education. A second core area consists of relational aspects like attachment theories and conceptualisations of care, and images of the caregiver are constructed from attachment research, anthroposophy, caring theories, and further philosophical assumptions. In the third core area, professional images of the caregiver are analysed in educational discourses. Basic research into nursery care and current research and theorisation of professional attachment provide a background to my empirical research focus on professional care.

Methodology

The methodology chapter outlines my research design and the operationalisation of using gestures as an analytical tool. It also provides a transparent account of the research process, including data generation and data analysis. An insight into the research field of nursery education raises ethical questions and this will be discussed, as well as issues of reflexivity, validity, transferability and my personal position as a researcher. A brief introduction of the identified gestures is provided, which are further elaborated in the findings chapter.

Findings

The findings chapter examines the conceptualisations and practices of Waldorf nursery care using the main identified gestures of welcoming, caring, affirmative, delimiting, preceding and pondering gestures. A description and analysis of the gestures in light of their functions, roles, and underlying objectives is carried out. Finally the gestures are further analysed in light of the key concepts of an education for freedom, attachment security and education as self-education.

Discussion

In the discussion, the findings generated in the empirical research will be related to the key concepts and the theoretical perspectives outlined in the literature review and the research questions will be addressed. First I will discuss the caregivers' practices and conceptualisations to the concept of attachment security with regard to socialisation processes of trust and care and to the Waldorf educational notion of an education of freedom. Next, I discuss the findings to the notion of education as self-education with regard to self-development and professionalism. Finally, I will use the findings and the generated new knowledge to contribute to current educational discourses, such as the discourse on education versus care, the discourse on attachment theory in nurseries, and the discourse on professionalism.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, I will offer three study outcomes and resulting conclusions concerning the development in Waldorf nurseries. I give an account of the relevance and limitations of the study and recommend three areas of future research. A personal reflection will end the thesis.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

My literature review includes three parts. As laid out in the introduction, infancy is a new domain in the educational realm, especially in Waldorf education and is not yet at home in any one academic discipline, and neither is the professional Waldorf nursery caregiver. To investigate into a theoretical background to the study means drawing from various academic areas.

In the first part of my literature review, I examine different images of the child, with analytical focus on their developmental and learning abilities. These images derive from various academic fields and will be analysed with regard to the educational dualism of individualisation and socialisation, as referred to in the concept of education for freedom. The Waldorf educational image of the child is analysed with regard to lifelong learning, as well as a foundation for future development. This will provide a knowledge base for the developmental phase from birth to three and the corresponding educational needs, which in turn influence conceptualisations of the caregivers and their practices.

In the second part of my literature review I will outline different conceptualisations of the child-caregiver relations, exploring perspectives of socialisation processes of trust and care. In line with the analytical focus of attachment security, I review the development of attachment theory from the dyadic view to network approaches and to new research designs into a socialisation of trust. This paradigm shift is used to discuss educational nursery discourses concerning attachment security. I will analyse the Waldorf educational image of the caregiver and relate it to conceptualisations of care and further philosophical assumptions. This part will provide a theoretical background to the key concepts of attachment security and education is self-education and offer a theoretical justification to use gestures as a methodological tool.

In the third part of my literature review I will analyse professional images of the caregivers and discuss them in regard to the concept of professionalism. Basic research into nursery care is provided and a short glimpse into the rare existing research and theorisation of professional attachment. This analysis will provide an insight into professional aspects of nursery education, relevant to the empirical focal point of professional care.

2.2 The golden years: images of the child

Educational and caring theories and practices are influenced by and build on images and conceptualisation of children and childhood (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Lally, 2006; Smeyers & Wringe, 2003). These conceptualisations are seen as adult-constructed and influenced by various factors such as historical time, geographical place or more specifically by class, gender, and ethnicity (Gittins, 2003), as well as the beliefs and practices of the community members involved (Degotardi & Pearson, 2014). With regard to babies, infants and toddlers, childrearing practices have been influenced by the intimate personal and cultural belief and value systems of the individual families as well, providing the context for communication and formation of relationships (Raikes & Pope Edwards, 2009). Anthropological and ethnological research has contributed widely to this debate and widened our western understanding of the wealth of childrearing conceptualisations. Research has been done on the small child within other academic fields, predominantly developmental psychology, established during the early twentieth century (Woodhead, 2009). In western educational theories, the professional work with the small child has, according to Gutknecht, entered the stage quite late, namely in North America and North Europe around three decades ago, while in Germany the pedagogy for the child under three is an even younger discipline and not yet an established field of research (Gutknecht, 2010).

In the following chapters I want to portray a selection taken from the wealth of images of children under three and their caregivers, regardless of the scientific or academic origin and add Steiner's view, since this view is essential in my research. Then I will analyse these images with regard to individualisation and socialisation processes to provide a theoretical background to the concept of an education for freedom.

2.2.1 Traditional images

The traditional image

Smeyers and Wringe (2003) identify the enlightenment tradition as the birth of the traditional image, portraying the child as an “adult to be”, not yet rational, helpless in a moral sense and in need of moral guidance. Lally (2006), focussing on the child under three, paints traditional images of the “unsocialised savage” and the “tempted”, highlighting the caregiver's responsibility for a moral upbringing, protecting the child in his struggle between good and evil, whereby impulses need to be controlled and inhibited. Children should not be spoiled,

and childrearing is seen as a struggle for power between child and adult. Lally's images of the child as a "blank slate", "empty vessel" or "tabula rasa", having come into the world without any "predisposed inclinations" (p. 6) can be seen as a subcategory of the traditional picture. He classifies these images, starting from Aristotle, via John Locke to Skinner and the behaviourist school of the 1960s, in saying that "Many people look at infants and do not see anything but an eating, sleeping, and defecating activity" (p. 11). This image implies that the motivation to learn must lie with the adult and it is their role to "write" on the "blank slate" or "fill" the "empty" child as early as possible and with the right content. Both image clusters portray the child as a product of socialisation, of the environment. Degotardi and Pearson (2014) combine these into an image of the "incapable child", in need of nurture and guidance to live and grow. Gopnik (2009) speaks of the myth of the brain-deficient baby, far from the characteristics of reason, science and civilisation.

The progressive image

The progressive picture, closely connected to Rousseau's (1712 - 1778) image of the child, portrays the child as a product of nature, as "essentially good" and able to learn everything necessary by experience, in line with the empiricist theory of knowledge dominant at that time (Smeyers & Winge, 2003). Lally (2006) describes this image as the "noble savage" and the "natural unfolding", as well as the "innocent". Going back to Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Dewey and Neil, these images portray children as good souls, in need of protection from damaging impulses from society. Taylor (2013) sees the special connection between childhood and nature as "the essential and original raw material of life itself" (p. xiii). She cites Rousseau in arguing that, since man "has been ruined by corrupt society, he must be returned to the state of nature" (p. 7), and concludes that Rousseau produced a binary logic of good nature versus evil culture. She postulates a "nature child" representation, closely connected to nostalgic images of some kind of golden age, an idealised image of childhood, portraying children with plants and animals in natural surroundings. Development happens out of nature and only needs a protective shield from caregivers or educators.

2.2.2 Modern images

The competent / vulnerable child

Emmi Pikler (1902 to 1984), a Hungarian paediatrician, is known worldwide through her ground breaking work and research in an orphanage, called "Loczy" in Budapest from 1946 to 1978. She stands for a paradigm shift in professional care for babies, infants, and toddlers.

On the basis of her research, she argued for an image of a competent child and developed methods to nurture the child's competencies with a great respect for children's ability to learn to walk and to play by themselves. The Pikler impulse stands for a conceptualisation of professional care in allowing a free development of movement and play while providing one-to-one, respectful, attentive and secure care such as feeding or nappy changing (Pikler, 2001). Lally (2006) portrays this recent image of the competent/vulnerable child "simultaneously wearing two hats, one that displays the child's vulnerability and one that shows the child's competency" (p. 12). The child comes into the world with an in-built ability to learn and a personal learning agenda, eager to socialise and motivated to understand the world. "While the child has skills, motivation, and curiosity genetically built in, at the same time the child is desperately dependent upon adults for nurturance, support, and security" (p. 12). In this view the caregiver has to provide care and respect the competencies of the child.

Baby 0.0 or the computational baby and the social investment

In recent neurobiological research, Eliot (2010) states, that the infants brain, as the major organ for learning, actually triples in size and matures during the first three years. She compares the infant's brain to a "learning machine", like a computer that builds itself up with no obvious software, but an incredible ability to adapt to its surroundings. It programs itself, for example, with just the right language. Genes seem to lead the sequencing, but the quality of the programming is determined also by environmental factors, described by neuro-scientists as a combination of developing and "pruning" of brain neurons. Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl (2001) state that children have "powerful learning mechanisms that allow them to spontaneously revise, reshape, and restructure their knowledge" (p. 7). In other words, the brain learns and it reprograms itself, displaying an image of the little child called Baby 0.0 or the computational child. The caregiver's task is to offer input and stimulation to enhance learning processes.

Dahlberg and Moss (2014) talk of an image of the human being as a "homo economicus" who lives in a world of competition and calculation, trying to rear children that are able to contribute to a market economy. In this image the child is seen as a "highly profitable social investment, contributing to the exploitation of "human capital" and the creation of the flexible and compliant workforce required by globalized capital" (p. 0). Moss (2006) sees this image as an answer to the newly acquired awareness of the growing educational and social responsibilities of the early childhood workforce. He states:

Since the latter part of the previous century, early childhood has come to occupy an increasingly high profile on the policy agenda of both nation states and international organisations. One reason is that early childhood services are seen as necessary conditions both for competing economically, in an increasingly globalised and marketed capitalism and for ameliorating its associated social disorders. (p. 30)

According to this image, the caregiver's task is similar to the image of the baby 0.0, in investing in the children and stimulating them with early learning programs.

The scientific child and the philosophical baby

Gopnik (2009) writes of a revolution in the scientific understanding of babies and young children in the last thirty years in developmental psychology, claiming, "In some ways, young children are actually smarter, more imaginative, more caring, and even more conscious than adults are. This scientific revolution has led philosophers to take babies seriously for the first time" (p. 5). The first three years are seen as essential in our life-time development and come with immense inborn learning capacities such as curiosity, drive and perseverance to explore and to understand (Gopnik et al. 2001).

Science isn't just the specialized province of a chilly elite; instead, it's continuous with the kind of learning every one of us does when we're very small. Trying to understand human nature is part of human nature. (...) The scientist peering into the crib, looking for answers to some of the deepest questions about how minds and the worlds and language work, sees the scientist peering out of the crib, who, it turns out, is doing much the same thing. No wonder they both smile. (p. 3)

This image implies that the caregiver should do research into the amazing scientific learning abilities of children to gain new knowledge as one way to solve "the ancient philosophical problems of knowledge in a scientific way" (p.6), in the hope that "thinking about babies and young children help answer fundamental questions about imagination, truth, consciousness, identity, love and morality in a new way" (p. 6).

Postmodern "images"

Many postmodern philosophers followed this thinking about children and deconstructed existing images of childhood to create postmodern images trying to solve philosophical problems. For example, Smeyers and Wringe (2003), borrowing from Lyotard and Wittgenstein, portray childhood not as a particular age or a stage of development, but "rather it points to a never-ending indeterminacy, unmanageability, or wildness, a trans-conceptual silence." We adults are incapable of "grasping" infants, and we should not study them, but

enjoy them, since “childhood or infantia (literally, being incapable of speech) is the generic term for all that does not let itself be incorporated or regulated” (p. 324). Post-modern images of the child can assist caregivers to see children anew and inspire educational discourse and research.

2.2.3 The Waldorfeducational image of the awakening child

Anthroposophy, a philosophy developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), forms the basis for Waldorf education, incorporating theosophical thinking such as the concept of reincarnation. Steiner grounds his educational theories on an image of the child as an earthly and spiritual being. He sees the human being as living a twofold life, one between birth and death, during which the human being is connected to the earth, and one between death and a new birth, during which it is connected to the spiritual realm (Steiner, 1987a). He portrays the developmental goal throughout these incarnations as a development for freedom (Steiner, 1987b), whereby freedom can only be attained during physical incarnations. This concept is connected to the concept of karma or destiny, seeing the child as an incarnating individuality, and is essential to understanding the main inner gesture of a Waldorf caregiver, which can be simplified to the overall attitude and gesture of asking: Who are you, who do you want to become, and what do you need from me?

The first three years are seen as a transition period for shifting from the spiritual to the earthly realm, whereby all developmental steps are still supported by the spiritual world. The fact that we cannot remember anything before around three years old and are not able to say “I” to ourselves is seen as a sign that the child is still in another state of consciousness and only slowly incarnates into his body, his community, and the earthly human-kind. (Steiner, 1983, 1987a, 1989b). Steiner assumes, that from the moment the child can say “I” for himself, he has established a conscious, individual relationship, like an “I” concept, to himself and the outer world. Before that time the “I” still hovers around the child and penetrates in three steps into the inner being, and the child ‘awakens’ to himself and to the earthly world. The dream-like consciousness during this transition period is accompanied by a “telephone connection” to the spiritual forces and beings that guide these major developmental steps of walking, speaking, and thinking (Steiner, 1983, 1987a, 1994), and this is seen as the reason for the immense learning potential. This connection is cut when the “I” consciousness is established.

Learning to walk, to speak and to think

Steiner sees in the human process of *learning to walk upright in the child's first year* a difference to the animal world. The child inhabits his body, establishes his relationship to gravity, masters and experiences the principles of statics and dynamics, orients his body in space and finds equilibrium (Steiner, 1989b). It is his challenge to achieve uprightness and learn to walk on his own, but he needs an upright role model. The primary measure of destiny is visible in the process of learning to walk (Steiner 1983, 1989b). More broadly speaking, Steiner assumes that under spiritual guidance we learn to find our way in earthly life, as an inner adjustment or orientation to all the possibilities for movement with the own rhythm and beat. At the same time, the child takes in the spirit of the environment: "in learning to walk, we take hold of the soul element of our milieu" (Steiner, 1989b, p. 34). Therefore "together with the spiritual element that the child absorbs while learning to walk, there also flows into it a moral element emanating from the environment" (Steiner, 1989b, p. 48). The child not only needs an outward upright role model, but an inner uprightness or truthfulness as well.

Learning to walk and to balance forms the basis for human speech. Therefore language is the transposition of movement and balance, since "speech has to be developed on the basis of the right kind of walking and of the freedom of the arms" (Steiner, 1883, p. 115).

To *learn to speak in the second year* is the attempt to relate to fellow human beings.

Language coming from the child's environment works upon the child's soul and integrates the child into a community (Steiner, 1983), into a "certain body of people". Steiner speaks of the human being as an imprint of language and goes so far as to state that this shapes thinking processes: "So we see how during childhood the human being is inwardly predisposed, right down to the blood circulation, by what comes from the environment. These influences become instrumental for the orientation of a person's thought life" (Steiner, 1989b, p.39). In a wider sense, Steiner speaks not only of learning to speak, but of formulating the truth, out of the spirit. Adults around the child should use language as truthfully as possible, being authentic by saying what they really mean.

In *learning to think in the third year* the child learns to live within the world of thoughts and ideas, through individualisation of the brain. It finds its home in the wider society of mankind. "Thinking is really something belonging in common to the whole of humanity. For this reason logic is over the whole earth" (Steiner 1983, p. 125). Thinking should develop last. The child learns to think through language, out of the imitation of the sounds. First thinking develops with a quality of mirroring, or reflecting outer nature and its processes (Steiner, 1989b) and is

closely related to the development of play. In line with the image of the scientific and the philosophical child, he sees this first thinking as special: “it is so beautiful when the child has learned to think so directly, in a manner of which human beings no longer form any conception!” or “we learned thinking from the angels” (Steiner, 1983, p. 16).

In these fundamental developmental steps, the child expands its life circle, it incarnates into its body, becomes part of the surrounding and the human community. Walking is closely connected to the development of the will, and speaking to the emotional feeling realm. This threefold-ness of willing, feeling, and thinking can be seen as an anthroposophical basic concept of development throughout life and it underlies Waldorf educational concepts, e.g. teaching the hands (willing), the heart (feeling), and the head (thinking) in Waldorf schools. How this process is shaped in the first three years has lifelong configurational consequences for the child (Steiner, 1989a), forming the foundation for the child’s future development (Steiner, 1987b). So through walking, speaking, and thinking, the child learns three major capacities “to live a life towards freedom”, at the same time environmental influences are imprinted in the body and particularly so in the brain and the nervous system (Steiner, 1989b). Steiner speaks of the self-expression of the child doing things by himself, where we as educators should not interfere, and of the impressionability of the child, whereby the child is imprinted by everything around him.

When children are fully engaged in building up the physical organs in this way, they must be left free to do so, and consequently the doors leading to the outer world remain closed. It is essential that we refrain from interfering in our clumsy ways with these inner activities in children, because they are doing what they have to do and are thus inaccessible to outer will forces. We must also realize, however, that despite the preoccupation of children with their processes of growth, everything we do around them nevertheless makes deep and distinct impressions on them. (Steiner, 1987b, p. 127)

2.2.4 Images of the child in regard to individualisation and socialisation

In the previous section, I have described different images of the child. The images show a contradiction in the question of how development processes are initiated and portray possible perspectives for understanding learning in the first three years of a child’s life with different consequences for the caregiver. This contradiction has been theorised in various ways, for example as a dualism of nature and culture, or growth from the inside and educational needs from the outside. This dualism is related to individualisation and socialisation processes and will be explored further in order to understand the concept of an education for freedom.

Concepts of individualisation and socialisation processes (enculturalisation)

One perspective, originating from the traditional and the progressive image and manifested in the tension between academic fields such as “nature realism” as in developmental psychology versus social constructivism, leads to the dualism of biology as nature and socialisation as nurture or culture (Taylor, 2013). Taylor sees an “epistemological schism” in the “radical polarisation of nature and culture, a foundational enlightenment dualism that underpins so much categorical western thinking, including thinking about childhood” (p. xvii).

Looking at the etymological base of the Latin origin of the word ‘education’, Bass and Good (2004) see a dualism in the two concepts behind the word. One concept is represented in the word: ‘educare’, meaning ‘to train or to mold’, whereby it refers to the “preservation and passing down of knowledge and the shaping of youth in the image of their parents”. The second concept is found in the term ‘educere’ meaning ‘to draw out’, whereby education is seen as “preparing a new generation for the changes that are to come – readying them to create solutions to problems yet unknown” (p. 162). Buber, who saw two instincts within a child, namely the instinct for origination, in learning to say ‘I’, and the instinct for communication, in learning to say ‘you’ paints two images of the caregiver accordingly: the gardener and the sculptor, vibrant images that feature the dualism (Bartholo, 2010).

The consequences of this dualism for future development and self-understanding as human beings can be seen in concepts of being (developing ourselves) and belonging (feeling connected) (Degotardi & Pearson, 2014). As Noddings says: “We feel that we are, on the one hand, free to decide; we know, on the other hand, that we are irrevocably linked to intimate others. This linkage, this fundamental relatedness, is at the very heart of our being” (Noddings, 1986, p. 51). Vandenberg (1999) states: “We are not independent, autonomous, isolated egos, nor are we simply the socialised mirror of interpersonal expectations. We are both: singular, unique beings who also are in a relationship with others” (p. 37).

Bridging the gap

The traditional and the progressive image of the child display the dualism of nature and culture. In modern images both poles are present, usually with a tendency to one side. In the competent/vulnerable image of the child a zig zagging between the poles is seen. Aims to overcome the dualism seem to inspire academic thinking. Following the image of the philosophical and scientific baby, developmental psychology offers a perspective in saying that nurture is our nature with the capacity for culture as “part of our biology, and the drive to

learn” as “our most important and central instinct” (Gopnik et al., 2001, p. 8). The prolonged period of care (the vulnerability) allows children to adapt to the environment, enabling us to “survive by being able to learn how to behave in almost any ecological niche, and by being able to construct our own niches” (p. 9). Leaning on this evolutionary need, it is vital to “have babies who are brilliantly intelligent learners and grownups who are devoted to helping them learn. That may be why we also have babies who are utterly helpless and grownups who are devoted to keep them alive” (p. 9). Bridging the gap, children learn neither following the traditional nor the progressive image: “children are not blank tablets or unbridled appetites or even intuitive seers. Babies and young children think, observe, and reason. They consider evidence, draw conclusions, do experiments, solve problems and search for the truth” (p. 13). Steiner’s image of the child portrays the dualism as built into our developmental processes as well. He portrays the contradiction as something necessary for human inhabitation of the earthly world as a destiny-driven journey to achieve personal freedom and at the same time be part of a journey to community-building and working on human freedom as a species.

Summary

Depending on the image constructed of the small child and its learning abilities, this review has illustrated how one could look at the first three years as a basis for lifelong personal and individual development as well as a tool for enculturing small children and assisting them to adapt to the community. The consequences of this tension can be seen as having configurational consequences. In the first three years, the child is a prodigious learner and able to understand itself, the community, and the world. This process seems to lay the basis for a capacity, vital in life, to be autonomous and social. In regard to the concept of an education for freedom in professional care, one can say that images of the child influence caregiving and educational conceptualisations and how individualisation and socialisation processes are practised. In my empirical part, I will therefore explore the caregivers’ images of the child and how they practise individualisation and socialisation processes, as a tool to understand their conceptualisations of an education for freedom.

In the next chapter, we will move into relational aspects between the child and the caregiver with a focus on socialisation processes of trust and care, crucial for understanding the concepts of an education for freedom and attachment security. The term ‘socialisation of trust and care’ is used in this study in a way that is closely connected to the concept of attachment security, and a justification for this choice is given in the next chapter.

2.3 Relational aspects, the socialisation of trust and care

In the second part of my literature review I will analyse aspects of the child-caregiver relationship and analyse socialisation processes of trust and care as conceptualised in developmental psychology, education, and philosophy. Following the analytical focus of attachment security, I will portray traditional and new attachment research, offer an insight into the paradigm shift from the dyadic to the network approach, and introduce the new research area of a socialisation of trust. I will go further into relational aspects of a socialisation of care and explore images of the caregiver in regard to Waldorf education, caring theories and related philosophical assumptions, vital for understanding Waldorf educational conceptualisations and practices.

2.3.1 Conceptualisations of attachment

Athenian: Well, but if during these three years every possible care were taken that our nursling should have as little of sorrow and fear, and in general of pain as was possible, might we not expect in early childhood to make his soul more gentle and cheerful? (Plato, cited in Grossmann & Grossmann, 2009, p. 354)

Traditional attachment theory, the dyadic view

The socialisation of trust and care can be seen as old knowledge, inherent in humanity. A first academic conceptualising of the special bond to the “nursling” was done after World War II by John Bowlby (1907-1990), the founder of attachment theory. As a psychoanalyst, he researched the link between major disruptions in the mother-child relationship in the first three years and later psychopathology to support psychoanalytical theories. Bowlby observed that, when separated from the mother, children experienced great distress, even when taken care of by others (Bowlby, 1953). Pioneer attachment researchers such as Mary Ainsworth (1913-1999), developed the theory further and created a method, still used today, called “the strange situation”, to provide guidelines to research into the newly defined terms “secure” and “insecure” attachment (Cassidy, 2008; Weinfreid, Sroufe & Egeland, 2008). This new theory had consequences in various fields; e.g. it led to the ‘rooming in’ practice in hospitals to allow mothers to stay with their sick children in order to avoid separation.

Grossmann and Grossmann state four central findings of attachment theory. Attachment of a weak and inexperienced child to his primary caregiver, mostly the mother, is theorized as a biological necessity for survival. This behaviour system, to attach to a person that is stronger and wiser and able to grant security and maintenance, is equal to behavioural systems like

nutrition, aggression, or sexuality. A second central finding is that continuous and sensitive caregiving is essential for emotional and psychological health in the developing child. Attachment theory tried to explain how early attachment experiences are processed and how they become internal working models for the child using cognitive psychology. The quality of attachment can be measured by looking at the emotional security they provide. A third finding can be seen in the harmful impact on the well-being of the child through fear of separation or separation itself. Involuntary separation creates fear, anger, and aggression out of frustration, and efforts to sustain attachment. The grief of the child is not connected to his cognitive development, but lies in the nature of attachment. The grieving process has stages of protest, despair, and alienation. A fourth finding is that the attachment behaviour system is closely connected to the exploratory system. In case of a fearful situation, the child will stop his exploratory system and seek closeness to the attachment person. When secure again, the attachment behavior system stops and the exploratory system will be resumed. Therefore attachment security is seen as necessary for free exploration (Grossmann and Grossmann 2009, 2012). Later long-term studies have proved attachment security to be a major contributor to enhancing all learning processes, e.g. exploration skills, motivation and cognitive development, as well as verbal and social competence (Gutknecht, 2010).

Intercultural research, shifting the paradigm

The wide range of research carried out on the mother-child attachment raised critical questions towards professional care, whereby the view of separation from the mother as being harmful in general was regarded more and more to be fed by theories rather than scientific facts (Andersson, 2003). LeVine (2002), bolder in his criticism, states that Bowlby revised his concept of maternal deprivation later, but that this “thinking” still influences the image of attachment.

In my view, the basic differentiating concepts of attachment research (...) involve moral judgments, not medical ones, and are grounded in an Anglo-American cultural ideology of the 20th century, not in human biology. The Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment perspective has created categories of pathology or mental health risk out of normal individual differences in behaviour, and it perpetuates the blaming of mothers characteristic of mid-20th century pop psychology. (p. 1)

Weisner (2005) asked whether “the premature labeling one kind of dyadic attachment as “secure” is a judgement about culture’s ideal about mothers and their practices of parenting and family life” (p. 91). The growing criticism towards traditional attachment theories,

focusing on the mother-child dyad received great impetus from intercultural research (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi Schwartz, 2008). Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Myake, & Morelli (2000) conducted a study comparing American and Japanese attachment patterns and their results were ground-breaking. Their findings showed the cultural differences in looking at the term “secure” attachment infused with cultural assumptions, and the danger of misinterpretation of data with “unfortunate consequences for assessment, intervention and intercultural understanding” (p. 1101). They called for research “tied to the cultural context in which it is embedded”. Chao (2001) contributed a critical thought by asking future researcher to conceptualise the term culture more closely and define whether cultures should be seen as nations or as “attitudes, values, norms, and behaviours of many and various social groups, not mere countries with a tacit emphasis on their typical middle class population” (p. 823). She calls for a culture-sensitive theory of attachment, integrating universal and culture specific concepts and to incorporate cultural diversity into Western theories.

Keller (2014), one of the few German researchers who has conducted research internationally, conceptualises attachment as a “biologically based - but culturally shaped - construct. To understand the children’s development globally, we have to see that a majority of all children are born into multiple networks of caregiving, with a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of the children. The sense of security is given by the availability and reliability of the community, rather than by the individual attachment. Weisner (2005) points to many ways of promoting “different kinds of trust and emotional bonding” such as the Japanese concept of “symbiotic harmony”, or the German socialization concept of autonomy in comparison to a socially distributed caretaking with a concept of hierarchical relatedness in African nations. Intercultural attachment research has shown a diversity in offering attachment security, and in line with Gopnik’s image of the scientific and philosophical image, the child is portrayed as culturally competent, able to understand culture as part of our evolutionary set-up. Cultural competence is seen as rooted in the same biological foundations as the need for attachment, since the human being is and has always been a cultural being (Grossmann & Grossmann, 2012).

With regard to my concepts of an education for freedom and attachment security, the paradigm shift from a dyadic to a network approach raised questions about my empirical approach. How can attachment security be researched, apart from looking at the caregiver’s attachment to the child, with sensitivity to culture? In the following chapter I want to portray

a new attachment research area, helpful for my purpose in line with my choice to use gestures as an analytical tool.

2.3.2 Socialisation of trust

Weisner (2014) asks for a holistic understanding of trust and security as a “universal socialisation task for cultures” (p. 263) and to understand attachment security as having “socially distributed, polymatic, plural trusting relationships with a network of caregivers” as “a social sign of appropriate, developmentally optimal social-emotional attachment” (p. 265). Painting a picture of a choir, the question should be how the choir could be enhanced with

many different songs and lyrics in many different and wonderful idioms, all contributing to the goals and moral directions for life desired, with varying scripts for producing a secure and sufficiently trusting person? This surely is an understudied and undertheorized question in the field of attachment. (p. 267)

Following the question of how we can research into the mechanisms of producing a sense of relational trust and security in children worldwide, he calls for research into the diversity of socialisation and enculturation activities as “organized around multiple goals” (p. 267).

Weisner grounds our cultural competence in our immense capability to adapt to societal circumstances and our basic, fundamental “ability to grasp the fact that others’ minds and intentions are like our own” and our “intersubjective awareness of other minds and intentions, joint attention and engagement with others” (p. 74). Without these capabilities, socially mediated attachment, leading to a sense of social security and trust would not exist, and therefore “multiple attachments and shared caregiving evolved along with the capacity for intersubjective understanding and social awareness itself” (p. 276). He calls for a research that values diversity in conveying security, confidence and social trust worldwide, searching for new qualitative and quantitative research and new experimental and naturalistic research designs, in order to

improve our measures to provide biosocial, individual, and social-contextual measures, so that assessments of trust and security can better inform theory as well as policy and practice. As a result, our scientific understanding and holistic appreciation of what matters for trust and well-being will be richer and more inclusive. (p. 275)

Weisner inspired me to inquire into attachment security in Waldorf nurseries in incorporating a search for socialisation and enculturalisation activities and analyse them towards a socialisation of trust. A further empirical aid is offered by the consequences of the paradigm

shift from a dyadic perspective to a culture-sensitive network approach and the tool of key person systems as laid out in the next chapter.

Attachment Networks

Intercultural research inspired a new perspective to see attachment as a culturally transmitted construct with different possibilities to convey attachment security and enculture the children into the given context. It inspired educational discourses and research to widen the focus and understand the child in its environment, beyond the dyadic focus, since “young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and thus relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development” (Centre of the Developing Child, 2004, p. 1). In this new perspective, an emphasis is on the child’s attachment needs in a network of relationships with different qualities and levels of complexity (Degotardi & Pearson, 2009, 2014; Lamb, 2005). Attachment or relationship networks need to be explored in appreciation of their complex dynamic nature and significance, including the relationships between peers (Degotardi, Sweller & Pearson, 2013; Degotardi, 2015). Apart from this focus on the role of attachment networks, conceptualisations combining dyadic and network approaches are discussed widely. For example, by reflecting the strength and success of the dyadic view with recognition of the significance of other relationships and experiences (Lamb, 2005), or by discussing successful caretaking of the small child as depending on the social network behind the primary caregiver (Ahnert, 2011).

This discourse is mirrored in the variety of key person systems in nurseries. Most nurseries follow a key person concept to feed dyadic attachment needs of the children. The main tasks of a key person are having primary contact with the child, building a relationship with the child and the parent, acting as a point of contact, meeting the child’s individual needs (e.g. dressing, toilet training etc.), and responding sensitively to the child’s feelings, ideas and behaviour. According to the dyadic view, the danger in a group care approach without a key person system leads to “anxiety, aggression or withdrawn behaviour” (Grenier, Elfer, Manning Morton, Wilson & Deamley, n.d.). The key person system in nurseries is a vital source for understanding the attachment orientation of a nursery and will be part of my research. I will use the key person system as one methodological tool to understand the caregivers’ conceptualisations and practises for fostering attachment security.

Summary

In this chapter on conceptualisations of attachment, I described traditional attachment theories put forward by research pioneers, who sensitised those concerned to the need of the child for attachment, establishing attachment security as a fundamental human need and a basis for physical, emotional and psychological health, and intellectual development. The paradigm shift in attachment research, fuelled through the international context, broadened the view to a new conceptualisation of attachment security through networks and raised questions about seeing attachment security as socio-culturally constructed. A search for new perspectives can be seen in research into socialisation processes for trust in societies. The child's inhabitation processes were regarded from an attachment perspective, defining attachment security as a vital ingredient of a successful inhabitation. The deep impact of learned attachment patterns for future development was confirmed. In regard to the images of the child, the image of the vulnerable child, dominant in traditional theory, is enhanced through competent and scientific images, portraying the child as culturally competent.

Reviewing literature for this chapter assisted me in identifying ways of researching attachment security in my empirical work. To inquire about socialisation and enculturalisation activities in the nurseries and to inquire into the key person system might be useful tools to understand the caregivers' conceptualisations and practices for attachment security. In the next chapter I will explore relational aspects further and shift the perspective to the caregiver as an attachment figure, responsible for the "care" of the child.

2.3.3 Conceptualisations of care

An essential ingredient in forming attachment is caring for the needs of the small child. Though Steiner formulated no methodical/didactical support, he gives guidelines, for *how* the caregiver should care, essential for understanding the caregivers' conceptualisations and practices of care and of education as self-education. To enhance my underlying perspective and line of argumentation that caring for the small child has specific characteristics, I want to broaden the Waldorf educational background with further philosophical assumptions. I will look briefly into caring theories, helping to understand the caregiver's tasks and giving a background for my choice to use gestures as a methodological tool to research.

2.3.4 Steiners image of care and the caregiver

In Steiner's view, children under seven are not receptive to the adult's will; they only learn through imitation of caregivers as role models. What Weisner calls intersubjective understanding, is described by Steiner as children using their "fine, instinctive perception for everything going on around them, especially what is happening in people with whom they have established a certain rapport" (Steiner, 1987b, p. 108), whereby rapport could be understood as an expression for attachment. If attached, children become "perfect mimics and imitators" (p. 129). This educational principle of imitation and role modelling is the basis for seeing the main task of the caregiver to create an environment worthy of imitation, a "right" environment, just as the mother's womb created the environment before (Steiner, 2003). He speaks of the outer, as well as the inner environment created by the caregiver's attitudes, feelings and thoughts. "What really matters in education is the mood and souls attitude that teachers carry in their hearts toward the human being" (Steiner, 1987b, p. 125).

He highlights that this thought implies the moral duty for adults to be "worthy of imitation", since the child perceives and imitates not only the caregivers' actions and moves, but their feelings, thoughts and aims as well. He states as a consequence: "education during these first two and a half years should be confined to the self-education of the adults in charge, who should think, feel, and act in a way that, when perceived by children, will cause them no harm" (Steiner, 1987b, p. 130). Authenticity is essential, since children imitate who we are, not what we pretend to be. In combination with the developmental principle of walking, speaking, and thinking, he considers the gesture to be the basic element of education in the first years.

The principle of imitation comes to light in gesture, in movement. (...) So it is in the cultural development of humanity as a whole. (...) So it is with the child; (...) When little by little the child grows into the world during the first, second, third and fourth years of life, he does so through gesture; everything is dependent on gesture. (Steiner, 1989a, p. 40)

Steiner speaks of the inner connection of the child to the gestures of the environment, of absorbing outer and inner gestures; therefore self-education and a conscious use of gestures is essential (Steiner, 1989a).

All Education is Selfeducation

A further responsibility can be seen as associated with the concept of an education for freedom and the feeling of being "morally obligated to lay the best foundations for the child's

future development”. Caregivers “especially those who work in children’s homes”, must ask themselves:

Have I been specifically chosen for the important task of guiding and educating these children? (...) What must I do to eliminate as far as possible my personal self, so I can leave those in my care unburdened by my subjective nature? How do I act so I do not interfere with a child’s destiny? And, above all, how can I best educate a child toward human freedom? (Steiner, 1987b, p. 122)

To do this, the caregivers should develop a “living” (lebendige) comprehension of the child’s individuality, as well as a deepened knowledge of its developmental stage (Steiner, 1989b). Using precise and holistic observation methods, this perception, or as Steiner calls it “one’s knowledge of human nature” should transform into pedagogical instinct, so that in any given situation, the caregiver knows “instantly and exactly” what to do in response to the child’s expressions.

Selfdevelopment

Steiner goes one step further and sees being with the small child, since it is still connected to the spiritual forces, as a chance for us adults to reconnect to these forces, helping us “to achieve harmony with the part in us that is wiser than our conscious intelligence” (Steiner, 1987a, p. 21). He says we must be reminded “at least at the beginning of each new life – of the great truth of what we really are in our innermost essential being” (Steiner, 1987a, p. 27). His ideas about development lie in the imagination that “we transform ourselves in the course of our earthly life into the power at work in us in childhood” (Steiner, 1987a, p. 19). Steiner sees Waldorf education not as a system or a set of recipes to follow, but a very personal and individual developmental process guided by anthroposophical principles. His image of the human being as a twofold being implies the desire to reconnect to spiritual forces guiding the small child and nurturing the caregiver’s development as well. The educational goal implies the aim to work towards a deep understanding and love for human nature and the respect or “feeling” of human “dignity” in education.

2.3.5 Socialisation of care

In this section, I present theories of care and related philosophical assumptions to complement Steiner’s concept of care. Caring theories inspired me to look at a socialisation of care in addition to a socialisation of trust. These two perspectives are closely interrelated, and proved

to be a vital tool in my empirical research, with caring as a means of forming attachment and providing a tangible and concrete focus in line with Steiner's emphasis on gestures.

Noddings (1986) sees caring as a tool for self-education and self-development as well, and as such the primary aim of education in nurturing an ethical ideal of care. She holds a feminine or feminist view of ethics rooted in receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness, in contrast to the masculine view more concerned with morality and rules. This perspective takes the concept of 'relation' as ontologically basic, and claims human encounters and the need for affective response as inherently human. The joy of being related allows magical moments to happen in the world and should be celebrated, so caring can be a "sower of ethicality and joy", helping to build a more ethical society. Ethical care derives from natural care "out of love or natural inclination" (p. 5). This natural condition is seen as the drive or condition to be "good", providing a motivation to grow morally with the ideal to enhance ourselves and those we care for. For some caregivers, caring for the small child "lies at the very heart of what we assess as good", eliciting "the tenderest feelings in most of us" (p. 87). As the motor of natural caring is love – the motor of ethical caring is a vision of a best self for both involved, allowing the child "to explore his ethical self with wonder and appreciation" (p. 123).

The first care, we as infants receive is building up an attitude expressing our "earliest memories of being cared for and our growing store of memories of both caring and being cared for" (p. 5). In line with Gopnik et al.'s statement that nurture is our nature, Noddings claims that we care because we are humans, and that we could not survive without care. Caring implies offering disposability in generosity and empathy, whereby a receptive state is required with an appreciation of freedom, irrevocably linked to others. The one who is being cared for has the freedom to support the process by revealing his reaction as a major contribution. The caregiver, seen as a developing free human being, should not function, follow rules, or be a technician led by duty or accountability, but care authentically and with commitment. As the caregiver receives not only the response of the child, but the child himself, this allows renewed possibilities of taking pleasure in caring and in each other, as every human encounter is unique.

Further philosophical assumptions

Noddings relates her concept of "magical encounter's to Buber (1878-1965) and his famous quote "Man becomes an "I" through a "You" (Buber, 1970, p. 80), or speaking with Novalis

(1772-1801) that the child learns to be a human only through a human being (von Kügelgen, 1979). According to Steiner's concept of reconnections, every encounter between caregiver and child can be seen in this regard, as Buber formulates, as a "craving for the You" (p. 79) or with Levinas' (1909-1995) words providing "more than I contain" (Levinas, 1991, p. 51).

In every sphere, though everything that becomes present to us, we gaze towards the eternal you. In each we perceive a breath of it (Buber, 1970, p. 57). You does more, and more happens to it, than it knows. No deception reaches that far: here is the cradle of actual life. (p. 60)

Infants are born "response-able" (Garrison, 2011), open for communication and immediately "the ethical character of pre-linguistic exposure arises from the connection between the ability to respond and responsibility" (p. 275). Vandenberg (1999), in line with Noddings, uses Levinas' concept of the unique encounter as essential for ethicality, to search for our ethical responsibility in everyday simple gestures as "profound ethical acts of care for another".

Our face-to-face encounter with our children is asymmetrical, they are vulnerable to our response and their being depends on our care. They expose us to the mysteries of life and their vulnerability alerts us to the ever presence of harm, injury and death. Their life depends on our simple acts of feeding, giving and care to sustain them. We love our children, not for what they do, or can provide, but because of who they are, their irreducible uniqueness. They are not merely "others", but specific individuals who belong to us, who have a moral claim on our being. (p. 36)

As Buber says: "love is a responsibility of an I for a Thou" (p. 66), Vandenberg (1999) sees care as "an ethical commitment of love, expressed in concrete acts of giving and engagement. The children's survival, and that of the human race, depends upon love and responsibility of adults for their babies" (p. 41).

To welcome the children's uniqueness is conceptualised by Derrida (1930-2004), borrowing from Levinas. He speaks of hospitality as an unconditional gift, as a yes to the other with the need for a yes to oneself as a receiving condition (Derrida, 1999). Taking this thought further, Ruitenberg (2011) states that the "at home" of education is the caregiver and that an ethic of hospitality impels the host to examine her or his sense of being at home. The concept of hospitality, going beyond the concept of welcoming, involves an ethic of hospitality that "is all about the guest, about giving place to a guest", "a demand for openness to the arrival of something and someone we cannot foresee" (p. 33). I can relate these philosophical thoughts to the Waldorf educational image of the child as an incarnating individuality and the self-developmental challenges involved in receiving children.

In this chapter on a socialisation of care, I outlined anthroposophical and philosophical images of the caregiver with regard to caring for the small child and the nurturance of a socialisation of care. Steiner paints an image of the caregiver as a role model and of the child as a “perfect imitator” learning through imitation with a preference on gestures. Becoming a role model “worthy of imitation” is a self-developmental task, carried out in order to nurture an education for freedom for the child and the caregiver. In caring theories these ‘encounters’ between child and caregiver are portrayed as a developmental challenge, as well as fostering “a best vision of oneself” and exploring our “ethical self with wonder and appreciation”.

These caring encounters have ethical potential to nurture a socialisation of care in order to nourish a “more ethical” society. They have a potential to nurture a socialisation of trust as well, nourishing attachment security. As the motor of care is love, a carer should develop an ethical love based on our responsibility to care for the next generation with welcoming and hospitable gestures.

Summary

In the second part of my literature review I have widened the theoretical background to understand the caregiver’s task of creating individualisation and socialisation processes and outlined conceptualisations of attachment and care. Attachment research deepened the understanding of the child’s vulnerability and need for attachment security as configurational for later life, as well as his cultural competence to adapt to the attachment patterns conveyed. Conceptualisations of care have proved care as a vital tool for researching into these processes and supported my choice to use gestures as a methodological tool to inquire into professional care in order to answer my research questions. Self-developmental aspects of caring for small children were portrayed in anthroposophical and philosophical theorisations, providing a background to the key concept of ‘education is self-education’.

In the next part of my literature review, we will leave the general perspective on children and caregivers and move into the professional field. Professional care in nurseries is subject to various educational discourses and influenced by educational policies and framework conditions. Therefore the next chapter analyses nursery care through a professional lens.

2.4 Professionalism

In the discussion on the ethics of care, the relationship between the child and the caregiver was looked at in anthroposophical, ethical and philosophical terms as to how children should be welcomed and cared for. This deepened background will assist us to understand the caregiver's conceptualisations and practices of care. To explore professional care further, an exploration of the term with regard to the discourse on professionalism is needed as well as a brief exploration of related discourses, such as the discourse on care versus education.

Therefore, in the third part of my literature review, I will continue to deepen the caregiver's perspective and analyse images of the professional caregiver, embedded in the social and political realm and discuss them to the concept of professionalism. Then I will portray some basic research into nursery care and into the rare existing research and theorisation of professional attachment.

2.4.1 Professional images of the caregiver

To link professionalism to the previous chapter of care and trust, one way to define the term is provided by Feeney (2012). Her concept of professionalism, seen in a historical context, implies committing yourself fundamentally to working with moral and ethical consequences.

In the educational realm, images of professional caregivers are constructed, similar to images of children and childhood. Apart from personal values and images of the 'ideal caregiver' (Degotardi & Pearson, 2014), the debate about the role of nurseries and the image of the caregiver mirrors sociocultural priorities and concerns, influencing cultural imperatives and social policies (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Elfer, 2007), as well as organisation and composition, and quite essentially, also material conditions of nursery education (Moss, 2006). In looking at the images of the caregivers, a discourse on professionalism affecting early childhood policies is detectable. I want to portray three images identified by Moss and broadened by others, and relate them to concepts of professionalism.

The mother caregiver

This image of the caregiver as a mother substitute is closely related to the concept of 'care work' (Moss, 2006), related to images portrayed in my chapter on the conceptualisation of care and traditional attachment research. It portrays an ideal situation for the child to be with the mother and is seen as attachment-oriented, following the dyadic view. Degotardi and Pearson (2014) base the origin of this image on the ideological belief, that mothers are the

ideal and best carers, and if professional care is needed, which is seen as a 'necessary evil', a professional family care is preferred, as homelike and maternal as possible, with educators as mother substitutes, reflecting the qualities and attitudes of 'good mothers'. This natural, maternal attitude towards the children does not require a high educational standard.

The early childhood worker as a substitute mother produces an image that is both gendered and assumes that little or no education is necessary to undertake the work, which is understood as requiring qualities and competencies that are either innate to women (maternal instinct) or else are acquired through women's practise of domestic labour (housework skills). (Moss, 2006, p. 34)

In contrast to the nursery teacher, the 'baby-sitter' or 'childminder' is usually underpaid, has limited professional training, and earns little appreciation. Moss (2006) points out that in most wealthy countries, for example the 30 OECD member states, a split between "childcare" and "early childhood education" is seen, "which goes back to the origins of formal, centre-based early childhood services in the nineteenth century" (p. 31), with far-reaching structural consequences for the organisation and the image construction of the split workforce.

In regard to professionalism, Manning Morton (2006) bases the development of a professional identity of nursery caregivers on the historical context of dividing "care" and "education", based on the "Cartesian mind/body dualist philosophy that privileges the thinking mind, which offers freedom and control through rationality and knowledge, over the physical constraints of the body and the unpredictability of emotion" (p. 45). The dualism divides the rational public service, related to the fields of science and knowledge from the physical and emotional, essentially female-dominated private, domestic realm (Manning Morton, 2006). Opposed to Vandenberg's ethical call to see caring acts as inherently educative, this discourse creates a dichotomy between care and the gaining or transmission of knowledge. Elfer (2007) discusses new developments in nursery care to have either nurseries with self-concepts as a substitute home, with intimacy and voluntary family-like interactions or nurseries with self-concepts as a school, with a focus on professional, projected and designed interactions. He speaks of a schoolification of early childhood education, leading to a practice, whereby attachment to the children is restricted. He states that teachers develop psychological defences against the emotional demands of the job while focussing on learning. Dalli (2008) argues, similar to Noddings, that the image of the caregiver as a mother substitute disempowers nursery teachers from 'claiming professional status' and sees in a reconstruction a possibility to "re-vision notions of love and care so that they may be transformed into pedagogical and

political tools” that can support “a reconceptualised notion of professionalism that responds to the unique and evolving nature of quality early childhood practice” (p. 174). In her account of professionalism, Manning Morton sees physical care for the children as the foundation for a secure attachment. How the children are held and touched, how they are cared for plants the seed for attachment and later well-being. Children need loving attention and their somato-sensory systems develop through touch. She claims the way the children are touched to be a primary consideration for professionalism, seeing professionalism in a new dimension close to the ethical dimension of care.

The technician caregiver

Following the call for schoolification, Moss (2006) describes the image as a technician as being widespread in the English-speaking world, an image of a functioning early childhood care and education being driven by economic and social goals, connected to the image of the child as a ‘social investment’ or ‘the computational baby’. This image suggests a caregiver able to apply a “defined set of technologies through regulated processes”. Set curricula, programmes, and methods are applied and performance is assessed against developmental norms and standardised criteria. Values in this image contain a feeling of objectivity and a “belief in the possibility of applying processes in a detached and replicable way that excludes personal interpretations and feeling” (p. 35). Transmission of knowledge is valued, “both to the worker through acquisition of competencies and to the child, through following the prescriptions set out in curricula and attendant outcome criteria” (p. 35). An image of childcare is painted:

‘Childcare’ is viewed as an industry, whose employers (...) need to achieve industry-defined National Occupational Standards, which are statements of the skills, knowledge and understanding required in a particular industry and clearly define the criteria for assessing competent performance. (British “Qualification and Curriculum Authority” cited by Moss, 2006, p. 35)

In regard to professionalism and the expanding view of caregivers as technicians, Osgood (2006) tries to deconstruct the term professionalism, stating that professionalism is constructed as an apolitical and specialised expertise on a subject, but can be discussed as a “disempowering regulatory gaze in the name of higher standards” (p. 5). Following Foucault, she sees recent key policy documents in the UK, such as “every child matters” or “the ten years strategy” as normalising technologies reacting to a crisis in early childhood education:

The need to regulate and control stems from the discursive construct of a 'crisis in education'. Early childhood services are widely presented as failing to meet the needs of children and families and therefore the rationale for regulation is legitimated and a regulatory gaze deemed expedient and necessary. In this climate early years practitioners increasingly have to wrestle with demands for accountability, performativity and standardised approaches to their practice, all of which mark a pronounced movement towards centralised control and prescription, which poses a potential threat to professional autonomy and morale. (p. 6)

As a result the practitioners have their autonomy reduced and feelings of powerlessness and fatalistic resignation arise. Similar to Manning Morton, Osgood blames the hegemonic governmental masculine discourse of rationality overpowering the less powerful marginalised feminine discourse of emotionality. As outlined in the image of the mother caregiver, Osgood concludes that in the rather female-dominated context of nursery care where emotional labour is done, professionalism should be closely connected to critical reflection and raising consciousness to enable practitioners to "actively reposition themselves in competing and alternative discourses of professionalism" (p. 11).

The researcher caregiver

Moss introduces a third image, related to the Reggio Emilia approach, inspired by the municipal childhood services of Reggio Emilia, a city in Italy. This image is community-oriented, as in a developing community, not only the child learns, but the caregiver and the parents as well. The researcher caregiver is a constant learner, seeking deeper understanding and new knowledge of the child and its learning processes. These processes are nurtured and inspired by the relationship, seen as the heart of the process, but also by theoretical approaches from various fields. The researcher worker is a reflective and dialogic practitioner, whose emphasis is "to listen and engage in dialogue" (Moss, 2006, p. 36). Constant reflexivity incorporates subjectivity, "assuming responsibility, because you cannot escape the need to interpret, construct and, if necessary, evaluate" (p. 37). These processes should be carried out in relation with others, co-constructing knowledge, identities, and values, with an openness to listen and not to pursue "conformity to predetermined outcomes" but welcoming "the unexpected, that which takes her by surprise and by doing so provokes new thought" (p. 36). This image of the caregiver is related to images of children represented as the scientific, the philosophical and the competent child and postmodern images. The impulse to incorporate the caregiver as a developing personality is related to the findings concerning the

conceptualisation of care, specifically to the image of the caregiver by Steiner. This image is explored in educational research and used for early childhood conceptualisations worldwide.

In regard to professionalism, the researcher caregiver implies a notion of professionalism that overcomes the divide between education and care, looking at various images of the child with a strong relational aspect and answering accordingly. Manning Morton defines:

‘Professionalism’ in the early years must also be understood in terms of the day-to-day detail of practitioners’ relationships with children, parents and colleagues; relationships that demand high levels of physical, emotional and personal knowledge and skill. Therefore, being a truly effective early years professional requires a reflexive interpretation of those relationships not only through the lens of our theoretical knowledge but also through the mirror of our subjective personal histories and our present, feeling, embodied selves. (p. 42)

This image implies a high degree of self-reflection and a concept of professionalism related to self-developmental aspects. Being with the child is seen as a source for common development, and professionalism can be seen as a raised consciousness, incorporating subjectivity and an open gesture to the “unknown”. This concept of professionalism can be seen as related to the ethical responsibility laid out in the conceptualisation of care and in the definition of professionalism by Feeney, as stated in the beginning of this chapter, and to my concept of education as self-education.

2.4.2 Professionalism and educational discourses

In the previous section, different qualities in professional caregivers were discussed, and conceptualisations of professional care constructed. The different images shape the role of the professional caregiver and point to the general challenge of defining what care means in a professional context. As discussed in the first part of the literature review, the dualism of nature and culture is hidden in the images of the caregiver as well, related to the images of the child. A schoolification of professional care was detected, influencing inhabitation and enculturation processes and raising questions of attachment security, as well as questions, of how to incorporate the emotional, vulnerable side of professional care, further discussed in the next chapter. This chapter introduced the discourse on education versus care, based on the dualism of rationality versus emotionality, a discourse related to the discourse on standardised quality measurement and professionalism in nursery education. How Waldorf nursery caregivers conceptualise professionalism and how they relate to these discourses will be part of my empirical research. In the next chapter I will move further into professional care.

2.4.3 Professional nursery care

In this chapter, I will move further into the institutionalised field of education and offer a brief look into recent research on professional care and professional attachment. This glimpse will provide more background for understanding the caregiver's conceptualisations and practices, further embedded into an educational context.

Studies have been carried out to measure the effects of professional care internationally (Grossmann, Grossmann & Waters, 2006; National Research council and Institute of medicine, 2000; The NICHD Early Child Care research network, 2005). Belsky et al. (2007) reflect upon their major NICHD study in the U.S. in saying, that there is a “great interest in the potential long-term sequelae of child care experience”, triggered by the concern, looked at in the discourse in my chapter on attachment research, that “ever since Bowlby promulgated attachment theory, thinking derived from it has led some to expect day care, especially when initiated in the earliest years of life, to undermine the security of infant-parent attachment relationships” (Belsky, 2009, p. 1). As seen in the efforts by new attachment research to look into the complexity of attachment contexts, Belsky continues in his paper, the results of three large-scale studies, carried out in different countries vary substantially and “there are probably no inevitable effects of day care on attachment. Effects appear contingent on the societal context in which day care is experienced” (p. 3). He suggests the need to consider “quality, type, timing and quantity of care”.

The fact that detected effects of day care on attachment security vary substantially by national context means that it is precarious to draw strong inferences from attachment theory as to what the effect of day care will be. Ultimately, day care is a multidimensional phenomenon, so questions such as “is day care good for infants (or young children)?” are too simplistic. (p. 3)

The NICHD study researched into “risk factors”, to produce categories and guidelines to measure the effects of nursery education, involving the family background of the child. Concerning the risk factors in nursery care, the main research outcome is a call for high quality in professional nursery care. Moss and Dahlberg (2008) in their discourse on the conceptualization of quality, cite seven evaluative factors indicating “good quality” from a research review by the British government from 2004:

Adult-child interaction that is responsive, affectionate and readily available; well-trained staff, who are committed to their work with children; facilities that are safe and sanitary and accessible to parents; ratios and group sizes that allow staff to

interact appropriately with children; supervision that maintains consistency; staff development that ensures continuity, stability and the improvement of quality: and a developmentally appropriate curriculum with educational content (National Audit Office 2004, cited by Dahlberg & Moss, 2008, p. 3)

This evaluative and measurable view of quality is criticized and in line with the discourse on professionalism, as outlined in the previous chapter, professional nursery care is seen as running the risk of following a path of technicalisation, whereby unmeasurable qualities, such as “subjectivity, uncertainty, provisionality, contextuality, dialogue and democracy” are neglected (Dahlberg & Moss, 2008). One central reference point in measuring high quality care is seen in the individual relationship or attachment that the caregiver forms to the child.

Professional attachment

Supported by the major NICHD study, the association “Zero to Three” (2009), a group of the most important experts in the field, declares that “the quality of child care ultimately boils down to the quality of the relationship between the child care provider and the child; skilled and stable providers promote positive development” (p. 4). Drugli and Undheim (2011) assert that the caregiver’s ability to develop a sensitive relationship with the child is the most determinative factor for high-quality care. But how professional attachment issues are dealt with is related to the image of the child as discussed in the first part of the literature review, the conceptualisation of attachment security as discussed in the second, and the image of the caregiver, as discussed in the third part. All these images and conceptualisations have their effect on practices of professional attachment, whether they are within a dyadic or a network approach, or disregarded in favour of educative aims. Looking at the term professional attachment in itself, one enters into a very sensitive and complicated research field, with especially the consequences of negative professional attachment patterns being a neglected area. Drugli and Undheim (2011) in their research on professional attachment in Norway showed signs of the discourse mentioned above and found constrained attachment patterns, but state that these issues are difficult to discuss:

There may be some resistance among caregivers and parents to admit that some caregiver-child relationships can be more negative and dysfunctional than others. Parents need to believe that their child is taken good care of in day care and caregivers want to believe that they are doing a good job. (p. 1163)

Gutknecht (2010), writing a pioneer doctoral thesis on nursery education in Germany, provides one explanation for constrained patterns in nurseries, in looking at the need for emotional availability. Professional attachment involves the caregiver’s willingness to offer

empathy, open-heartedness, warmth, “a great deal of one’s own emotional expressiveness”, and “more than pedagogical engagement” (p. 42). As outlined in the image of the caregiver as a mother caregiver and the related discourse on professionalism, when caregivers are working mainly with their natural ability to care, she asserts this constant demand for emotional availability is “socially exhausting“, it “saps their strength“, “puts them at risk for burnout”, and “frequently, terrible job conditions are the reality of the profession”. Under these circumstances, caregivers run the risk of avoiding this emotional work through “objectification and de-individualisation” of the children, since “the institutional context represents a risk matrix for professionals that they will behave in an intuitively educational manner, that they do not show warmth and heart, that they become emotionally blunted” (p. 43). She suggests two strategies to avoid this danger. The first is to examine the term ‘professional attachment’ critically, reduce its rank and rename the phenomenon. “In order to describe the necessary emotional depth that is vital to establish, students are rather given concepts such as “offering a holding matrix”, “making a supportive environment available”, “becoming a safe haven” (p. 43). This critical view towards the term ‘attachment’ is supported by the fact that attachment security or dealing with attachment deficits in institutionalised settings raises unrealistic hopes. A second research outcome is a new focus on responsivity in caring situations and gestures used in professional care:

Deliberate practice of responsive touch, responsive language, responsive approaching and distancing can constitute a protective factor for babies and small children, but also for the professional. The meaning of the many small gestures and activities during the work day becomes clearer, the behaviours are available, so that it is easier to stay “in the flow” (Gutknecht, p. 43)

This research outcome can be seen as similar to the methodological/didactical guidelines in the Pikler impulse. Emmi Pikler created a set procedure of caring activities and gestures, seen as inherently responsive, attentive and respectful towards the impulses of the child, but deep emotional involvement or kissing or hugging was to be avoided so as not to attach the child too closely (Martino, 2009). The children in her care were supposed to be prepared for adoption and the place for maternal attachment (or love?) left empty. As professional attachment is different from parental attachment, in regard to the time limitations: “they get married, they move away, they change their group, they experience one ‘nursery generation’ after the other” (Gutknecht, p. 43), this raises the question of the inner nature of the phenomenon of professional attachment.

The concept of professional love

Page (2011) sees professional love for the children as essential, since humans prefer to be cared for by people who love them, rather than people who are being paid for the job. To provide professional love, she calls for an extension to Belsky's concept of a lens to see the world through, to be responsive to the children's and not to one's own needs. She argues for a motivational shift in thinking about professional love that involves caring touch with a deeply sustaining, respectful and reciprocal relationship in a professional way.

For professional love to occur in professional caregiving roles, the carer needs not only to have experienced being cared for, but also being loved. Of equal importance, the carer must be able to shift their thinking in order to intellectualise the experience as a loving caring encounter; that is what I conceptualise as professional love. (Page, 2014, p. 122)

To deny the importance of love in professional care "because it is somehow viewed as being too personal and unprofessional" denies the children a minutiae of a secure and loving attachment and an image of themselves as "worthy of being loved" (p. 125). This highly sensitive area is being explored from different angles and subject to new research. Colley (2006) takes a more critical look at this claim in asking how emotions can be commercialized and whether love is a product that can be bought and sold. As the work is emotionally demanding with children triggering emotional reactions such as tenderness, compassion, comfort, anger sometimes leading to feelings of love, Gutknecht (2010) sees the pain, that might occur, "to always have to part ways with them" and the consequence, that professionals "no longer allow themselves to get involved in close relationships with the children, that they follow functionalist relationship patterns" (p. 43). Manning Morton (2006) expands on the issue by shedding a light on the fact that providing loving touch as emotional labor exposes the practitioner to children's vulnerability and to "the darker side of learning", in dealing with attachment issues. The practitioners have to deal with their own vulnerability, their cultural beliefs and their own, sometimes unresolved experiences. They need to recognize "which part of their own experience were either romanticizing or demonizing their view of children in the present" (p. 46). A professional attachment needs a caregiver that attunes to the child, and in case of difficulties, does not avoid attachment and closeness, but works on their own issues to resolve the inner attitude and provide help to the child. This reflexivity, combined with a thorough knowledge of theoretical aspects of child development, is a basis for forming a professional attachment and forming a professional identity. Manning Morton concludes:

We need to abandon the historical deficit view of what early years practitioners are not and instead promote a professional identity of a critically, reflexive, theoretical boundary crosser: a boundary crosser who can see young children as powerful active learners (with autonomy and agency) and yet still hold their dependent and vulnerable selves in mind, hear their distressed and angry voices and accept the centrality of their physical processes to their sense of self and learning. (p. 50)

Summary

In my last chapter of the literature review I outlined current research into nursery care and its relationship to different educational discourses. Professional images of caregivers were portrayed and discussed with respect to the discourse on professionalism. Research into professional attachment is rare and shows tendencies to avoid going into the sensitive, vulnerable and emotional side. As seen in the conceptualisations of attachment, this field is under-researched and new research designs are needed. In Gutknecht's study, a focus on the image of the mother caregiver is seen, with a call to "mechanise" attachment and caring situations, typical for the German field in order to professionalise and protect the nursery caregivers from burnout and other consequences. In the Waldorf movement a similar move is seen in incorporating the caring methods of the Pikler impulse. Gutknecht's study paints a difficult image of professional attachment and puts out the call to look at attachment in a more relationship-oriented sense. This urge to rename the phenomenon was seen as well in my chapter on attachment networks in order to incorporate a stronger multidimensional perspective in using the term relationship. This leads to certain questions: What term for the "working relationship" do the Waldorf nursery caregivers use? The discourse on love in professional care mirrors the discourse on professionalism and points to the sensitivity of the research area. At the same time this discourse bridges the gap between the disciplines in asking ethical questions towards personal attitudes, not neglecting the "darker side" and the vulnerability of the children and the caregivers, leading to the empirical questions: how do the caregivers conceptualise the nature of their professional attachment, and what does the term professional love represent to them?

2.5 Summary

In order to frame my investigation of Waldorf nursery caregiver's conceptualisations and practises, I followed three main pathways in the literature review. I portrayed images of the children, with a focus on the image of the child in Waldorf education and discussed them to

the key concept of an education for freedom with regard to individualisation and socialisation processes. In the second part of my literature review I analysed conceptualisations of attachment and conceptualisations of care, painting anthroposophical and philosophical images of the caregiver in regard to their responsibility in creating socialisation processes of trust and care. In looking at Steiner's image of the caregiver and related philosophical images, I gave a glimpse into the ethics of care and the self-developmental possibilities of encounters between the carer and the cared for. This background is vital for understanding the Waldorf caregiver's beliefs and aims and led me to use gestures as an analytical tool for researching into professional care. In the third part of my literature review I gave an insight into existing theorisation of nursery care. I outlined images of the professional caregiver and discussed them in terms of the general concept of professionalism, professional care and professional attachment and the question of how to deal with the high demand of emotional labour in institutionalised settings. This exploration of the educational realm embeds Waldorf nursery education in a wider educational background, important for understanding societal and cultural influences.

I have provided a wide theoretical background to the research area of Waldorf nursery education, mirroring the small child's 'homelessness' or manifold relations to academic fields such as developmental psychology, education, or philosophy. In my opinion, the different aspects could contribute to the emerging knowledge base on professional care, essential to understand the field in his context and shaping educational and caring conceptualisations. Many questions emerged in looking at the different concepts and interrelations came to light that are worth being explored empirically. I see nursery caregivers as experts in the field, dealing with the dilemmas and challenges posed by these ideas on a daily basis. I see their daily work as an immense contribution to future generations and to the well-being of each and every child in their care and as a major resource for the academic field, waiting to be explored and recovered. In my empirical part I will research into Waldorf nursery caregiver's conceptualisations and practices of professional care with selected methodological tools as introduced in the next chapter.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

My methodological aim was to research into Waldorf nurseries with an emphasis on exploration, discovery, and description of the caregiver's professional beliefs and aims, as inherent in qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). My research interest lies in understanding interconnections between the gestures used in their practises and their conceptualisations of professional care. I want to develop a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of this interrelation, leading me to the choice of a qualitative course of action. I used the overall research paradigm of a social constructivist, interpretive approach, integrating multiple data generation and analysis. My aim was to generate and analyse data that places a strong emphasis on documenting the participants' own perceptions, conceptualisations, and perspectives, and how they gave meaning to their own practices, allowing an appreciation of subjectivities and multiple perspectives.

I have employed inductive as well as deductive analytical approaches to examine the subjective orientations of my research participants, while linking these to my theoretical interests in professional care in nurseries through carefully selected analytical concepts.

3.1.1 Empirical context and selection of research sites

To find a research field, I contacted eight Waldorf nurseries in Germany with an application letter including an introduction to my study, my professional background, and the research design. Six nurseries were chosen for practical reason, they were within an hour from my home town or my place of work, being 140 km. apart from each other in West Germany. Two were chosen because of their intercultural background, and I was hoping to gain data in this regard. I planned to visit two to three nurseries for one week and carry out focus group interviews a week later. The application letters were well received, with grateful and encouraging answers appreciating my plans, but six nurseries rejected participation, the given reasons being mainly difficult working situations with teachers missing and/or bad timing because of familiarisation in October/ November. Both intercultural nurseries rejected my application.

I settled on one week visits to two nurseries, taking on children from zero to three years old, with the youngest ever taken in being 4 months old. Both nurseries have two groups with ten

children. The child-caregiver ratio is around one to three/four and the overall institutional conditions can be called good. The caregivers earn a decent salary and have a slightly higher or similar amount of holidays than is the standard. They are well-established in the area and have a waiting list. They are situated outside of city centres and enjoy a green outdoor setting. All caregivers and all parents signed the letter of consent and gave their approval for video recording. One family with two children did not agree to the use of photographs in the thesis beforehand, but they gave their consent subsequently, after seeing the picture used.

Nursery one opened in 2012. I visited one group with opening hours from 7am to 4pm. In this group four caregivers aged 30 to 55 years old cared for 9 children, aged 1.5 to 2.11 years old, with one child about to start nursery the week after the observation. They were all trained as early childhood teachers and two have additional Waldorf nursery training. Nursery two opened in 2008 and has opening hours from 7am to 3pm. I visited both groups. In two groups seven caregivers with an age range from 22 to 46 cared for 20 children ranging from 2.1 to 3.0 years old in one group and 1.1 to 3.0 years old in the other group. They shared a volunteer in her practical, final year of teacher training, 19 years old. They all have early childhood training and five of the six have Waldorf nursery training.

3.1.2 Methods of data generation

Three main methods were used to gather data: To observe the daily rhythm and the practice in the nursery, I took field notes and conducted video recordings. To explore further into the conceptualisations of the caregivers, I carried out focus group interviews.

Observation and field notes

I spent two weeks in the nurseries to observe and gather data to the daily rhythm, the practices of the caregivers, the children's reactions and other features important for understanding professional care in Waldorf nurseries. Especially in the beginning, I only observed and took field notes. The field notes proved to be a vital instrument in two ways. I noted down little dialogues and little situations, rich in expressiveness and worth to be documented, without the need for video recording. I was able to note down situations, that were not suitable for recording or in which I was simply too late or moments, in which a repeating theme was detectable with different connotations and the written documentation gave more insight into the variation. A second purpose was to use the field notes as a communication partner for myself to document various reflections, thoughts, and ideas. In this sense the field notes were

my main tool to improve self-reflectiveness and self-development as a new researcher and proved vital as a constant documentation of the research process.

Video recordings and photographs

Once I was established as “just a normal visitor” by the children, I started to use the video camera. Most of the time, I did not look through the lens, but placed the camera on my leg to avoid distracting the children. I recorded typical situations in the nursery throughout day two and three. On the last two days, my focus was on the field notes again and a focussed recording on chosen situations in which “something new” was seen.

These recordings were analysed in the evening with a slightly quantitative approach to detect the most common visible gestures. A second group of gestures, that emerged from watching the recordings were those less ‘visible and clear’, sometimes rather ambiguous, or with a strong inner gesture perceivable or simply “interesting” to be explored further. Photographs of the gestures were taken from the recording. Around 50 photographs were sorted out. At the end of the observation period, the photographs were given to the nursery teachers together with a proposed interview guide, for them to get familiar with.

Focus group interview

To investigate the caregiver’s conceptualisations, I carried out focus group interviews a week after the observation. The choice to carry out a focus group interview, rather than individual interviews was made to encourage interaction, to avoid putting the caregivers “on the spot”, and to get an understanding of shared and common knowledge, rather than individual meaning making (Savin Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

During the interview I took the role of moderating, following the proposed interview guide in a semi-structured form incorporating the caregivers’ impulses and wishes. I kept the interview flowing, sometimes asking further questions or clarifying statements or following the caregivers’ discussion and keeping the main structure. The interview process was divided in two main parts. In the first part, questions were asked concerning their conceptualisations of the child and caregiver, of the nursery, of their work, aims and wishes for the children, of problems and good moments, of professional attachment and their ideas of self-education. In the second part of the interview, the photographs of the gestures were used to relate to their practices. In nursery one, the caregivers wanted to watch videos related to certain photos, that they felt were worth being explored further. This enhanced the process of knowledge

generation and in this group part two of the interview was very intensive, taking 1.5 hours in addition to the first part, taking one hour. Three caregivers were present, one was sick. In nursery two all seven caregivers were there and their focus was on the first part, taking more than two 2 hours. In the second part the caregivers looked at the photos and a discussion on certain photos emerged, taking half an hour. Therefore I gathered data from more than 5 hours of interviews. The overall mood of the interviews was partly formal, with participants excited and curious, partly informal, sharing cake and hot tea.

3.1.3 Ethical issues

Researching into professional care and professional attachment raises various ethical questions. As seen in my literature review, professional care involves questions of researching into qualities of emotional labour and can be seen as a difficult task, since I regard quality as not being measurable in the technical sense, as outlined in the image of the technician caregiver. In order to protect the children and the caregivers, I decided on a methodological approach to look at the gestures as a tool of investigation and use them to inspire a focus group discussion, whereby the caregivers are free to decide how far they go into sensitive subjects, such as the emotional side of attachment. My fears of touching on a “private” and sensitive matter were met with a very open and curious attitude to investigate “into their own issues”. The caregivers were grateful to have the opportunity to be observed and mirrored in order to enhance their self-developmental path. As one caregiver expressed, it is so useful and so rare, to have somebody “from outside” see, what “we don’t see anymore” or “not yet”. The tool of using gestures was successful in giving the whole process a concrete and tangible basis. To create a “researcher mood” in the process, I invited the caregivers to be co-researchers, as seen in the image of the researcher caregiver and to join me in my task of documenting and analysing how they carry out their valuable work to contribute new evidence-based knowledge to the nursery movement. This notion led to a methodology of providing the caregivers with photographs and the interview guide beforehand and requesting them to create the interview with me in order to answer their questions, raised in the process. This form of participation allowed the caregivers a feeling of carrying out a study themselves and a feeling of autonomy.

As for the children, I tried to follow the same methodological approach to see them as co researchers, as participants in the research and not as subjects (Johannsen, 2011). As Gopnik

et al. (2001) line out that “trying to understand human nature is part of human nature”, I see children as competent empiricists researching me as a researcher the same way, I research them. Therefore, I tried to incorporate the children’s empirical interest by being authentic and available, if needed, but also being conscious not to disturb the daily life in the nursery and not to impose myself on them. The children integrated me first as “just another visitor”, but along the way some interactions emerged, the children using gestures or entering a verbal dialogue with me, expressing their “voice”, as understood as “any sound, gesture, movement or word” (White, 2011, p. 64). Their research was visible especially in nursery two in the group with older children, where one boy studied me with interest, accompanied with asking me from time to time “what you do?” (“machst Du?”). As Degotardi expresses her experience as a researcher in a nursery with a boy that “was willing to accept my observer presence as long as I fulfilled the role of the responsive, attentive caregiver that he had come to expect from the teachers in the room” (2011, p. 27), I tried to fit in the setting as naturally as possible, offering a helping hand if needed. Another factor of ethical sensitivity was not to record certain moments loaded with emotionality, as a child in distress, since “professional and personal notions of caregiver sensitivity, responsiveness, human rights and dignity, and infant capabilities and vulnerabilities all had to be balanced with research agendas and methodological intentions” (Degotardi, 2011, p. 31). To me, as a Waldorf practitioner, the ethical question is what image of the human being am I conveying, not ‘using’ children in my research but taking on the ethical responsibility of being a role model, in whatever I do or wherever I am, in line with ethical considerations to treat children with respect, love and care.

3.1.4 Personal stance, reflexivity, validity and transferability

Reflexivity and validity in the data generation process

In the process of data generation, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, it was both my advantage and disadvantage to research into my own field. I carried a precaution of getting trapped into a supervision mode, based on my current role as a Waldorf teacher trainer, visiting my students in their working place. To avoid this, I created a ‘researcher mood’ to set a clear relational input and help position myself as a researcher and the participants as co-researchers, encouraging reflexivity as a mutual collaboration (Savin Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Having been a nursery teacher for 6 years, I fitted easily and naturally into the research field. My wariness of getting into a ‘nursery teacher mood’ was not confirmed. Having been out of practice for three years, it was fairly easy to install a ‘researcher mood’. The feared

overwhelm with images out of my former work life did not emerge; instead the observation process inspired a firework of “relating it to the theory” that had to be controlled and quenched, providing theoretical and personal reflectivity. Along the process of data generation I experienced difficulties keeping the researcher mood and got entangled in the web of relations and ‘not seeing anymore’. In these moments, I needed self-reflection to keep the gaze and go back to my research focus.

I tried to achieve validity in making my thematic interests transparent and clear. Apart from stating my methodological choices and interests already in the application letter, I gave a draft of the interview guide to the caregivers beforehand. This was a methodological choice to enhance the “co-researcher mood” and to transparently convey my voice of investigation, e.g. to research the practice through observation and to research into their conceptualisations through the interview in asking for images of the child, the caregiver etc. The caregivers commented that this method was useful, since they needed time to think about some of the questions beforehand. The combination of using the gestures as the analytical focal point and the caregivers as co-researchers was made transparent and was taken on by the caregivers as a challenge. This method supported my aim to let the caregivers speak and to analyse the data in regard to the interrelation of practice and conceptualisation through the gestures with the support of the caregivers.

Personal stance, validity and transferability in the general research process

My personal stance, seen as reflecting my deeply held attitudes, opinions and concerns (Savin Baden & Howell Major, 2013) derives from my personal and professional background. As important to know in qualitative research which personal stances or biases the study involves, be it the researcher’s or the participants’, I need to admit that this study is deeply connected to the Waldorf educational context, the anthroposophical image of the human being, and my working experience in using this image as an educational tool. Looking at questions of subjectivity, neutrality, authenticity, dependability or transferability inspired by O’Leary (2014), my research is heavily laden with Waldorf educational assumptions. My strategy to acknowledge and manage this bias was to disclose and use it in the research process to carefully construct my conceptual framework and try to be transparent in the analytical process. The Waldorf educational lens influenced the choice of theoretical background material and the careful and conscious construction of the key concepts, vital for the research design and the research questions. The key concepts were transparently used to analyse data

and therefore supported epistemological reflectivity (Savin Baden & Howell Major, 2013). A constant systematic discussion of the analytical focus and the analytical process was carried out with a supervisor who is external both to the nursery context and to Waldorf educational principles. This helped me explicate my taken for granted assumptions and critically assess my selection of analytical concepts.

Transferability was nurtured through a methodology, likely to be “applicable in alternative settings or populations” hoping to provide “lessons learned” that can illuminate relevant issues within similar field contexts, whereby applicability or transferability “can be determined by those reading the research account” (O’Leary, 2014, p. 61). Broadening the term transferability to generalisation, the qualitative research design used a firm theoretical framing, offering possible analytical generalization as a “generalization from one case to other cases that belong to the scope of the theory involved” (Smaling, 2003, n.p.). This form of generalisation, involves a “reasoned judgment about the extent to which the findings of one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 262). This question is further discussed in the conclusion chapter.

3.2 Data analysis and analytical approach

As described in my chapter on data generation I generated a huge amount of data with around 25 GB of video recordings, a journal full of field notes and 5 hours of interview. A decision was made to use gestures as the main analytical entry point, but the analytical process to be used for analysing the data further was open.

Why gestures?

Using gestures to investigate into professional care in Waldorf nurseries was inspired by three main reasons. Following the Waldorf educational concept of imitation and role modelling and the concept of the gestures as the main tool for imitation, as Steiner said that “the principle of imitation comes to light in gesture, in movement” and “everything is dependent on gesture” (Steiner, 1989a, p. 40), this conceptual background hinted towards using gestures as an analytical focal point, supported by new research into professional attachment, as outlined by Manning Morton (2006) or Gutknecht (2010). If gestures carry this immense importance in nursery education, they can be identified as a suitable analytical tool to investigate according to my research questions. A second reason, as outlined in the ethical issues, was to protect the

caregivers and the children in basing the study on a concrete and tangible method in this sensitive field of investigation. A third argument was the methodological advantage of using documented gestures or situations as a tool to inspire the focus group interview with authentic stimuli to enhance knowledge generation of knowledge, which might be implicit and is highly contextual and subjective. Looking at the photos and videos enabled the participants to relive the moment and inspire thought processes to voice the “unspoken” (Vesterinen, Toom & Patrikainen, 2010).

As laid out in my research design, the gestures were used as an analytical tool to research into the interrelation between practice and conceptualisation of professional care. My first analytical step was to research into the caregivers’ conceptualisations through a thorough analysis of the interviews.

Analysis of the interviews

The interviews were transcribed and read frequently to identify first themes and get familiar with them. To start the analytical process, I arranged the data into data summary tables (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The summary tables were organised based on the following deductive categories:

- Images of the child and the caregiver
- Images and practice of professional care
- Images and practice of professional attachment (including familiarisation)
- Use and conceptualisation of gestures
- Self-education and self-development

These summary tables were analysed inductively to identify the main points and a first draft was written, with an analytical focus on summarising and ordering relevant data into manageable chunks. This sorting gave me a deeper understanding of how the caregivers gave meaning to these different thematic orientations, and how these ideas were expressed through different practices. The selected quotes displayed in the thesis were originally in German and have been translated into English by a designated translator and checked by the author.

Analysis of the gestures

My choice of pictures for the group interviews was informed by a slightly quantitative rationale to look for typical gestures, seen often and repetitive. A more qualitative, intuitive

choice of gestures, rich and promising for gathering an insight into the caregiver's conceptualisation and practice was carried out as well. The caregivers carried out a second choice of photographs in the interviews to explore them further. In the analytical process, most categories of gestures derived from the second interview part in nursery one. The caregivers grouped and named gestures into the categories 'welcoming', 'caring', 'awaiting' and 'delimiting' gestures. Some 'interesting' photographs were further explored in watching the related video recording and led to a category of 'pondering' gestures (abwägen), identified by the caregivers for situations, in which the caregiver ponders over which gesture is suitable. In nursery two, similar categories were mentioned with an exploration of "encounters", gestures or moments, where the caregiver and the children had a "face-to-face" encounter and a discussion on "tuning in" gestures, where the caregiver answers the child intuitively to affirm and appreciate. In a later inductive process I added, to the delimiting gestures, 'preceding' gestures, that were used to encourage the children's behaviour to try to achieve a certain result or were analysed as "being a role model to go ahead" or conveying sociocultural patterns. I created the category of affirmative gestures, categorised by the caregivers' as 'awaiting' or 'giving space' or 'allowing them to do it by themselves' gestures, incorporating the 'tuning in' gestures. Therefore five overarching categories were identified:

welcoming	caring	affirmative	delimiting/preceding	pondering
Gestures to create a welcoming environment, build community and offer an inner welcoming	Gestures to care for the environment and the children, as in nappy changing, feeding etc.	Gestures to allow a free development of play and movement and care for themselves	Gestures to delimit children's behaviour or go ahead in order to solve a situation	Gestures as an inner dialogue in choosing the right gesture

Many gestures could be categorised under more than one criteria, some were not easy to distinguish and they 'intermingle'. In many gestures all categories were visible, e.g. in caring gestures, pondering, preceding and affirmative moments can be analysed. But in order to analyse the data further, this analytical categorisation helped me to understand the wealth and variety of the main gestures the nursery teachers used. I then continued the analytical process and incorporated the written out findings from the data summary sheets into the categories of

gestures, according to their relatedness. This analytical step explored the use and function of the gesture, the images related to the gestures, and the caregiver's conceptualisation of their role in professional care. I wrote down a description and an inductive analysis of the gestures.

Further analysis of the gestures

In order to write down the description I used the video material and the field notes as well. In a further analysis I went deeper into the data generated through recording and noting with the analytical focus on detecting an objective or inner motivation behind the gestures. Following Heine, that behind every outer gesture there is an inner motivation, objective or attitude that guides the activity apart (Heine, 2008), I reviewed the video data and analysed the interviews further to understand the caregivers' objectives and their practice and conceptualisations. This analytical gesture can be understood as well, as using Weisner's idea that socialisation and enculturation activities are constructed around "multiple goals".

In a further deductive approach I related the data and the identified inner objective to the key concepts. To narrow the focus and generate findings that could prove viable to answer the research question, I analysed the gestures as follows:

- I analysed the welcoming and caring gestures in regard to the key concept of 'attachment security',
- affirmative and delimiting/preceding gestures in regard the Waldorf educational notion of an 'education for freedom',
- and pondering gestures to the Waldorf educational notion of 'education is self-education'.

The complete analytical process led to the findings chapter, as outlined in the next part of my thesis. In the findings chapter, I will start with a brief introduction to the field. I provide two introductory glimpses into the "daily" life of the nurseries, as experienced by the researcher on the first day of the observation period. I then present the analysis of the five categories of gestures. I start by describing the gestures as they manifested themselves in the practices in the nurseries, and describe their purposes as recounted by the caregivers. I then relate each category of gestures to images of the child and the caregiver, and to notions of professional care, attachment and self-development and the underlying objective.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction to the research field

To introduce the two nurseries some first impressions from the first day at the research sites:

Nursery one: I found my place on a low and wide window sill, perfect for children to climb on and look at the room or the garden outside. Before me there was a pinkish woollen carpet and a blue sofa with pinkish pillows on one side of a small room, with a 'Pikler triangle' and a "slide" in the middle. There were some shelves and lots of baskets with hand-made "toys" of various kinds, as well as a little "play kitchen" with household items waiting to be explored. A boy (1.9 years old) comes in with his mother, and the nursery caregiver Irma talks to them with intimacy in a soft tone. Irma's eyes wander from the mother to the child, mirroring the mother's concern with her facial expressions and welcoming the child with warm interest and a comforting smile conveying a quiet 'joy of seeing him again'. I understand it is his third week in the nursery and he did not sleep well the night before. The mother puts the child into Irma's arms and leaves - he cries. Irma is very quiet, seems to wrap him with her comfort and says: "Yes, I believe you". After a while, she says "what can we do?" and looks into the room. The boy still cries, but follows her gaze. "Where is the "miracle thing"? She finds a basket with felt balls, sits cross legged with the child in her lap, takes a red ball out of the basket, quiet and interested. The boy takes a ball as well, he stops crying and starts to play, leaning on Irma.

The atmosphere in nursery one was warm and homey, coziness expressed through the colours and indirect illumination, the use of natural material and the room structure: a small room with an open space for play in the middle, and various play and "hiding corners" surrounding the centre. There was a kitchen and a cosy nappy changing room with soft lighting as side rooms, only partly separated, so that the caregivers could see the children and the children could see the caregivers, while they care. The atmosphere conveyed an open gesture, I could see many smiles and joy, each time a child and the parents came in, a family atmosphere welcoming everybody, even visitors like me. The parents were informed about my research and greeted me with affirming smiles or a handshake and enjoyed a little morning chat with the caregivers before they left. The caregivers spent time on the floor to welcome the children, there was lots of physical contact, sitting on laps and celebrating "togetherness" or

comforting. As the day went on, the children played intensively by themselves in and outside in the little garden with a huge tree and as lunch hour arrived, the physical closeness was re-established, the children ate lunch and were taken to bed, individually, with individual rituals and loving care.

Nursery two, group one: I am sitting in the “care corner” for eating. The room is big and round with a huge white, globe lamp under the round and high ceiling, reminding me of embryological images. Magenta coloured curtains frame the big windows and the door to a porch, leading to a big green garden with sandpits, a “nest swing” and a hill, created in a spiral. I can see horses in the neighbouring compound and open meadows, a forest enclosing the area widely. There are two big light-coloured carpets in the middle with colourful pillows on top. Caregiver Ivy prepares breakfast, Caregiver Diane sits on the carpet in front of a sofa, knitting a toy. It is still early and only one child is there. The girl (2.1 years old) lifts one carpet, where the two carpets meet, puts blankets and pillows underneath, creating a little house or “cave” under the carpet and lies down underneath. “Good night, Diane”, she says. Diane answers: “good night, Clare!” Quietness ... the telephone rings, some children are sick and Ivy talks to the parents quietly. After “sleeping”, Clare gets up, stretches herself and says “good morning”. Ivy, having the breakfast ready, goes to her, kneels down and answers “good morning, Clare, I want to take you with me to the toilet”. I ask myself: are these Clare’s first days without a nappy? Clare: “You and me, all by ourselves?” Ivy: “Yes, all by ourselves. I will come with you and wait outside in front of the toilet”. Clare: “Oh yes, and then I can do a poo-poo unhurriedly!” They leave ... after coming back, the child goes to Diane and says: “Diane, I made a big pipi”. Diane answers with a smile and warm affirmation: “Clare, you made a pipi!” The same situation two hours later: Ivy: “Clare, I want to take you with me to the toilet”. Clare: “but I don’t need to make a pipi”. Ivy: “but I still want you to come”. Clare brightens up and follows Ivy joyfully. Again some hours later, Ivy: “Clare, do you need to make a pipi?” Clare: “Yes, but I want to go all by myself!” Ivy: “Well, Clare, then you go alone and I will wait for you here”. Clare leaves the room eager to fulfil her task.

In nursery two, I visited two groups, the group mentioned above having quite old children, mostly around two years old. The room conveyed space. There was a “Pikler triangle” as well with a slide and a “tunnel” to climb through. “Separations” made with low wooden bars and hand-made shelves with natural play material, such as wood, shells or stones and household items such as pots and pans, cups and plates in rainbow colours, structured the room. The

children came in, greeted the teachers and started immersing themselves in play. In moments of care, like nappy changing, eating or going to the toilet or to the garden, the caregivers cared for the children with calm, respect and humour. The atmosphere was light and open, the children filling the big room with their play, their energy, their creativity, and joy.

4.1.1 Gestures in Waldorf nurseries

The caregivers in both nurseries indicated clearly that they appreciate and acknowledge the fundamental importance of gestures and their use in daily practice. Dana sees gestures as play “a role in our whole time here together, not only in the receiving process or in the meeting of needs, but also the, “that’s not alright!”, and “actually that’s the whole day as it unfolds for us together, with the children, with the group, it’s all so embedded with gestures”. They saw gestures as important tools to express oneself. As Anne says: “You express yourself with them, and of course it is always a different gesture, (...) but it is still a lot of your own stuff that you are expressing”. Since nursery children are in the process of learning a language, gestures are seen as essential for expressing oneself, for understanding and communicating to the other, as well as laying the foundation for rhythm and structure.

Tina: Well okay, the less developed a child’s language is, of course, the more important the gestures are—first to understand the child’s gestures, to see them, to interpret them. Do I actually understand what he wants? (...) The smaller the child is, the more important I find this to be, but I also notice that with the 5-year-old boy that I have at home, once you’ve established these gestures, you don’t always need the language they’ve acquired, then you can do without, too.

Sonja brings it to the point, as she asks: “everything is a gesture, after all, isn’t it?”

Looking at the gestures as a whole, as outlined in the previous chapter, they are interrelated and intermingled. For the purpose of this study, a general classification was done, but this classification needs to be understood within the background of the complexity of the data. As an example I want to portray a simple situation, observed frequently and classified as a caring gesture, when the children are singled out for a nappy change. First they are observed in order to wait for “the right time”, as when the child has finished playing with something and is not yet involved with something new. The caregivers usually knelt down and offered eye contact or softly introduced their wish to carry out some form of caring with a gesture and language, such as “it’s time to change your nappy, so that you are ready to go into the garden”. The children were given time to respond and signify through a gesture their acceptance or refusal.

When refused, the caregiver would accept, if possible, and return later, or meet the refusal with emphatic understanding, but a firm answer, that “it has to be done now”.

In this little situation all gestures were observable in one simple act of caring. Respect is portrayed in waiting for the right moment and care gestured in the wish to change the nappy, and kneeling down to be eye-to-eye with the child allows a brief moment of recognition and encounter. Waiting for the response conveys respect, but care and welcoming as well, since the child’s need is acknowledged and cared for. The caregiver ponders the reaction of the child and decides to let the child carry on with his task in respect and affirmation or use a preceding gesture to go ahead, to be able to care and convey the act of caring as a human cultural necessity and a frequently carried out ritual in professional care. This example shows the complexity of analysing the gestures, but I decided to follow an analytical process to categorise the gestures in a more quantitative way and to analyse the interrelations between the categories in a limited amount in order to answer the research questions.

4.2 Welcoming gestures

Description

This category includes all the gestures that can be connected to the caregivers’ practices of welcoming the arrival of the child.



The caregivers were seen to create a secure, prepared and structured environment, e.g. preparing the room to look ordered and welcoming. This care was performed two to three times a day. Breakfast was prepared and stood ready with coloured hand-made bowls and cups on a little table, sometimes with a little flower. When the children came in, the caregiver welcomed the children and the parents, sometimes at the door, sometimes they came in, sat down and had a chat with the caregiver, while the child diverted his attention slowly to the toys and the other children. The communication with the parents was seen as familiar,

exchanging news or information or little problems and wishing each other a good day. The caregiver welcomed the children with open arms and open laps or a short little chat. Especially in nursery one, the caregivers often welcomed the children with a period of physical contact, until they were ready to explore the room and play. During the familiarisation process, observable in nursery one and in one group in nursery two, I could see the attempt to search for suitable individualised rituals, as mentioned in my introduction, e.g. looking for “the miracle thing” to help overcome the grief of separation. The caregiver stated that the child is welcomed and received in the nursery and with them to feel at home. The joy of welcoming and receiving is seen in the following pictures.



In order to welcome the child and build trust an inner attitude of attentiveness was observable and conceptualised by the caregivers. As Edith says especially about the familiarisation process, “we are attentive to the child, you devote all your attention and care to this child, you accompany their actions, you make a lot of eye contact, make yourself available, if they cry, when they need help, you’re there for the child”. Welcoming gestures are seen to convey openness and interest and they play a vital role in establishing first communication.

Sonja: these gestures also play a big role. I do feel that the child senses it, she now shows a bit of special affection for me and then it’s sometimes very subtle, that they give you a ball or you put a basket down and they look at you, or you look at them, then we look away again. It’s about these subtleties that you’re paying attention to, that you notice—how it comes about, this giving and taking.



To the welcoming gestures I added gestures of “mutual closeness” between the nursery caregiver and the child, conceptualised by the caregivers as “encounters”, forming attachment. Dana talks of the first moment of intensive eye contact with the children, sometimes happening fast, sometimes taking some time.

I find there is always this one moment when the child makes their first intensive eye contact with you. (...) they see me and I see them, that’s for me the most important thing. It really has something of a connection about it, oh now we’ve found each other, you can see into the child and I have the feeling they see into me and then I can familiarise them.

The next picture shows a caregiver with a child in the first days of the familiarisation period after separation, taken to look at the horses for comfort.



4.2.1 Images of professional care: “creating a protective sheath”

Image of the child and the caregiver

Analysing welcoming gestures in regard to the image of the child, it is seen that the child is received with an individualised and respectful attitude in keeping with the child as an incarnating individuality, coming to the world with a destiny, as two caregivers discuss:

Tina: A person who comes here, a soul who incarnates here, who must move into this physical house. Sonja: Well it’s open, what will become of this person, (...), it’s just that the individuality, the personality isn’t so pronounced in that sense, but it’s there, it’s as if it’s surrounding the child.

Familiarisation takes time and patience. Both nurseries follow individualised versions of the familiarisation guidelines of the Berlin and the Munich model, in which the parents join the child two to six weeks or even longer with a gentle expansion of separation periods.

Edith: You have to get to know the child’s essential being, so you can’t form an attachment in one or two days. It’s a process, a process of getting to know each other, where these virtues—are they virtues?—dependability, assistance, attachment-promoting qualities are offered, and it needs time.

The caregivers offer welcoming gestures, allowing the child to familiarise into the attachment and the nursery, portraying the image of the vulnerable/competent child, as Agnes says: “but in a way the child steers the whole thing too, so it’s not that we impose ourselves.” Or speaking with Diane: “I find that they take over their realm that way and also in a certain way us. But I think it’s often through playthings (...) or depending on how old the children are, through making contact with other children”. In regard to the image of the caregiver, a creator of a welcoming environment was seen and conceptualised by the caregivers as a creator of a protective environment.

Professional care

A major theme of providing professional care was seen in shaping a protective room or space for development (Schutzraum). To welcome the little child in their institutions, the caregivers talked of creating a caring and loving environment, stable and secure and one that allows, supports and stimulates the little child’s growth, as Sonja says:

To me it is important to create a protective space around the child—so that it can develop. (...) to create atmosphere so that the child can arrive, that it is here, that it can feel comfortable in this space and has the opportunity to do the things it wants to do. Arrive in this space, but also among us human beings.

Often concepts of making the children “feel welcome, accepted or adopted” were used. As Agnes says “So that the children are safe and secure, (...) nowadays parents have to go to work, that we simply offer protection, and a good sort of protection they feel comfortable with.” To nurture the child’s inhabitation processes in time and space, the caregivers spoke of a clear, reliable and repetitive daily rhythm, following the individual needs of the children, e.g. incorporating the individual sleeping rhythm of each child and clear room structures. This continuity is seen as important with a few ritualised moments, e.g. a little morning circle on the carpet, to convey reliability as Edith says:

So that’s this reliability that’s always there, that’s the room, the daily rhythm is always the same, no matter who’s there. Of course it always changes a little, but basically it’s what gives the child the main sense of security.

Their conceptualisation of providing a protective sheath around the child incorporated an image of community building as well, conceptualising the nursery as a social organism that the child is welcomed into. In my observation, I saw that not only the child is familiarised into the nursery, but the parents as well. Their presence during this period allows them a thorough insight into the nurseries routines and “style” and into the community of caregivers. The

caregivers welcomed the parents into their midst as well, as seen in nursery two, where two parents spent a few mornings in the nursery accompanying their little daughter and getting familiar with the caregivers. As the mother was from Kenya and belonged to the same tribe as my former husband, my professionalism as a researcher was challenged not to interfere with the familiarisation process – but we did enjoy a thorough chat in the garden and I was able to perceived the delicate “attachment threads”, woven by the caregivers to build community, mirrored by the children in their openness to welcome the new child as well, and me as researcher, as laid out in my methodology chapter.

- **Community building with the parents**

The caregivers conceptualised my perception of “attachment threads” and discussed the importance of a relationship with the parents:

Tina: But the parents are the parents, that’s this special relationship. They have come to them and through them they come to us, and we make sure that from the beginning we’re in real communication with the parents, that they’re also open towards us and we towards them as well.

The caregivers stress the importance of having a good contact to the parents to create trust and understanding, to form a bigger sheath around the child, that supports well-being, since it has “to handle the split between the home and the nursery” (Dana). A crossover of traditions is discussed, e.g. how family traditions can contribute to the daily routine in the nursery and how some nursery traditions find their way into the homes, like little rituals for sleeping, or little songs and rhymes. This trust needs care and attention, since the relationship between caregiver and parents influences the relationship to the child, as Edith says:

I always imagine it like two circles intersecting in one place. That’s then something in common which must always be well cultivated. (...) We need this interface with the parents, to have the parents’ trust, and the better the trust is - I’ve experienced that - the more freely they give us the child, the freer the child can be, the more comfortable the child also feels.

Another factor mentioned by the caregivers was the need to carry the parents in their consciousness and “their heart”, since the child is still very connected to them, and throughout the day, there are moments to “celebrate” the existence of the parents.

Sonja: It’s like when I sort of carry the parents within me—so, what they’re doing just now, where they are at the moment, then that has an effect on the child (...)

Agnes: Yes, staying in good contact with them, and you are constantly hearing things about them from the children and then you don’t just say anything, you say that mama is the best and mama is coming back.

- **Community building with the colleagues**

The caregivers' conceptualisations and images of their community was different in the two nurseries, though the practice was observed as similar. In nursery one the main aim was an emphasis on their image as role models trying to create a room for encounter and development for the children, the parents and themselves. A "village-like" image was discussed, in the spirit of the African proverb: "It takes a whole village to raise the child", a village that acts as role model for a "functioning" society. Children can perceive ways of dealing with each other and in treating everybody with respect and dignity, they create an environment, worthy of imitation.

Tina: I see us adults as role models. How do we interact with the other, how do I speak to my colleagues, how do I ask them for something? How do I greet them when they come in in the morning—do I look at them or am I fiddling around with something and not interested? The main thing isn't that she's there on time, but rather we are living the image of a community, in what we do together and how we do it, that the child can experience, ahaa, that's how it can work. (...) If we want to cultivate a loving, respectful way of interacting with the children, then we do it with each other too. That's the only way it can be authentic.

Her colleague Sonja goes a step further by pointing out the respect and appreciation of the caregivers' differences "that's the acknowledgement of our different natures then as well, we know then too, what each other's temperament is like, no matter the generation, or what everyone's stance is and that everyone sees things differently".

In the two groups of nursery two the emphasis was on an image as a host family or a foster family. One group laughed a lot during this part of the discussion, joking about relationship patterns, who was the Mum or who was the Dad. Edith says: "You live so closely together that it does have something of a partnership about it, in the broadest sense a partnership that you live and demonstrate here, whether you want to or not." Both groups said that though they are not a substitute for the parents, the structure of the work brings with it a strong "family character", supported by the thought that the children think the caregivers actually live in the nursery. Anne spoke of caring for each other like in a family and her aim to always care for the weakest. I was able to observe this often, e.g. one day a child was very tired and fretful, having had a bad night of travelling home from a short visit at grandma's, and the whole daily rhythm was changed to let him have a good sleep. This feature includes the caregivers as well.

Diane: Yes, I think so too, that it's completely transparent, we know each other so

well, that you see immediately when anything is different (...) it's all so on display (...) a familiar community in which change is immediately noticed, no matter which direction it goes (...) and a community which also shares it, where one person looks out for the other, that's what is distinctive about us. That you are aware of the other and also take responsibility for them too.

4.2.2 Welcoming gestures in regard to attachment security

The caregivers created a protective room or space for the child to develop in as an outer gesture. The inner room or attitude, that the caregivers creates in themselves was conceptualised as receiving the child with an open gesture. As Edith says: “you receive the children just as they are, it's this willingness to open up and take in the child without any judgement, when I have the child already pegged, nothing can happen“, or as Anne says: “This ‘you're welcome here’, that's also a sort of gesture, as a completely open gesture”. This implies an image of the caregiver, receiving the child as seen in ethical concepts of welcoming or Derrida's concept of hospitality, with all it holds and contains or according to Steiner's image of the child, coming with a destiny and a task.

Edith: Well I do think that the child comes from heaven and seeks out its parents and comes here too (...) I think that children bring something with them, their own ability, their own being, a personal self, and our task is to see what is there, what does the child bring with it and what does the child need and how can we do that for the child.

This inner attitude of openness and curiosity seems to be the basis for moments of mutual encounter, observed plentifully in the nurseries and obviously enjoyed by the caregiver and the children. The caregivers spoke of these processes as reciprocal, as outlined in the literature review on the ethics of care. I did observe many moments, in which the caregiver's enjoyed “relatedness” in welcoming and caring moments as “magical moments in the world”. As the youngest caregiver in nursery two describes:

Riccarda: We oil the children's legs before they take a nap and Paul's toes are so ticklish. I only use a little pressure there and then how his face beams—it gives me so much somehow, it is so nice that even when things are strenuous, I can handle it well. It's these brief moments that you have with a child—that is so nice.

I would identify these moments of encounter between child and caregiver as portraying a quality of welcoming the individuality of the child in a hospitable and profound way, with moments of “mutual perception and recognition, (...) like a spark that ignites” (Edith). This image of the spark shows the inner quality of welcoming care. These moments can be seen as nurturing the inhabitation process, welcoming the child into humanity and conveying a high

degree of acceptance, allowing a “vision of a best self” and the child “to explore his ethical self with wonder and appreciation”. In regard to the key concept of attachment security, I regard this quality as essential for conveying security, reliability and mutual acceptance.

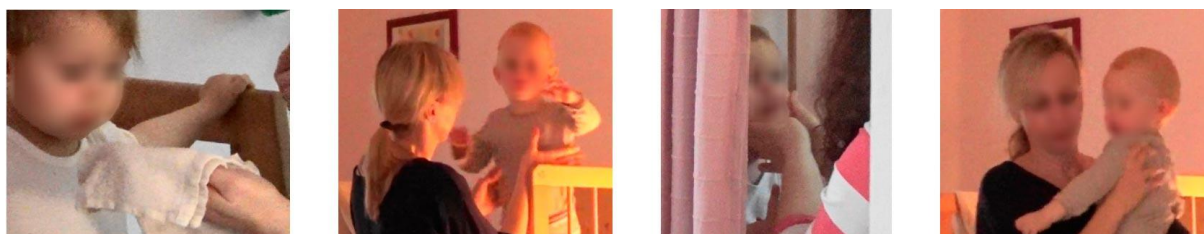
Summary

Welcoming gestures receive the child into the nurseries with preparing an outer and an inner protective space. The environment is prepared in the effort to convey reliability and security to enhance inhabitation in time and space. The child is welcomed with an open gesture and a welcoming and hospitable inner objective into an attachment network created with a focus on building community.

4.3 Caring Gestures

Description

Caring gestures continue the process of welcoming gestures with similar qualities. Apart from a continued care for the environment, the caregivers care for the physical needs of the children in the caring situations like eating or nappy changing. Especially for the young children around one year old, the “one-to-one” caregiving situation was carried out with attention and enveloping, warm gesture and voice. As seen in the pictures below, a protective mood is created while caring in a soft lightened corner of the room.



As described in the introduction, the caregivers observed the children to find “the right time” to single them out, similar to the example in the introduction of the findings chapter. The caregivers took care not to disturb the children while playing. Depending on the age and personality, I saw the caregivers approach them individually with little rituals or certain gestures to invite them for a caring situation. The child’s acceptance or refusal was heard and considered; in most cases, the children’s faces lightened up and they followed the caregiver. With the older children, this process turned sometimes into a humorous play. In caring gestures the caregivers appeared very attentive and nurturing to me, enveloping and mindful of caring for the child. In the group with older children, caring gestures were seen less, the

children were more independent and the caring gesture was conveyed more through language, but the inner enveloping gesture was the same or can be seen as balancing out the missing outer gesture. Caring gestures were adjusted to the developmental need of the age group, as seen in the pictures underneath, when the caregivers started to offer more autonomy.



Caring gestures conveyed reliability, security, and safety through a certain repetitive choreography and an attentive attitude, respect, and affirmation. When the caregivers were distracted, they usually communicated this back to the child and when the child was distracted, this was communicated as well, and the caregiver followed the child's interest and celebrated a moment of shared attention. The older the child was or depending on the individuality, the caregivers were seen to only offer caring gestures and wait for the response. Here I want to include the gesture of the helping hand, where the caregiver only provides care and security through a helping hand. These caring gestures were seen with the hands and sometimes only through the eyes, as to cover the children with comfort and care.



Apart from caring for the physical needs of the children, emotional and spiritual needs were cared for as well. These would be emotional needs, such as attachment, security and warmth

and spiritual needs like being seen, perceived and appreciated. A variety of gestures intended to grant security, protection, appreciation and “someone to hold onto” (Halt) were explored in the interviews. The next picture shows a caregiver with the newly familiarised little boy after sleeping and still in need of “leaning on”.



One example, presented in the picture below on the left, discussed as one of the ‘interesting’ pictures, inspired me as a researcher to rethink my conceptualisation of caring gestures, since the caregiver holding hands with the child was seen as a caring gesture, Diane conceptualises:

The picture on the park bench, that’s something like the haven I was just talking about. With ‘haven’ I associate a sort of place where you’re safe, where you can come to rest and it is also the point from where you can start out all over again. I wouldn’t go so far as to bring maps, and I know for myself what the seas look like, but whether the child sees or feels that, I don’t know and I don’t have to know. Maybe like how you stand in life, you transport that too.



The picture on the right was discussed as well in nursery one:

Tina: I’m providing support on the one side, the one side is calm, and with the other hand I’m caressing him a little, because he was so tired and needed to be close. Just a little bit of affection too. But still I’m looking into the group, because he wasn’t the only child.

As described, caring gestures were observable in substantial amounts and they were the most fruitful kind of gestures in regard to my methodological choice of using photographs to identify gestures in the practices of the caregivers.

4.3.2 Images of professional care: “you are always in relationship”

Image of the child and the caregiver

In caring gestures, the caregivers conceptualised an image of the vulnerable/competent child. As for the caregiver, they spoke of a “satisfier of the needs”. I classified this image in my analysis as a “guarantor”, trying to express the main quality of this image. The caregivers saw themselves as a close perceiver of and carer for the needs of the children, be it individual needs or general developmental needs of their age group. As Ivy says: “To see the needs of the child, to recognize them, to satisfy them, in that sense, to satisfy the child in every area”. These gestures nurture attachment. As Diane says “to see the needs and then to plan the daily rhythm for the child accordingly - that helps the child arrive and that also helps form an attachment, because the child notices, I’m being seen.” As seen in the example on the park bench, Diane conceptualised an image of the caregiver as a “safe haven”, a base for the child to return and relate to like an anchor, when she says: “that’s exactly what’s interesting about the work here, that you’re always in relationship. In kindergarten you’re always in relationship too, but the children need less of this anchor point, this coming to the caregiver, to a point of reference”.

Professional care

The caregivers conceptualised caring gestures as nurturing the child’s needs and providing security and care. The practice of caring gestures was seen as closely linked to the caregiver’s practice of key person system, as to see, who cares for whom? In my observation, this question was discussed quite often, though a set system of care was detectable. In order to research into my key concept of attachment security, apart from conveying security in the caring situation, I asked the caregivers about their key person system, which could be called care system as well.

- **Professional attachment and attachment structures**

Both nurseries had similar practices of attachment networks with different conceptualisations. The familiarisation process was always carried out by one caregiver, who offers attachment, finds a suitable daily rhythm for the child and takes on all the necessary care. Then slowly the

other caregivers join in. In nursery one, caring processes are organised with repetition and continuity, but the key person system is loosened and becomes subordinate. Their experience is that children look for their caregiver that suits their needs the best.

Agnes: They somehow seek out what they need. We do have very different temperaments, we grownups, and I've experienced that what they seek is completely independent of who familiarised them. So eventually, when they've really arrived, then they break away from their key familiarisation caregiver, then they look for who they are most compatible with.

So, once the child is settled in, the team of caregivers take on a shared responsibility, granting security through the community of caregivers. In nursery two, the key caregiver who familiarised the child stays with the child and carries out most of the daily routines. Quality is provided through constant perception and care for "their" children through the assigned caregiver; "an inner attitude comes with it that you constantly carry around, that you carry your key children with you" (Dana). Each key person is assigned three to four children, but they do open the concept due to practical circumstances, such as one caregiver being busy and to avoid to attach too closely.

Edith: So we noticed within our team that it's important for the child to have this one attachment to a caregiver during the familiarisation process, (...) that that's how the foundation is laid (...) that this trust is first fulfilled by one person. But it is also the case that this person cannot fulfil it in the long run in the nursery, because she's ill, because she's on holiday, or isn't working anymore, and when the attachment is based on just that caregiver, then that's a great disappointment for the child.

The caregivers conceptualised professional attachment as a major factor in creating trust and well-being apart from a welcoming and protective environment. Without attachment, pedagogical work and care would not be possible. As Tina says:

For me it is the basis. If I don't have (...) this contact to the child, I can't be there for him. If I can't help, when the child doesn't let me change their nappy—that is something really intimate, we get really close—and I couldn't ever imagine, that when a child is lying in front of me and I notice they're holding their breath or feeling totally uncomfortable, then I would have to stop. I wouldn't be able to take care of them. For me personally that's the very first thing that has to come, actually before anything else.

Attachment is seen as a basis for the pedagogical encounter, as the "heart" of the inhabitation process, and the difficulties in finding the right quantity and quality of professional attachment was discussed, e.g. towards conveying security through reliability in the environment.

Edith: You have to form an attachment to the child you're taking care of, there has to be an attachment. But I always find it difficult to make sure that you don't get the child too attached to you, that you don't make the child dependent on you, that you don't form too strong of an attachment, meaning that you really find a happy medium. And you can accomplish that easily by being reliable and providing clear outer structures—that forms an attachment too. (...) Attachment is surely important, but not this exclusive one. It is elementary, it must lay the groundwork for a basic sense of security, but it shouldn't be exclusive.

Therefore caring gestures are used to nurture attachment, to establish a dyadic security and to open it up to a network character, so that every child can be cared for by every caregiver.

4.3.3 Caring gestures in regard to attachment security

Tina conceptualised being an attachment figure in a profound and simple way, attaching the children to the nursery and to humanity outside the family. "I see it as an attachment (Bindung) or connection (Verbindung), we connect to the child, his path has brought him here, our career paths have also brought us here, so!! And now we're here. To be able to work we enter into an attachment". This hints towards a quality of professional attachment as a requirement to carry out caring gestures. As the literature review on professional attachment discusses loving touch as a necessary ingredient of professional care, the caregivers offer a conceptualisation of an inner gesture of universal love to be able to care with a loving touch.

Tina: This being connected to one another, we are all human beings, and let's assume, this spiritual world, as Rudolf Steiner called it, exists, or God, as the Catholic church calls it, which tells us we are not alone here. And actually I can easily begin with children there, especially when you have your own. When my son was born I thought, that can't be reduced to a sperm cell and ovum and cell division, all that—there is somehow something more, and that's this love your neighbour, or love in general. We are also very often charmed each morning with these little beings. We are happy when they get happy, and then we're with their parents again—how often have I thought that this is exactly what mama and papa should have been able to see. It's this, we belong together and they are brought to us and we are somehow so happy to be able to accompany them.

Compared to love in a family, the caregivers' spoke of pedagogical love, that invites the child into their midst, as Tina says: "I can't describe it in a single word, pedagogical love? Coupled with this love for humanity, which naturally everyone has", and she gives an example that made the whole group laugh: "when a little lad runs through the field, then you open the garden gate, you don't stop and think about whether it's during your working hours or not, or is that one mine or not". Anne declared human love to be an essential inner gesture to connect to the children. Speaking of the children's "right to be loved" she sees the nursery as a place

where this love can be shared with children who are not their own, simply because they are human beings. She says: “you love the child for having been entrusted to you, because you are accompanying them for a part of the way”. This affection is reciprocal as well, as Edith says: “I find that the joy that the children radiate and also this openness they show towards you and also this advance of trust that they bring with them and gift us with, I can gratefully accept it”. Professionalism is conceptualised in a more objective, generalised view on love, having consequences for the practice, as Edith talks of the difference between her love for the nursery children in contrast to her own children, using the urge to kiss and caress as a distinguishing quality: “Well with my own children I constantly have the urge to kiss them. I don’t have that with the other children and I think that is professional”. This objective of giving care with pedagogical love can be understood as a main contribution to conveying attachment security and nurturing an ethical socialisation of trust and care in a professional setting.

Summary

Caring gestures envelop the small child and care for physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Attachment needs are cared for by offering a socialisation of trust within a dyadic and network approach. The objective of offering attachment security involves care with a loving touch and an appreciation of the child’s individual attachment needs. Caring gestures give way to affirmative gestures when the children grow older.

4.4 Affirmative gestures

Description

As the children become more independent and can most take care of themselves in preparation to become kindergarten children, the gestures seem to change. They observe and affirm more without “doing something”. The caregivers seem to “wait” to allow “doing it by themselves”.



These processes needed patience and a supportive attitude conveying trust in the competence of the child. Above are children eating and changing into outdoor clothes. The caregiver on the right sat and waited, sometimes sorting out some socks or doing small things, while the three bigger children dressed themselves, a situation, that took more than 20 minutes and I was astonished by the caregiver's patience. The next two "affirmative" situations, seen often, are when the caregivers shared the child's exploration, here of a book and of another child. The second picture could be regarded as a caring gesture as well, in regard to the child explored.



Affirmative gestures are mainly concerned with providing space and room for development and were seen a lot during free playtime inside and outside. The children were seen exploring themselves, play material, or natural material such as sand, stones or water, the room, the garden and the world with everything in it. They were seen researching into physics, as seen in the following picture in the middle, where the child had a lot of fun discovering the physical limit of falling off the swing with an affirmative caregiver trusting him in his endeavour.



They explored biology in watching animals or plants, sometimes tasting them, mathematics in sorting material and other subjects through intensive play. They also explored themselves in their sociality, as seen in the picture on the top right, where two caregivers were observing a loud conflict between three children, without interfering. The children were fighting about a

swing hanging in the tree. The main strategy used by the children to get to the swing was to shout even louder than the others, but they eventually solved the problem. Or there were little role plays, where the older children learned to understand the world by being cooks, construction workers or mothers and fathers. Next, some exploration of movement and a game of conkers.



Sometimes, the caregivers joined in the gesture and then gave an impulse, individualised and geared towards affirming the child. Like in the helping hand, they are sometimes expressed through physical gestures, but sometimes only seen in inner gestures, or in a “look” or “gaze”. Here the distinction between care and affirmation is fluid.



4.4.2 Images of professional care: “doing nothing?”

Image of the child and the caregiver

In affirmative gestures, the image of the competent, the scientific, and the philosophical child were the dominant images. The caregivers created an image as an escort to accompany the “scientific” development, an “escort on the way”, or an “escort on the developmental path of the child”. In a safe and stable environment, the child explores himself, the others and the world. These developmental steps are perceived without any interference, but with attention and appreciation. Sonja explains:

The word “escort” I find to be actually very nice as the image, I escort the whole thing, and that can’t be a formula, (...) they are trying to find their way, to get to

know everything. That's the way it is with everything in this time, you give them the framework only and everything else can only come from the child, everything they then do.

Another quality was seen to mirror the developmental steps as an “outsider” to support the parents with a professional view of the child from a loving distance, as T. argues:

And then for me it makes a difference to look at—so, where is the child? Can we help them somehow, are there developmental steps that we need to look at more carefully now? (...) As something like an escort through their development, to see, how can we take that up with the parents, so that the process goes well. Even though I'm not working in early intervention or ergo therapy or speech therapy, I'm someone who has the task, I think, to take a step back and observe the child.

Affirmative gestures were found often in the observations, with an emphasis on the child in action and the caregiver “doing nothing”. They were definitely not spectacular, compared to the vast amount of active welcoming and caring gestures. Sometimes these gestures were not easy to select and division between them and other gestures were fluid.

Professional care

The caregivers conceptualised affirmative gestures as the main tool to nurture the child's explorative learning skills and autonomy, as seen in the picture showing a child exploring physical laws on the nest swing in the garden. Connected to their aim of creating a protective environment to nurture inner processes of growth, as in the development of movement and play, they argue that this individual development should not be disturbed. Anne described the difficulty of holding oneself back in affirmative gestures so as to be a mere escort.

The balance between attachment and autonomy, this being on your own and that being attached, and it's not either/or but rather it's both, and it's also being clear about such things as how I tend to be a fearful type, so I have to be careful that I don't impose that on the child, but instead tell myself: see that you take in the child's gestures and watch how the child does it, but don't go into a panic immediately. I think this is the core of early childhood education, attachment.

The attitude to “holding oneself back” was related to a quality of leaving “personal issues by the door” and developing an inner quality deriving from Steiner's ideal of not disturbing the child's development by interfering with personal issues. As Sonja said: “When I leave in the morning, then I know I'm going to work now and I prepare myself and also leave personal stuff somewhat behind, (...) then during that time I'm there and fully concentrated on it”. Being “fully concentrated on it” was conceptualised in regard to affirmative gestures, as to develop an inner gesture of escorting and affirming the children, without outer gestures.

Tina: That's the ideal, the ideal we are striving for, where you struggle to be present with yourself. Yes, but also to be present with the child (...) maybe resting within oneself, but then with purposeful attention and observation. (...) That was hard for me, I had a very long adjustment phase. This insight that physically sitting there and doing nothing as perceived from the outside, is not doing nothing. I like to be moving around and doing something, but that's not the right thing. You need this attentiveness, you need this calm, and to communicate that to kindergarten teachers, you know, sometimes they just come in—there are three of us sitting there and they sometimes look at you like: So?!?! What is it you people do? (laughter).

The caregivers in both nurseries discussed how they adjust their affirmative gestures to the children in resonance.

Diane: I think that a lot of it happens purely intuitively, that you don't reflect on it and that it's about a sort of a resonance. You react differently to older children than you do to smaller ones, to livelier ones differently than to the quiet ones. And I think you pick up some momentum. Or you intentionally do it differently sometimes to add some momentum, a boost. I guess too that a lot of it comes from your feeling.

They also discussed, how conscious or unconscious the gestures are, and were surprised, to see themselves in the pictures or on video, as Tina says: "Many gestures that I make consciously and others that just come or just were that way—there were a lot of moments where I could never have said that I did it one way or the other". Edith was surprised to see the photographs of caregiving situations with a child and realised, that affirmative gestures are not only given by the caregivers, but by the children as well.

As I was looking through the photos, I thought, a lot of it is the gaze. I didn't even realize that, for example here, that she was looking at me. She drives me so crazy, (...) when I say, so, now take off your trousers, then she always somehow does something else and I have the feeling she avoids eye contact with me so that she doesn't have to agree to anything, so, because when she looks at me, then she could notice what I want. And now I see the pictures and see, oh yeah, she does look fairly often. (laughter)

4.4.3 Affirmative gestures in regard to an education for freedom

Affirmative gestures and the image of the caregiver as an escort were conceptualised by the caregivers as enhancing a "free" development of movement and play in the children. In allowing, observing and appreciating the children's developmental expressions, the caregivers seem to practise and train their ability to respect "a sacred space", in which the child has the opportunity to be on his own, to be unguarded, to work independently on himself. As seen in the literature review on the Waldorf educational image of the child, these steps of walking,

speaking and thinking, as connected to playing, should not be disturbed, but respected with a “living observation” to improve the caregiver’s knowledge of human development. To repeat Sonja’s quote, the children are trying “to find their way, to get to know everything” they are learning “to get to know” themselves, their community and the world. This respect for how the children conquer their surrounding seems to allow them a deep look into the children’s aim to individualise and socialise. Development is seen as individual and “done in their own time”, and is sometimes not always fully perceivable to the caregivers. As Sonja says: “with this connection to the angels, a lot happens that you can’t even really grasp”. Still the observation of the children allows the caregivers an understanding of the individuality of the child and its individual “inner drive”. As Sonja expressed: “they are all so unique”.

Tina: if you see the children (at movement and play), how they try out and see and then they try again and again, they repeat and then you look at another child, then you can see it, you can see how different the other child does something similar (...) these are developmental sequences, every child goes through, the one early, the other one later, but it is already clear and obvious, who the child is and who wants to come here.”

This objective of respect in affirmative gestures seems to enhance the self-reflective processes to “hold oneself back” and the caregiver’s ability to engage in “living observation” in order to nurture an education for freedom.

Summary

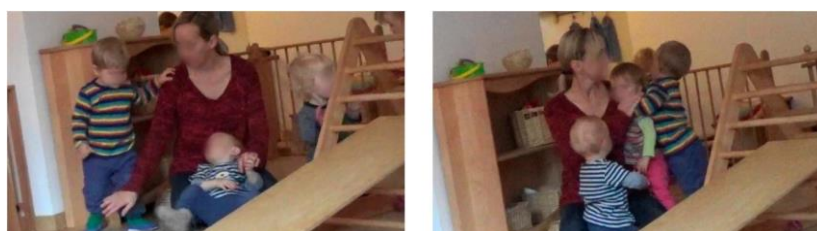
Affirmative gestures escort the children in their developmental processes, where they should “not be disturbed”. The caregiver’s train their perception to understand the child in his developmental aims and his individuality and develop a respectful quality of “holding oneself back”, and to align their gestures accordingly.

4.5 Delimiting or preceding gestures

Description

Delimiting gestures were seen rarely in the nursery. Their presence grew, when the atmosphere became loud, energetic and a bit “unruly”. In these situations the caregivers set impulses to change the outer environment, e.g. put a challenging slide on the Pikler triangle to nurture the need for greater movement or took some children to the garden to run or simply be there and act as “go-betweens” to prevent hurtful collision moments. The caregivers delimited children’s gestures of the children to protect weaker children in a conflict situation or to offer

a solution or a safe escort. Delimiting gestures are seen in the pictures below. In the pictures a child seemed to be interested in climbing into the caregiver's lap or find physical contact and in doing so, the other children were "in the way". He tried to influence the situation by kicking the little boy lying down and removing the little girl. In this situation, he gestured his need and the caregiver entered into the gesture and diverted it, not allowing the gesture to be carried out to the end.



Preceding gestures were observable when the caregiver took action and introduced a gesture to solve a situation or convey a cultural input such as a ritual. The next picture shows a situation, where a nappy change was urgently needed but not welcomed by the little girl, expressed through running around in the room. The caregiver waited for a brief moment of "encounter" and then preceded, before the child could escape again.



4.5.2 Images of professional care: "the socio-cultural role model"

Image of the child and the caregiver

Delimiting and preceding gestures could be classified to create an image of the child in need of cultural advice and guidance. The caregivers constructed an image as a role model to convey societal rules and regulations and sometimes delimit gestures that were not acceptable, such as hitting or biting. They spoke of problems such as dealing with aggression among the children, or other "difficult" behaviour and their aim to deal with these issues professionally, to be open and respectful and to try to understand the developmental process for the child.

Tina: We once had a child, he was just always laying himself on top of the other children. They screamed and kicked, tears were pouring down their cheeks, noses

running. He would have kept it up for another three years. This was really something uuuhh, but today I think that was just his individuality, today he probably doesn't do that anymore. But I had to learn from it. It was hard for me. I sometimes had to struggle with my emotions over it.

The image of the caregiver as a role model was conceptualised to convey an adult, self-reflective and aware of her responsibility to guide the child, even in these difficult times.

These gestures are used to educate the children and stimulate self-regulation, seeing the child as a cultural being and the caregiver as a cultural role model.

Edith: What I sometimes do deliberately, Joe is always so theatrical and I want him to drop some of the theatrics. (...) "*Heile, heile Segen*" (a children's healing song) and all kinds of stuff for when he's "just" bumped his foot, small gestures for small injuries, big gestures for big injuries, that these things are handled in proportion, that the child also learns through these gestures to respond to the world in measure. There are parents who are always throwing their hands up in the air—oh for God's sake, what happened? When this gesture diminishes, then the pain also diminishes somewhat, so I think you can also use these gestures a little purposely when you notice that there's a pattern behind it that's not good for the child. (...) You need to steer that a little bit.

Professional care

The use of delimiting gestures was conceptualised as a challenge in professional care and the caregivers perceive working in a team as supportive and helpful in this regard, in sharing and reflecting on difficult situations together and appreciating a fresh look from outside. As Tina says: "have a look and think, why this way actually, why not another way? And what effect does this gesture have on the child?" or "When you have a colleague and you think, wow, that really works well for her, so great, and I have problems with it every time. Does she do it differently?" This group of gestures was not discussed widely, and the functions of delimiting and preceding gestures were less conceptualised in the interview. One further example of a preceding gesture is offered and discussed in the chapter on pondering gestures.

4.5.3 Delimiting and preceding gestures in regard to an education for freedom

Related to welcoming and caring gestures, delimiting and preceding gestures and the corresponding image of the caregivers as role models seem to come with a responsibility to be an authentic adult and to convey an image of the human being that the children can look up to, welcoming the child as a social responsibility and a cultural task. This task can be related to the "best vision in oneself" but I would classify it in a more sociocultural sense. In order to carry out this role a high degree of self-reflection is needed, as a raised awareness of personal,

cultural and “professional” patterns, conveyed to the children. The data showed, that the caregivers were only partly aware of their own patterns. As Diane says: “I don’t think I’m aware of it, or it’s become so thoroughly blended in over the years that I just can’t separate it out anymore”. Edith states: “how you were raised yourself, how you grew up yourself, I think that plays a big role and by learning it you can differentiate, you can recognize and notice, what in there is mine, and what’s professional?” They aimed to professionalise their gestures, to avoid unconscious transmission of patterns to the children, since they “grow into our attachment patterns” (Edith). The caregivers expressed a need for further training. As Tina says: “that’s where I always say, we would have to work more, get more of a foundation, get more involved with theories and approaches to see, how does it work actually?” She continues:

For us to sit down some time and to ask, what are attachment structures like in general, what are our patterns? I haven’t really reflected on that yet. I haven’t looked at that yet in detail, and really, almost autobiographically, sit down and look, maybe together with someone external (...), so that we can maybe recognize patterns or they become explicit, where we can think them over again.

Delimiting and preceding gestures were not very often seen in the nursery, which can be understood to enhance an education for freedom in holding back strong enculturation gestures and unconscious transmission of sociocultural patterns, in order to allow as much individualisation as possible.

Summary

Delimiting and preceding gestures are less used. They were used to stop or protect children to solve a difficult situation or convey sociocultural values, rules and necessities.

4.6 Pondering Gestures

Description

The category of pondering gestures sparked a wide discussion of the use of the right gesture at the right time, be it a welcoming or caring gesture, or an affirmation, delimiting or preceding gesture. Pondering gestures were not outer gestures, but mainly an inner dialogue or gesture of the caregiver, conceptualised by Sonja as a pedagogical conflict with herself. Examples were seen often in my observation, and expressed by Tina:

Getting a feel, always this getting a feel for, how much does the child need me now? This respectful advancing towards them to respond but then also stepping

back again. That the child always feels perceived. Of course others are often in the foreground, but when a child comes, then we are there. And sometimes we are like, now we are looking for the boundaries, you have to stay where you are—that's also sometimes what it's about. So not only the lovingness, of course we're also loving, but this, that you just say so, that's the way it is now, I'm not changing my mind, you can complain about it, and for a long time if you want, you can go to the corner and make a show of it, you can scream loudly, still that's the way it is, that we are now changing clothes and taking a nap. And that we just stand there as a person and then see with the child, how it reacts.

One example being a separation situation, where a caregiver had difficulties dealing with a separation from a grandmother, who visited the nursery for the first time and took a long to leave, since she was interested and curious. The boy seemed very tired and “out of rhythm”. The family, including the grandmother had travelled back home from a holiday the night before and it had got late. The situation ended with the caregiver taking the crying child away from the grandmother. Tina explains her difficulty and qualms with the situation: “With this gesture, I struggle, no, to take the children away, (...) that's this physical power over them. Of course they can scream, they can kick and flail, but none of that helps—I'm stronger.” She describes:

His grandma did want to leave, she said so too, but she also looked around and chatted a bit. She was interested and said a few things, and now he noticed, she's about to go and you're staying here for a while, and so he got up then, and I sort of got between them when he wanted to go to his grandma. He'd been sitting on her lap before and she kneeled down. Before he could grab his grandma again I took the opportunity and got him.



As seen in the first picture the caregiver sat for a very long time, welcoming the child and the grandmother, then entered into a phase of pedagogical conflict with herself, whether to take the child, who started to cry every time the grandmother tried to leave, or to wait.

4.6.2 Images of professional care: “what’s the right gesture?”

The image of the child and the caregiver

In pondering gestures, the image of the child is multi-layered and open-ended and accordingly the image of the caregiver very close to Steiner’s image, asking: Who are you, who do you want to become and what do you need from me? This gesture ponders among all possible gestures and seems to be highly individual, context- and personality-dependant, since the caregivers pondering led to different resulting possible gestures in the interviews.

Professional care

Pondering gestures were discussed in depth. The situation with the grandmother was discussed, looking for the right gesture, when the child clearly indicates that it does not want to be separated, so the caregiver ponders between welcoming and affirmative gestures, ending up with the need for a preceding gesture and acting as a role model, taking on responsibility.

Sonja: You can’t leave the responsibility to the child. It would be too much to expect them to say something like: Grandma, it’s time now, please go now, you know we want to close the door now. Agnes: Or, child, you decide. Do you want your grandma to leave now? Sonja: Yes, you assume the responsibility and that’s how you exude a sense of certainty.

Agnes describes her pondering to find the right moment to take the children or to give them time to continue with their tasks. She describes difficult moments.

What is also sometimes hard for me is when they’re occupied with something, for example, we’re going out now, or we’re going to do this or that—to wait for the right moment. Or also when they, I mean, it does work, but when they don’t want to have their nappies changed and such. When should I stop waiting, when should I just take them? When can I leave them alone for longer? That’s still sort of hard for me.

A caregiver gave the example of a conflict between two girls fighting for a position to lie on a shelf, 2.10 and 2.6 years old. The situation did not happen during my observations, but was discussed in the interview. Here the pondering between caring and affirmative gestures was conceptualised as “I go over there now and get her out, or I let her keep fighting and I have to see what happens next”.

Tina: A few weeks ago, I had the situation that May was lying on a shelf and Lia wanted to have the exact same place. I mean, they sometimes lie there on top of each other. Naturally, Lia wanted to push May down, but May was holding on tight and I was crouched down beside them waiting and waiting and waiting, and the screaming got louder and louder, since the children were the same age and

equally strong and they were only pushing, I let them. At some point Lia started to hit, then I stopped her and said, hitting is not okay. And after May called Agnes and then called Irma for help, then she looked around and looked at me really angrily like, you're sitting here the whole time and just don't help me. Then I let her continue and after a while May got down and sat with me and had to finish crying, and that was the end of it for her. And Lia sat on my other knee, and since then they've never had such a serious fight again.

The caregivers pondered over two contradictory aims; on one hand they acknowledged the importance for the children to test their “willpower” to see, how far they can go, as well as learning social skills. As Agnes says: “They learn about social contacts, they learn to interact with each other, how they can solve that themselves as they grow up. If, as an adult, you always settled it, then they never learn to settle that themselves, which is important”. On the other hand, they need to reflect on the intensity of the situation and their responsibility to care and protect, as Tina says: “to experience this desperation too, (...) she was in conflict, in distress. That makes you weigh the decision, to what extent to intervene, to what extent to refrain from it?” They discussed the situation of the child and her developmental needs and how they try to allow individualisation to happen.

Sonja: It always depends, you sort of know the child and sort of know their story, and particularly with May you know that she's almost always with adults who more or less do everything for her (...) that is also an experience for such a child, that (...) mama doesn't come this time to decide in her favour.

To ponder and align their behaviour according to the child's need is seen as a central gesture in the two Waldorf nurseries.

4.6.3 Pondering gestures in regard to an education as self education

Pondering gestures seem to hold the key to getting a deeper understanding of the phenomena of professionalism and the caregiver's conceptualisation of professional care. As seen in the inductive analysis, pondering gestures are presented as an inner dialogue of the caregiver to themselves, to decide in the given situation how to react, whether it be care or nurture, distant affirmation or an active act as in delimiting or preceding gestures. To professionalise the use of gestures, the data indicates two different ways of professionalism or self-education: How the inner dialogue, the process of pondering is carried out in regard to an education for freedom for the little child and, how the caregivers develop their ability to carry out each gestures in a professional, self-reflective way, without imposing “their personal stuff” on the children. This individual professionalization, since every caregiver “needs to develop

different qualities (...) there is no general formula” (Tina) is essential to the caregivers conceptualisation of professionalism, since “the younger the child, the more I need self-education, it’s just what I am and not what I do, and that naturally makes the work somewhat difficult” (Sonja). The caregivers see nursery care as a path for self-development.

Anne: That you try to set a worthy example in what you do here, what you think, what you say, to be a worthy role model and someone to achieve uprightness (*Aufrichtigkeit*) with, physically, but also spiritually. Of course that’s not something that happens consciously. (...) but I always try to bring out the best in myself for the child, because the child always looks to you and wants to learn from you.

This reflectivity is seen as a challenge, but also a great tool for self-development, since the children’s individuality and destiny might connect to their own developmental tasks, as they discuss in line with the concept of professionalism, as outlined by Manning Morton, that nursery education might confront the caregivers with the darker side of development and be faced with their own patterns and vulnerabilities.

Anne: Where I’ve often had the feeling that the child keeps showing me a place where I need to work on myself, and has come to me to show me that. Ivy: I’ve often had the feeling, oh yeah, I was the one who familiarised this child. That brings me a certain task of my own, so this child is like a challenge for me with the issues I have and where I can grow through them.

This process is seen as a path to follow and not as a goal to achieve, since the process of self-development never ends.

Edith: I also think that you should have a certain inner disposition towards the world, towards fellow human beings, and it should be well-meaning, you should also sort of—well have something like pure thoughts, you yourself should sort of be cleaned up, in order to meet the child with openness. And that involves constantly questioning yourself, in your actions, in your situations. Everybody has difficult situations and, how do you master them, how do you find your way out of them again? And so then the children experience you, not doing everything perfectly and not being able to do everything perfectly, but this striving for it, that you are reflective about it and also that you aren’t doing it just for yourself but also for the others, and as anthroposophy thinks, that you’re doing it for the spiritual world as well.

In pondering gestures the caregivers’ follow the Waldorf educational image of the caregiver as well as the call for self-reflection and self-development, as outlined in the discussion of professionalism. They don’t follow the call for a technification, but try to carry out an education as self-education, that does not shy away from personal and emotional issues, their own vulnerability, and “the darker side of learning”.

Summary

Pondering gestures are inner dialogues in which the caregivers ponder in search of the suitable gesture. Pondering gestures are seen as self-developmental tools, assisting the caregivers to raise awareness of the use of gestures and to reflect on their own patterns with regard to caring for the child as a worthy role model.

4.7 Summary

I have presented findings based on the use of gestures as found in the practice of the nurseries. Gestures as a methodological tool to research into professional care have proved viable. Tangible and concrete, they allowed an inquiry into sensitive areas such as a socialisation of trust or care or into professional attachment.

In my analysis, I identified five main categories, introduced in the methods chapter and described and analysed in the findings chapter. The selective divide of some gestures can be seen as fluid, which is understandable given the complexity and interrelatedness of gestures, but a dominant quality of the gestures was identified using inductive and deductive logic with great support from the participants of the study as co-researchers.

welcoming	caring	affirmative	delimiting preceding	pondering
Preparation of a protective environment Community building Welcoming and hospitable inner attitude	Socialisation of care for physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Socialisation of trust in a dyadic and network approach. Professional attachment with pedagogical love	Escort of developmental processes Respectful inner quality of “holding oneself back”	Stop or protect children Role model to convey sociocultural values, rules and necessities	Inner dialogues Self-developmental tools

The gestures were described and analysed in regard to the images of the child and the caregiver and images and conceptualisations of professional care.

The analysis showed *images of the child*, as the incarnating, the competent and the vulnerable child, the scientific and the philosophical child, sometimes in need of sociocultural guidance. It showed *images of the caregiver* as a creator of a welcoming, protective environment and a guarantor for the child's needs in a holistic way; images as an attachment figure, an escort, a role model and as a self-educator.

The analysis showed *conceptualisations of professional care* creating a protective physical environment (sheath) around the little child with a repetitive daily rhythm, stable room structures and clear key person models. The protective environment includes a focus on community-building. Professional care includes holistic care for the children to feed their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, and nurturing professional attachment as the heart of professional care. Professional care involves a free development of movement and play with affirmation of inner developmental processes, as well as conveying socio-cultural impulses. Professional self-development is marked by self-reflective qualities such as “to hold oneself back” and to reflect on one's own inner structures and patterns in order to professionalise professional care.

Behind these gestures a motivation or objective has been identified, like welcoming care with pedagogical love, respect and sociocultural responsibility. Framing the interconnection, I argue for seeing gestures as a main pedagogical tool to convey professional care with pedagogical love, respect and sociocultural responsibility, towards the aim or goal of offering attachment security, and allowing an education for freedom and an education as self-education.

The analysis proved the data to be inherently rich and various further research questions emerged in the process and had to be put aside. The empirical findings presented will be used in the next chapter to be discussed in regard to the theoretical background as laid out in my literature review. In order to answer the research question of the caregivers' practice and conceptualisation of professional care, the findings are linked back to existing theorisation in order to gain a new understanding of professional care in Waldorf nurseries and contribute to the existing educational discourses, presented in the literature review.

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I return to my research questions. The chapter is structured according to the sub-research questions, which I use to examine the caregivers' conceptualisations and practices in light of the key concepts of attachment security, an education for freedom, and an education as self-education. In each section I will briefly return to each concept, relate it to theoretical perspectives introduced in the literature review, and use it to discuss the empirical findings. In this way, I will answer the main research question: What are Waldorf nursery caregiver's conceptualisations and practices of professional care for children under three? At the end I discuss how this knowledge can contribute to current educational discourses on nursery care.

5.2 Attachment security

The concept of attachment security derived from attachment theory and research and has been established as a basic need and a vital developmental ingredient of care and education, configurational for lifelong learning and emotional well-being. This concept has been discussed to considerations of a socialisation of trust and care as generic terms to understand attachment security in a wider sense in regard to the enculturation processes every society is responsible for. The discussion on professional care and attachment in nurseries revealed the lack of appreciation for emotional labour. It also illustrated the challenges of providing constant emotional availability as a risk factor to offering attachment security in institutionalised care. In this chapter I want to discuss the findings in the light of these theoretical perspectives.

5.2.1 "To create a protective sheath"

The caregivers conceptualised the creation of a protective sheath to welcome and care for the little child, an enveloping environment conveying a sense of trust and security in granting reliability, continuity and "hold". The conceptualisation of the caregivers included the physical "room" with clear room structures and an individualised, reliable daily rhythm to care for the child's individual needs and nurture an inhabitation in time and space. Another feature of the protective sheath was seen in building a community around a child in order to

create an image or a “role model” of a functioning society. This image incorporated the team of colleagues and the children and a focus on community-building with the parents. Though sometimes described as difficult, community building with the parents was seen as essential. The caregivers welcomed the parents and “celebrated their existence” to offer an attachment network conveying security and trust. The caregivers expressed this feature as helping the child to familiarise into the nursery.

Community-building with the children and the team was practised similarly but conceptualised differently. As one nursery followed an image of a village as a role model of a developing community related to the image of the researcher caregiver, nursery two conceptualised their community more as a foster or host family, related to the image of a mother caregiver. These concepts were mirrored in the key person approach, where nursery one had a focus on a network and nursery two on a dyadic approach. Both nurseries followed a dyadic start in attaching the child to one caregiver and opening the system to a network approach, but with different conceptualisations in keeping the dyadic view and incorporating co-caregivers, or opening the system and following a straight network approach to grant security through the community. But both keyperson systems were clear and reliable, and both systems cared for both, dyadic and network needs of the children.

In regard to the images of the child, as discussed in the literature review, traditional attachment theory focussed on an image of the vulnerable child, and new network approaches incorporate the image of the (culturally) competent child, incorporating the child’s ability to adapt to dyadic attachment patterns, but to communal and societal patterns as well. In the network approach attachment is seen as a sociocultural construct and the child as part of a network of relationships/attachments competent in caring for its needs. The empirical data reflect this shift. The child is seen in his individual attachment needs, as in nursery one, where they choose their favourite caregiver depending on their needs. As Agnes said: “they somehow seek out what they need”. Attachment security is conveyed in regard of the underlying image of the competent child, theorized as part of an attachment network in a network of relationships (Degotardi & Pearson, 2014). In nursery two attachment security is conveyed in an attachment network as well, but with a clear dyadic approach, it proved to be more challenging not to “attach” the children too closely. The discussions indicated that the dyadic approach comes with a stronger need for self-reflective practice and self-development as a professional attachment figure and an increased risk of interchanging the elementary

concept of professional attachment to an exclusive concept in attaching the child to one caregiver exclusively.

Both nurseries saw the dualism of portraying dyadic and network attachment security as an area of nursery education that needs attention, new conceptualisations, research, and reflective practice. Both nurseries saw the need for new research into professional attachment to find a balance between “approaching and distancing” (Gutknecht 2010), between offering attachment security and not attaching the child too closely. They conceptualised the origin of their key person model mainly from their own experience, and to reflect on one’s own attachment structures and patterns was seen as a challenge and as a future task, as Tina asked for further training to recognize and rethink patterns. This desire for further training shows the caregivers’ openness for professionalisation of the process of conveying attachment security, but to raise consciousness of the sociocultural patterns conveyed with granting attachment security as well.

To summarise, the caregivers’ conceptualisations of attachment security as welcoming the child into a protective sheath is practised through a creation of “clear structures”. The environment that included the parents was complemented with clear attachment networks. How to offer attachment security with regard to dyadic and network approaches depends on the personal preference of the caregivers, embedded in the organisational approach at each nursery and this is seen as a subject for further research and constant self-reflection in the teams. But both sociocultural constructs of key person systems see attachment security as a central feature of professional care.

5.2.2 Professional attachment

The creation of “clear” structures as a protective sheath nurtures the sense of security and therefore benefits professional attachment, offering reliability in outer structures. Both nurseries created images of the caregiver as a guarantor for the needs of the children with welcoming encounters. This gaze to care for the developmental and individual needs of the children and welcome them with their individuality conveys attachment security as well, since the child is reliably cared for, seen, and nurtured. This care was seen as forming professional attachment, reflecting Manning Morton’s concept in the discourse on professionalism, which posited care for children as the foundation for a secure attachment, claiming that how the children are cared for plants the seed for attachment and later well-being (2006). Professional

attachment was conceptualised as the heart of professional care. The dominant use of welcoming, caring and affirmative gestures conveys the mentioned protective sheath to envelop the child in, at the same time nurturing a professional dealing with the child's need of "doing it their own". Caring with moments of welcoming encounters and respect for the individuality can be seen as forming a basis for professional attachment to develop. At the same time, professional attachment was conceptualised as the heart of the inhabitation process and seen as a pre-condition to be able "to carry out the work" and support the caregivers' objectives to care with pedagogical love and a professional "loving touch". This shows an interrelation between welcoming, caring and affirmative gestures and professional attachment and offers a thought that one key to "intellectualising" loving encounters and care, as seen in Pages concept of professional love (Page, 2011), can be seen in a conscious use of these gestures. This offers a chance to meet Gutknecht's call for responsive touch to find a balance between "approaching and distancing", to protect the child and the caregiver, and lower the risk of institutionalised caregivers avoiding emotional availability (Gutknecht, 2010).

"Pedagogical love"

To grant professional love as a special feature in nursery care was discussed as a vital ingredient in forming professional attachment. A general conceptualisation of the inner nature of professional attachment was seen in a universal love for the children, as a pedagogical love, inherently human and partly connected to religious or spiritual backgrounds. Steiner's concept of reconnection, as a chance for us adults to reconnect to forces, helping us "to achieve harmony with the part in us, that is wiser than our conscious intelligence" (Steiner, 1987a, p. 21) might be related to the caregiver's concept of pedagogical love nurturing a deep understanding and love for human nature and the respect or "feeling" of human "dignity" in education. The close interrelation between welcoming, caring, and affirmative gestures can be related to philosophical assumptions in regard to an ethic of care, where the term ethical love was used as an ethical responsibility. The caregivers seem to be aware of this responsibility and to take on the challenge of caring with professional, pedagogical or ethical love as a human necessity.

Therefore I summarise, that the practice of a conscious and professional use of gestures nurtures professional attachment with pedagogical and ethical love, to grant attachment security in an institutionalised setting such as a nursery.

Embracing vulnerability

The findings in regard to the image of the vulnerable child relates to the image of the caregiver as a creator of a protective sheath and as a guarantor for the needs of the individual child. The image of the vulnerable child was embraced, enveloped and part of the concept, as Anne conceptualises her image of the community as always “care for the weakest”. Following ethical considerations of care, the caregivers take on the responsibility for the next generation and accept the “face-to-face encounter” with the children as asymmetrical, as children “are vulnerable to our response and their being depends on our care” (Vandenberg, 1999, p. 36).

The caregivers’ conceptualisations of the vulnerable child can be discussed in regard to traditional attachment theory and the image of the caregiver as a mother caregiver, embracing the child in his need for attachment, protection and care. But the data also showed that this process is reciprocal and mirrors back into the caregivers’ image of a caring community.

Diane spoke of the transparency of their community, of their awareness of vulnerabilities, and how they take responsibility for it. These findings indicate, that an image of the human being is constructed as an individual, but a part of a community as well, welcomed in both their vulnerability, and with their competence. This can be understood as nurturing a socialisation of trust and care and using Weisner’s (2014) image of a choir, offers a chance to enhance the child’s environment “with many different songs and lyrics in many different and wonderful idioms, all contributing to the goals and moral directions for life desired, with varying scripts for producing a secure and sufficiently trusting person” (p. 267). This image conveys a habitat for small children in which attachment security is provided through a professional socialisation of trust and care. Considering these findings in the light of notions of a schoolification (Elfer, 2007) or technification (Moss, 2006) of nursery care, I would argue that an exclusion of our vulnerability, be it the child’s or the caregiver’s, will lead into the wrong direction and nurture a socialisation of trust and care with questionable sociocultural consequences. I will return to this point in more depth below.

In summary, attachment security is seen as central in professional care and is offered through the creation of a protective sheath around the child. This sheath has many layers. Reliability is offered in the outer and the inner environment with clear structures. With a focus on community building, key person systems are established with dyadic and network approaches, offering professional attachment with pedagogical love, subject to constant self-reflection and

professionalization. Attachment security is seen as vital for the inhabitation process of welcoming the child into the human community in an institutionalised setting.

5.3 Education for freedom

The notion of an education for freedom is central to Waldorf education. The literature review identified the relevance of this concept in the aim to nurture future autonomy and freedom of personality and connected this notion to the inhabitation process of the first three years as a transition period, in learning to walk, to talk, and to think (Steiner, 1983, 1987a, 1989b). Play holds a central importance in this concept. Further images of the little child from various academic fields were discussed in regard to the dualism of individualisation and socialisation processes. In this chapter I will discuss the empirical findings in the light of these theoretical perspectives.

5.3.1 Individualisation through a socialisation of trust and care

The previous chapter has shown the caregivers' aim to welcome the children into a protective sheath, to convey attachment security, reliability, continuity and "hold". It was discussed, that the dominance of welcoming and caring gestures was balanced with affirmation and respect to allow professionalisation. I argue that we should see the respect, especially vivid in affirmative gestures, the caregivers' images of the competent, scientific and philosophical child and in the image of the caregiver as an escort, as nurturing a free development in this safe and secure environment.

The incarnating individuality

The child is welcomed into the protective environment with an inner gesture of respect and curiosity. Following the image of the child as an incarnating individuality, the caregivers welcome the child into humanity and into the protective environment of the nursery to be able to "feel comfortable" and to "do the things it wants to do" (Sonja). Affirmative gestures allow these developmental processes to happen in freedom. These processes, as in a free development of movement and play, are to be observed with respect and as little interference as possible. In carrying out these immense steps in autonomy, e.g. learning to walk, the child learns to trust himself, trains and develops his willpower and his sense of self confidence, nurturing a future freedom of personality. Or as in play, where the child explores himself and the world and learns to think and to learn with motivation and inner drive.

But the notion of an education for freedom was conceptualised and practised in other gestures as well. Welcoming, caring and affirmative gestures were the dominant gestures used and can be seen to be the main gestures in professional care in the Waldorf nurseries. Delimiting gestures were seen less often. To avoid strong delimitation, the caregivers followed a preventive strategy, seeing the need for limitation “as a last resort” and an indicator that the children are overstrained or somehow irritated. The need for friction or “feeling themselves”, typical for the “terrible twos” and seen as important for the inhabitation process was partly answered with delimiting or preceding gestures, but as seen in the example of the two girls on the shelf, with affirmation and care as well. The caregivers conceptualised their aim to understand the child’s developmental need, before a delimiting gesture is used. This nurtures an education for freedom, since the child is seen and treated with respect. Preceding gestures were seen more often, but were more difficult to identify. Preceding gestures as moments of enculturation through rituals such as morning ring, festival celebration or other ritualised time as a group together, central in Waldorf educational conceptualisations for kindergarten were rare as well. Therefore the main objective lies in professional care with pedagogical love and respect and enculturation happens mainly through these inner motivations and practices, instead of through delimiting and preceding gestures to convey sociocultural patterns. Therefore the inhabitation and enculturation process is dominantly imbued with the socialisation of trust and care, discussed in the following two sections.

The socialisation of care

In regard to the ethical concept of a socialisation of care, the caregivers welcome the individuality of the child. Especially in moments of mutual encounter, they see and accept it with everything or “more than it contains” (Levinas, 1991) and a hospitable gesture (Derrida, 1999; Ruitenberg, 2011), without “pegging” the child to their preconceived notions (Edith). I argue, that this practice nurtures individualisation or an education for freedom, that it opens a free space for the child to step in and incarnate with all it brings with it. This respect is visible in other gestures as well, e.g. how the caregivers carry out caring gestures. When the caregivers suggest a nappy change and the child is free to respond, they may well be practising Noddings (1986) concept of ethical care, where the child, though vulnerable in his need of care, is seen as a competent communication partner, free to respond and be heard. Language is used according to the gesture in offering care, but with respect for the child’s response and will.

Caring gestures were essential, when the children were small, and the older they became changed into affirmative gestures, allowing the children to “do it by themselves”. This further nurtures the notion of an “education for freedom”, as the children are given the chance to learn to care for themselves in small steps with the support and affirmation of the caregiver. Individualisation is supported by socialisation processes, enveloping the child’s vulnerability, but implying the child’s ability to care for himself, gaining autonomy, as seen in the situation, where the caregiver let the children take a long time to get dressed by themselves.

The socialisation of trust

The same transition is seen when we look at the development of professional attachment in regard to a socialisation of trust. Though highly individual, the caregivers often describe the first part of the process quite close: “during the first period you are so completely attached to the child” (Dana). During the child’s stay in the nursery this closeness gives way to a network approach and the child becomes part of the community, with attachment security conveyed by the community. This form of a socialisation of trust encourages an education for freedom. The child is regarded as a competent attachment partner and his attachment needs considered, as in nursery one, where the child is free to choose the person he wants to care for him, and in conveying a secure environment of an attachment network, autonomy is nurtured through security. A second outcome of this study in this regard can be seen in the caregiver’s reliability and their notion of caring with pedagogical love, nurturing emotional well-being and mutual acceptance, as a basis for enhancing exploration and free development and therefore an education for freedom.

In summary, the caregivers’ conceptualisations and practices of professional care in regard to the individualisation of the child as an education for freedom lies in the conscious use of affirmative gestures with the related conceptualisation of the images of the competent, the scientific and the philosophical child, and the caregiver as an escort. A second feature can be seen in an enculturalisation occurring less through delimiting or preceding gestures, but rather through a respectful socialisation of trust and care.

5.3.2 Bridging the gap: “nurture is our nature”

Gestures are intermingled and interrelated. Caring and affirmative gestures are shown to be as well in a peculiar way, if analysed towards their interrelated use and the use of language. In nursery two, as seen in my introductory glimpse, the use of gesture and language was slightly

different from their use in nursery one. Though the practice observed was quite similar, the caregivers were more affirmative, using more language to mirror and care for the child, “holding themselves back” physically. A warm inner caring gesture was conceptualised, e.g. in the picture on the bench with the caregiver holding the child’s hands and discussing this moment as a “safe haven situation”. As outlined in the previous chapter, the caregivers in this nursery conceptualised their community as a foster family and followed a more dyadic approach in their key worker system, accompanied with a need to avoid “exclusivity”. They seem to balance the conceptual dyadic image of attachment with a more affirmative outer gesture, conveying affirmation with an inner gesture of care. In nursery one, much more physical contact and a dominance of enveloping caring gestures was seen, while language was used less. The caregivers conceptualised their community as a “place for encounter”, a developing community, and followed a network approach as key person model. In the picture with a caregiver on the floor with a child lying on her legs, the caregiver conceptualised the physical closeness with an affirmative gesture as an inner gesture.

These findings show, how interrelated the gestures are. This finding could be interpreted as following different “styles”, depending on the conceptualisation of professional care and the training background e.g. how intensively the Pikler impulse is integrated, leading to a more affirmative approach. But the findings can be discussed as well with regard to inner and outer gestures. The caregivers seem to balance the two gestures of care and affirmation as inner and outer gestures to allow connection, security and closeness as well as freedom, affirmation and autonomy at the same time. This balancing out can be seen as pursuing the aim of allowing an education for freedom in order grant the child “a sacred space”, either conveyed through a high degree of freedom in the outer gesture with a preference for affirmative gestures or a high degree of inner freedom in offering loving care with an inner gesture of affirmation and “holding oneself back”. To express this in simple words: care with affirmation and affirmation with care.

The dualism of care and affirmation or attachment and autonomy can be placed within a wider philosophical discourse, being and belonging, as discussed in the first part of the literature review (Degotardi & Pearson, 2014). These are two human needs to be considered central to human development and shaped deeply in the first three years through individualisation and socialisation (enculturalisation) processes. The caregivers offer welcoming, caring and affirmative gestures in a dualism of nurturing love and freedom, attachment and autonomy.

As Anne says it is: “the balance between attachment and autonomy, this being on your own and that being attached, and it’s not either/or but rather it’s both, (...) I think this is the core of early childhood education, attachment”. One way to understand this interrelationship is through perspectives such as the concept of yin and yang or the view of love and freedom as two essential and necessarily interrelated human needs that must be addressed in settings of professional care. Its interrelationship can be expressed through love as the heart of freedom and freedom as the heart of love. From this perspective the findings encourage a use of gestures that follows this philosophical concept in offering professional attachment and love with granting freedom and autonomy as an inner gesture, and a use of gestures in offering affirmation and autonomy with an inner gesture of love and welcoming encounter. This adds another layer to the use of gestures and this finding indicates how sensitive and complex professional care as an educational field is.

In summary, the Waldorf educational image of the child, coming with a respect for the individuality, has profound consequences for the conceptualisation of professional care in the nurseries as seen in the images of the competent child and the caregiver as an escort. This conceptualisation is practised in the use of affirmative gestures and enculturation processes through a conscious and respectful socialisation of trust and care and less through sociocultural limitations. Professional care in Waldorf nurseries is carried out in a dualism of offering freedom and love as two basic human needs. A possible practice to feed both needs could be to use the concept of outer and inner gestures, in order to grant attachment security and allow an education for freedom. Therefore a possible tool for professionalization could be to carry out outer caring gestures with an inner gesture of respect and affirmation and escort the children and affirm their developmental processes with caring love.

5.4 Education is self education

The final concept used in this study is the Waldorf educational notion that “education is self-education”, seeing an education for freedom in a broader sense as a lifelong development. In the literature review, the Waldorf educational image of the caregiver as a self-educating and developing role model, based on the educational basic principle of ‘imitation and role modelling’ in the first seven years was related to ethical considerations such as self-development through the encounter with the child and to the concept of professionalism. This

notion will be related mainly to the findings of the pondering gestures and discussed to the definition of professionalism in an ethical sense, defined by Feeney (2012) as committing yourself fundamentally to work with moral and ethical consequences.

5.4.1 "What's the right gesture?"

Pondering gestures were conceptualised as an inner dialogue in searching for the right gesture. This process can be seen as trying to professionalise the use of gestures. The data indicates two different ways of acquiring more professionalism or engaging in self-education.

Which gesture?

The process of pondering as an inner dialogue can be discussed in regard to an education for freedom for the little child. As seen in the previous chapter professional care in Waldorf nurseries is carried out in a dualism of offering freedom and love and encouraging individualisation through affirmation and a respectful socialisation of care and trust in a protective environment. In the example of the two girls on the shelf, the caregiver pondered between affirmation and care, or between "I go over there now and get her out, or I let her keep fighting and I have to see what happens next". Seen in the light of the dualism of nature and culture, this process can be regarded as trying to carry the ethical responsibility for the child's individualisation and socialisation processes and conveying a sociocultural role model through the use of gestures. Professionalism in this regard would be the conscious and self-reflective use of gestures in conveying sociocultural impulses through respectful socialisation and an emphasis on allowing individualisation and an education for freedom. The key words are being conscious and self-reflective.

And how?

In carrying the sociocultural responsibility for the child's future in escorting and caring for the child in his most vulnerable years, the caregivers assist in laying the basis for the child's future feeling of "being and belonging" and his image of himself, his community and the human community. This concept is closely linked to the quality, in which the gestures are carried out.

Looking at the dualism of care with affirmation and affirmation with care, I would argue that a professional use of gestures implies an awareness of inner and outer gestures, and following the Waldorf educational principle of imitation and role modelling and knowing that the child imitates the caregiver intimately, a high degree of authenticity. A professional nursery

caregiver could professionalise through an aim to become more and more authentic and align inner and outer gestures. As Sonja said, the younger the child, the more important it is, *who* she is and *how* she does things rather than *what* she does.

The image of the caregiver, implied by an education as self-education, is the self-developing adult with all the vulnerabilities and competences. As Edith said “the children experience you, not doing everything perfectly and not being able to do everything perfectly, but this striving for it, that you are reflective about it”. In pondering gestures the children experience this striving to develop and the caregivers’ self-reflective use of gestures conveys an image of a self-developing human being. I would argue that this creates an incarnation-friendly atmosphere encouraging growth, development and learning and taking the “imitation and role model” seriously proves nursery education is building the basis for lifelong learning with adults as self-developing role models “worthy of imitation”. As Anne spoke of how important it was “to bring out the best in myself for the child, because the child always looks to you and wants to learn from you”. Raising awareness of these self-developmental processes in nurseries should be a new question and a coming task for future nursery caregivers. Looking at the findings in this regard, the Waldorf nursery caregivers are asked for an education as self-education, in order not to impose “their personal stuff” on the children (Steiner, 1987b). But the question could also be, how an awareness of these sociocultural processes nurtures a cultural sensitivity and a growing appreciation for self-development through the encounter with the small child. This question could start a discourse on what being “worthy” as a role model implies in a personal but sociocultural sense as well.

In summary pondering gestures can provide a self-developmental tool in Waldorf nurseries. To ask, which gesture to be is carried out and how and to seek a possible alignment of inner and outer gesture, following the objectives of welcoming care with pedagogical love, respect and sociocultural responsibility, are ways to nurture professionalism in order to achieve attachment security and an education for freedom for children.

5.4.2 Children bring the future

Self-developmental processes are reciprocal, as seen in the previous chapter. The children learn through imitating the adult; at the same time, the children remind us, according to Steiner, of who we are in our inner being as spiritual beings, or according to Gopnik et al. (2001) in their image of the scientific and philosophical image of the child, of our

fundamental ability to develop. Following the thought that “thinking about babies and young children help answer fundamental questions about imagination, truth, consciousness, identity, love and morality in a new way” (p. 6), nursery caregivers are in the profitable situation to be upfront and exposed to these little scientists and philosophers. At the same time, the children come with a need for a socialization so as to be prepared for the future, their future and according to Bass and Goods (2004) definition of “educere” as “preparing a new generation for the changes, that are to come – readying them to create solutions to problems yet unknown” (p. 162). This thought implicates a need for a “living observation” (Steiner, 1989b) to detect future needs and work as a sociocultural artist to create human habitats for small children to be prepared for the future.

At the same time the children allow us self-developmental processes as Anne said in the chapter on pondering gestures: “I’ve often had the feeling that the child keeps showing me a place where I need to work on myself, and has come to me to show me that” or Ivy says about certain children: “that brings me a certain task of my own, so this child is like a challenge for me with the issues I have and where I can grow through them”. I argue for an upgraded perspective on nursery care as a particular discipline within the educational field with more in store than smelly nappies and emotional “bottlenecks”, but an essential educational area full of developmental possibilities to work on human growth. Human growth in regard to the child, the caregiver and humanity.

In summary, the caregivers’ conceptualisations and practices of pondering gestures discussed in light of the notion of ‘education is self-education’ hints towards many possible lines of self-development through a conscious use of gestures. A growing awareness of the choice of gestures and how they are carried out are ways to nurture professionalism in order to achieve attachment security and an education for freedom for children. Nursery care has a high potential for personal growth and carries an immense sociocultural responsibility for future generations.

5.5 So what? contributions to educational discourses

A contribution to the discourse on education versus care

As seen in the previous chapter the interrelation between “education and care” is multi-layered. I want to discuss the findings on the professional images of the caregivers, as laid out in the relevant chapter, and present an argument for considering care *as* education.

In the literature review I portrayed professional images of the caregiver as a mother caregiver, a technician, and a researcher. These images were discussed with respect to the underlying dualism of dividing the rational public service, related to the field of science and knowledge in contrast to the physical and emotional, essentially female-dominated private, domestic realm (Manning Morton, 2006), and to the concept of professionalism. The schoolification of nurseries was discussed, as well as a tendency to mechanise nursery care in order to meet societal standards. The findings indicate that the Waldorf educational niche of nursery care puts an emphasis on professional care *as* education. A dominance of welcoming, caring and affirmative gestures in contrast to a limited use of educative gestures such as delimiting or preceding gestures hint towards this concept, as a focus on the socialisation of trust and care as the main enculturation tool. The caregivers’ conceptualisations of their images can be seen in a combination of a researcher and a mother caregiver with a professional use of care with a loving touch. The discussion on emotional labour in my chapter on attachment security might answer Dalli’s call (2008), to upgrade the image of the mother caregiver, to “re-vision notions of love and care”, and to support a notion of professionalism “that responds to the unique and evolving nature of quality early childhood practice” (p. 174). I argue for further research into “the unique quality of early childhood practice” as outlined in the previous chapters, incorporating “a researcher gaze” and a new, fresh look at care *as* education in professional care.

A contribution to the discourse on attachment security in nurseries

As laid out in my chapter on ‘education is self-education’, the caregivers carry the sociocultural responsibility to assist the families in preparing the children for the future. Attachment security is a vital ingredient in this process, to lay the foundation for future well-being, and emotional and cognitive development. I argue for seeing the socialisation of trust and care as the dominant educational task in these first three years. Therefore attachment security should be a vital goal in this educational field and not be avoided “in favour of educational goals”. The empirical data indicates that a raised awareness of socialisation

processes of trust and care in nurseries can support the attachment development of children in institutionalised care. Attachment security nurtures the development of the children's explorative skills as a basis for future learning, and therefore attachment security can be seen as an educational goal.

One tool for professionalising care in regard to attachment security lies in the dualism of dyadic and attachment network approaches and the creation of new key person systems, in favour of a socialisation of trust and to protect children and caregivers from emotional challenges or strains. To use the creation of a "protective sheath" in the outer environment to support professional attachment can be seen as a contribution that Waldorf education can make to current discourses on professionalism, attachment security and the educational task of nurseries.

Related to the theorisation of attachment patterns as configurational for building a future sociocultural responsibility, I want to raise the question of who will care for us and how, when we are old, if children have no configurational positive concept of trust and care? In the literature, the cultural competence of the child was portrayed in the images of the child and in my chapter on attachment research. This cultural competence allows the child to adapt to any lived form of "belonging" conveyed by the caregivers. Denying attachment security in nurseries will influence our culture and construct human identities, in the worst case, driven by insecurity and a wrongly understood concept of being without belonging. Future research needs to incorporate a raised awareness of these matters. At the very least, we as nursery caregivers can convey role models of society with an aim to build attachment security as an ethical obligation towards future generations. Attachment security will assist future generations to create their own ecological niche with a solid base and trust in humanity.

A contribution to the discourse on professionalism in nurseries

To professionalise nursery education the literature review has shown an emphasis on mechanising professional care, as outlined in the professional image of the caregiver as a technician. This study has given an insight into the subjectivity and complexity of the field and how closely related it is to human development with all its contradictions, vulnerabilities, and responsibilities. The findings in regard to an 'education as self-education' portrayed an image of an authentic, individual, self-developing caregiver. These caregivers can for example, use gestures as a self-educational tool to get to know the child in his individuality

and developmental needs for love and freedom and themselves as well, as human beings in development and also in need of love and freedom. This is associated with a clear emphasis on self-reflectiveness in order to work on one's own issues and patterns. The image of the technician was discussed with regard to a possible feeling of "reduced autonomy" in favour of standardised outcomes. This study has shown, that the self-development of the Waldorf nursery caregiver lies in "becoming a better role model", a human being fully in charge of himself. As the discourse on professionalism is linked to the concept of quality, this answers Dahlberg and Moss's critique on standardised quality measures and supports their call for reconceptualisation of the concept in regard to professional care.

As a contribution to the discourse on professionalism from the Waldorf educational niche I would argue, that professionalism in the nursery movement should go back to the traditional meaning of the term as defined by Feeney (2012), in committing oneself fundamentally to work with moral and ethical consequences. A second contribution this study can make is the call to support the caregivers in their journey to professionalism with supervision, advanced training programmes with for example the use of "stimulated recall methods" (Vesterinen et al., 2010). A professionalisation in this regard could lift nursery care to a profession with a higher profile, to an educational field that is configurational for all future learning and building future generations with the caregivers as sociocultural artists. A third request is the call to use the caregivers as co-researchers to incorporate their voices into evidence-based knowledge generation. The children in our care expect authentic, respectful and loving caregivers, worthy of imitation, and professional institutions taking on the moral and ethical responsibility to create habitats worthy of growing up in. And they expect researchers to lift these expectations into theorised knowledge.

5.6 Summary

In the discussion chapter, I discussed the findings on related theory and in regard to the key concepts of attachment security, an education for freedom and an education as self-education, and gave contributions to educational discourses from the Waldorf educational niche.

Attachment security was discussed as an essential feature of Waldorf nursery care. It is offered through the creation of a protective sheath around the child along with granting reliability and security in the outer and inner environment with clear structures. Professional

attachment and an attachment network is offered with pedagogical love as the heart of the inhabitation process to welcome the child into the human community in an institutionalised setting. A contribution to the discourse on professional attachment would be to lift the socialisation of trust and care to the position of the dominant educational task in these first three years. Attachment security should be a vital goal in this educational field and not be avoided “in favour of educational goals”. The Waldorf educational image of the child, coming with a respect for the individuality has profound consequences for the conceptualisation of professional care in regard to an education for freedom. This conceptualisation is practised in the use of affirmative gestures and enculturation processes through a conscious and respectful socialisation of trust and care, and less through sociocultural limitations. Professionalisation was discussed in two ways, with the question of which gesture is to be carried out how and how gestures can be used to nurture professionalism. Nursery care has been discussed and established as coming with a high potential for personal growth and an important sociocultural responsibility for future generations. A contribution to the discourse on education versus care was made in regarding care as *the* educational tool in the first three years and in upgrading the importance of care in educational discourses.

The caregivers’ conceptualisations and practices in regard to attachment security and an education for freedom can be seen as two main pillars of Waldorf nursery care, representing professional care in Waldorf nurseries as carried out in a dualism of offering freedom and love. The findings indicated that the caring and affirmative gestures can be used interrelatedly as outer and inner gestures. Therefore the concepts of attachment security with a dominant practice of welcoming and caring gestures and the concept of an education for freedom with a dominant practice of affirmative gestures can be seen as interrelated as well. Attachment security can be seen as a basis for an education for freedom and an education for freedom as important to grant attachment security and the conscious use of both concepts as a self-educational tool.

In general, the use of gestures as an analytical tool has proved viable for the research context and for answering the research question, and is recommended as a tool for supervision or advanced training in nursery care for nurturing professionalism. Further suggestions in regard to the discourse on professionalism have been discussed in light of the general study outcome of this research to embrace professional care with all its moral and ethical responsibilities.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined professional care in German Waldorf nurseries as a new, distinct area of education against the background of a politically induced quantitative growth of nurseries and a lack of academic representation. This led to debates about suitable conceptualisations and practices in the German nursery movement, as well as in the Waldorf movement, often led by personal and sociocultural beliefs, images, and conceptualisations of children, caregivers, and professional care.

The rapid growth called for new conceptualisations and practises to welcome babies, infants, and toddlers into institutionalised care and to understand their distinct needs and learning potential. It called for new conceptualisations and practices to take on the sociocultural responsibility of creating professional habitats for little children and their parents, laying the basis for future learning, emotional well-being, and personal development. Finally, it called for new conceptualisations and practices to professionalise nursery caregivers taking on the responsibility as professional “carers” and professional attachment figures.

An aim and purpose of this study was to investigate into the conceptual background of Waldorf nursery care and challenge some of the existing images and beliefs influencing conceptualisations and practices. Therefore I carried out a wide interdisciplinary theoretical background study pertaining to various academic fields and resulting educational discourses in the nursery movement. This review of theorisation assisted me in two ways and was essential for the research process. An exploration of existing images of the child, the caregiver and professional care exposed the origin of the sometimes unconscious beliefs and images and opened the way to understanding and orientating the empirical findings into a theoretical context. In identifying key issues discussed in academic research, I was able to situate my thesis within existing literature. A second consequence was that the literature review proved vital as a foundation and research tool to construct my conceptual framework with the empirical focal point of professional care and three key concepts ‘attachment security’, an ‘education for freedom’, and an ‘education as self-education’. This framework assisted in the construction of the research questions, contributed to my empirical analysis, and gave the study an analytical focus and hopefully some “power of impact”.

In the empirical part of my study, a further aim was to research into professional care in Waldorf nurseries with an emphasis on exploration, discovery, and description of the caregivers' professional beliefs and aims in order to empower Waldorf nursery caregivers to find a voice and become part of the ongoing nursery movement discourses. Therefore I carried out a qualitative research project using a methodology of data generation that encouraged the participants to explore their perceptions, conceptualisations, and perspectives, and how they gave meaning to their own practices. I used gestures as an analytical tool and a stimulated recall method to achieve this purpose, as well as inductive logic in parts of the data analysis. I employed deductive logic in a further step to analyse the findings according to my analytical concepts. In the discussion, I related the data to the theoretical analysis of the conceptual background of professional care in Waldorf nurseries, structured according to the key concepts, and contributions to educational discourses in the nursery movement were made.

As a general outcome of this study, I want to raise three points:

Exploring the wealth of images and conceptualisations of children, caregivers and professional care in the current practice of only two nurseries, a complexity, diversity and plurality was vividly perceptible. The image of the vulnerable child and the caregiver as a mother substitute dominant in the beginning of the movement has given way to a variety of images, showing the complexity and sensitivity of professional care. The caregivers construct a multi-layered professional identity and in line with Manning Morton (2006) the identity incorporates a critical, reflexive and theoretical boundary-crossing, caring for the vulnerability of the child and for its autonomy and agency. This development is ready to be further explored and conceptualised and can contribute to educational discourses and academic research far more than done in this study.

Current debates about the incorporation of the Pikler impulse into Waldorf educational conceptualisations, discussing methodical/ didactical "rights and wrongs", should give way to a debate on how to develop an awareness of dealing with our sociocultural responsibility to convey attachment security *and* an education for freedom. This debate can inspire the creation of individual and suitable methodical/didactical practices for the given institutional conditions. This process should avoid technicalisation and search for creative and authentic ways to professionalise nursery care, followed by questions

toward the concept of ‘quality’ in nurseries. This process could integrate the image of the researcher caregiver further, as well as integrate ethical and philosophical assumptions.

As outlined in the literature review, children are brilliantly learners and able to adapt to circumstances, if they find authentic caregivers to help them learn. The data has shown that professional caregivers take on this challenge and further research to support their efforts could enhance this process. The study has tried to use empirical data, generated with the help of the caregivers, to hold a conversation about existing conceptualisations and theories. Researchers should be encouraged to create new research designs to let the caregivers speak and hear their voices, as a community, or individually, as well as hear the children’s voices and accept them as co-researchers. Further research could build up a knowledge base to take on our academic responsibility for professional care as a new field of education, working in the first row on human development.

6.1.1 Relevance and limitations of the study

I see the main relevance of this study in opening the door to the hidden research area of Waldorf nursery care, to offer an insight into their practices and conceptualisations as an educational niche with an anthroposophical background. As outlined in the general outcomes of this study, nursery care as an under-researched academic field needs new research designs to widen the theoretical background and inform current discourses with evidence-based research. This applies even more to the Waldorf educational nursery movement. My study is therefore relevant in two ways: to the Waldorf movement as an academic endeavour and to the nursery movement in general as a contribution from an educational niche, contributing new perspectives to ongoing debates and existing educational discourses.

A third relevance lies in finding a methodological tool in gestures. Focusing on gestures proved to be an excellent way to research the conceptualisations of the caregivers, as they represented a tangible and concrete essential feature of the practice, unpretentious and easily manageable to me and to the caregivers. The caregivers were inspired to search for new ways of making meaning of their practices, in contrast to the process of a purely interview-based study. To me as a researcher, the process was similar. I was able to research into the interrelation of practice and conceptualisation and to gain a deepened understanding of my

empirical focal point. Therefore I see the analytical tool of gestures as having the potential to be used further to create suitable research designs into the field.

The limitations of this small-scale empirical study with a qualitative focus and a limited data set is that the generated knowledge cannot be generalised to larger populations. The study outcomes are limited to two nurseries with a very good reputation and known for their achieved quality and the data has to be understood in this regard. Widening the research field might bring different study outcomes, and different analytical frameworks or entries might lead to different knowledge generation. But in comparison to quantitative research and statistical generalisation, where the data is used to draw inference to a population, the study outcomes might be generalised analytically. As outlined in my methodology chapter, the conceptual framework has been closely connected to Waldorf educational conceptualisations and therefore the data is analysed to a particular theory. The question of how these findings can be generalised to similar situations cannot be answered, but the strong theoretical framing of my study might be seen as helping future studies with similar analytical frameworks and offer a guide “to what might occur in another situation “(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore this study can be seen as a point of departure to assist and contribute some theoretical perspectives and methodological tools, hopefully developed further by others in future research.

Recommendations for future research

Out of the wealth of further research areas emerging along the research process, I will highlight three focus areas for potential future research: the role of gestures, the socialisation of trust and care, and intercultural research.

The role of gestures: The role of gestures has a potential to encourage further research, for example: to look at one gesture in depth would prove an amazing endeavour, or research further into the interrelation of the gestures with various research foci. A further analysis of the different devolutions of the gestures could enhance our knowledge, for example to examine closely preparation, maybe pondering, decision making, realisation and reverberation of gestures in practice. Further questions could involve the issue of how conscious or unconscious the use of gestures is, or how we could use inner and outer gestures or visible and invisible gestures as tools for professionalization.

The socialisation of trust and care: Another area is the new research field of investigating into the socialisation of trust and/or care. New research designs could open ways to understand socialisation processes in the context of shaping attachment patterns as cultural constructs and the questions of how attachment security can be understood as learning to trust in a less attachment oriented sense.

Intercultural research: An immense challenge would be to carry out a similar research design as used in this thesis in different cultures, to research deeper into the use of gestures inter-culturally, pertaining to various questions, such as: Are gestures culture specific? How does Waldorf education and culture interrelate? Is there a Waldorf sub-culture that we create around the world? What can we learn from looking at questions of trust and care worldwide in a globalised age?

6.1.2 Personal reflection

Looking at the whole research process, I see my aim as being a “pioneer” in offering an overview and an attempt to view the phenomenon “as a whole” with subjective choices, but a strong aim to stay true to the whole picture. But this approach often made it difficult to stay with the common thread, the ‘red thread’, holding everything together, and therefore limit the research process. To use a metaphor: I tried to paint a picture and chose a large canvas. I had many colours and was motivated to use most of them, trying to fill the canvas. In the process, I was amazed, how they shine together and how beautifully they mix. Certain corners of the picture could have used more care and colour, inspiring me to paint in detail, but they had to be left undetailed in favour of the whole. I settled on choosing the middle to explore in detail, using five colours, one colour for each gesture, preferring three. This centre with the three colours was then used to look at the microcosm to see the macrocosm, giving relevance to the whole picture. But - did I need such a big canvas for this? Yes and no. Without the big canvas, the whole picture would never have been that informative, colourful and rich in layers, the centre shining back to the surrounding corners, and the whole would never have been understood in interrelation. But using a small canvas, the picture would shine more and be very expressive? Still, I am content with the picture.

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