**IFS Round Table Proposal**

Title: Hidden identifications: reconfiguring, tracing and connecting embodiments of spirituality, social history and literacy within children's play.

Format: round table

Presenters: Simon Bateson (University of Edinburgh; corresponding author), Dr Kate Smith (Froebel Trust), Fengling Tang (University of Roehampton)

Keywords: symbolic play, diversity, post-humanism

Synopsis: Froebel's belief that practitioners must attend deeply to the rich entanglements between children's inner lives and their outward expressions remains fundamental to inclusive practice today (Froebel, 1887; Bruce, 2021). At the heart of this is both a spiritual and political belief in the undivided life, which sees children as powerful co-creators living congruently with the world, determinedly making sense of their environment and making and inscribing new meanings and languages within it, both inner and outer (Liebschner, 2001; White, 2015).  What ideas, practices and commitments, then, can further enable practitioners to support this in twenty-first century contexts amid extrinsic curriculum expectations? How do we harness these entanglements (Bennett, 2010; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Haraway, 2016; Osgood and Mohandas, 2021) to give value to and extend children's communication, spirituality and sense of both belonging and becoming?

Inviting entanglement and connectedness, this round table will begin with a brief introduction to these themes and their links to and between the diverse work of three Froebelian researchers, followed by an open discussion where threads can be drawn together or apart.

Simon Bateson (University of Edinburgh) writes on the affective experience and deconstruction of coloniality in children's play and the interplay between inherited and emergent social identities in childhood. Kate Smith (Froebel Trust) looks at the embodied and material production of children’s symbolic mark-making which is often made invisible by external frameworks. Fengling Tang (University of Roehampton) explores the role of play in nurturing young children's spirituality by linking Froebelian thinking to the Posthuman, New Materialist lens in the Anthropocene.

References:

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Haraway, D. J. (2016) *Staying with the trouble : making kin in the Chthulucene / Donna J. Haraway.* Durham ;: Duke University Press.

Lenz Taguchi, H. (2010) *Going beyond the theory/practice divide in early childhood education: introducing an intra-active pedagogy.*London and New York: Routledge

Liebschner, J. (2001) A child’s work : freedom and play in Froebel’s educational theory and practice / Joachim Liebschner. Paperback edition. Cambridge, England: The Lutterworth Press.

Osgood, J. and Mohandas, S. (2021) Figuring gender in early childhood with animal figurines: pursuing tentacular stories about global childhoods in the Anthropocene, in Yelland, N. et al. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Global Childhoods.* Los Angeles and London: SAGE Reference