

**A CONSTRUCTIONISTIC INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S MEANINGS IN A
PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PLAYGROUP SETTING**

by

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I declare that “A constructionistic investigation into the development of pre-school children’s meanings in a psychotherapeutic playgroup setting” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references”.

Signed

L M Pearson

January 2003

“Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love”.

1 Corinthians 13 : 13.

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To **GOD**, for giving me life, and teaching me through His word.

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ABSTRACT

In this research project the context of a playgroup is used in the exploration of the developing meanings of preschool children living in a community village. Therapeutic goals include the co-construction of a group context where alternative behavioural social skills, and the related meanings thereof, could evolve in relationship with the therapist / researcher and peers. The research process is based on an underlying ecosystemic epistemology, social constructionistic theory and a narrative approach to therapy. A naturalistic research design includes the use of qualitative methods of play as therapeutic tools in the exploration of meanings. Research findings show the emergence of co-constructed meaning categories between all the participants of the research to be those of respect, responsibility and hope. The therapeutic significance of these three themes for this age group of children is discussed, and linked to the further construction of meanings.

KEY TERMS

Ecosystemic epistemology; Social constructionism; Narrative therapy; Play therapy; Playgroup; Pre-school children; Community context; Meanings in psychotherapy; Respect; Responsibility; Hope.

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