**Stitching Childhood**

**1. Presenters:**

Jane Whinnett:

Catriona Gill:

Affiliated to the Edinburgh Froebel Network.

**3. Abstract**

**Stitching Childhood: Using the Froebelian occupation of sewing to explore Froebelian educators’ concepts or views of childhood today.**

Froebel ‘acknowledge[d] the dignity of the child, of childhood, and of the life of childhood; not as single and isolated, but as a whole, complete within itself’ (Brehony, 2001b, p. 168) This concept of childhood as holistic and having value in its own right, is an important principle which underpins Froebelian practice (Froebel Trust, 2023) however, there is little research beyond this, into Froebelian educators’ concepts or views of childhood today.

Froebel believed that there was a unity in all things, ‘in nature (the external), in the spirit (the internal), and in life which unites the two.’ (Brehony, 2001a, p. 1) This monistic view with its focus on Unity, has significant elements of alignment with the recent ‘ontological turn’ of which Deleuzian (1987) philosophy and New Materialism (Barad, 2006) are part, and can act as counterpoint to the predominant duality which permeates much of contemporary thinking about early childhood.

Borrowing from pedagogical practices which offer alternative ways of thinking such as Clark’s concept of ‘Quilting’ (2019) and Lenz Taguchi’s (2010) ideas of intra-active pedagogy, this study explores Froebelian educators’ views of childhood through the Froebelian occupation of sewing. Drawing on Barad’s (2006) belief that ‘matter and meaning are not separate elements’ (p. 3) and the idea that the intra-actions between humans and material artefacts ‘have force and power to transform our thinking’ (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 4), participants created sewn textiles and annotations, in response to the question, ‘what is your concept or view of childhood from a Froebelian perspective?’ These multi-layered assemblages were then explored in a holistic way to draw out the material-discursive interconnections and intra-actions.

# References

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