

Love as an act of resistance: Ethical subversion in early childhood professional practice in England ^[1]

Author: Morris, L.

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Abstract

Challenging the conventional binary of morality and subversion as opposing forces, this article presents a new construct of ethical subversion in early childhood education and care professional practice. The conceptual framework combines constructs of emotional labour and care ethics, and theorising on power and subversive tactics. Text generated from focus group discussions and individual semi-structured interviews with graduate early childhood education and care practitioners provides the concrete corpus for Foucauldian discourse analysis. Critical analysis elucidates how, on the one hand, practitioners working in England experience ethical boundaries reflecting dominant discourses, while, on the other, they feel morally committed to care responsively even if it contravenes rule-based ethics. Ethical subversion is born from both reason and emotion: these are acts of loving disobedience by experienced practitioners who possess a deep understanding of risk and the critical implications of their rule-bending. Ethical subversion is relational and individualistic, supporting a care pedagogy focusing on the individual care needs of young children. Conceptualisation of ethical subversion raises important issues in the areas of ethics, management and professionalism: ethical subversion is constructed as a powerful phenomenon, with potential for effecting positive transformation in the lives of children and their families, while simultaneously augmenting constructs of professionalism in early childhood education and care in England.

Region: Europe ^[4]

Tags: early childhood educators ^[5]

professionalism ^[6]

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