



THE ARCHETYPE APPROACH / CASE STUDY LIBRARY

AA-CS-003

Power Needs Purpose

How Holding a Boundary Supported Confidence and Leadership



CASE TYPE	Voice, Boundaries & Leadership
AGE / CONTEXT	4 years
DATE RANGE	12/25-04/26
PRACTICE SITE	Children of Towan Kindergarten
PRACTITIONER	Oliver Riddett

EMERGING AA PRINCIPLE

Healthy care is strengthened, not weakened, when a child can also hold a boundary.

OBSERVE

What is happening?

RECOGNISE

What pattern is this?

BALANCE

What is missing?

INTEGRATE

What has emerged?

Observe -> Recognise -> Balance -> Integrate

What was happening?

The pattern as it first appeared



INITIAL PRESENTATION

A child regularly demonstrated a strong desire to help others, contribute to group activities and maintain positive relationships. He was often quick to give, share and accommodate. Practitioners began noticing occasions where he struggled to hold onto his own ideas when challenged by peers.

RECURRING PATTERNS

- Strong helping behaviours
- Prioritising relationships over personal preferences
- Giving up resources easily
- Sensitivity to others needs
- Reluctance to disagree
- Emerging confidence when supported to hold boundaries
- Persistence around self-chosen projects

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOURS

During one observation, the child used large construction blocks to build an enclosure he intended to sit inside. When another child attempted to take a block he was actively using, he held onto it and maintained his plan. An adult protected the boundary by explaining that the other child could have a turn once the project was finished.

CONTEXTS AND TRIGGERS

- Peer competition for resources
- Shared projects
- Group decision-making
- Situations requiring disagreement
- Moments where personal ideas conflict with others wishes

WHAT WAS THE CHILD SHOWING US?

The child appeared highly skilled at maintaining connection but was still developing confidence in protecting his own ideas, preferences and intentions within relationships.

What pattern emerged?

Seeing beneath the behaviour



PRIMARY PATTERN	Helper
SUPPORTING PATTERN	Builder
BRIDGING FUNCTION	Rebel through voice, ownership and self-advocacy

SHADOW / IMBALANCE PRESENTATION

Helper qualities were highly accessible. Kindness, generosity and cooperation were strengths, but at times they appeared at the expense of voice, boundary-setting and self-advocacy. Builder qualities were also visible through sustained projects and perseverance.

POSSIBLE UNDERLYING NEEDS

- Permission to prioritise personal ideas
- Confidence expressing disagreement
- Safety around holding boundaries
- Validation of personal preferences
- Opportunities for leadership
- Support developing voice within relationships

DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

The developmental opportunity was not learning how to care for others. The child already possessed that strength. It was discovering that caring for others and caring for oneself can exist together.

PERCEPTION SHIFT

The key perception shift was from 'Sharing is always the social goal' to 'Sometimes protecting an unfinished idea is the developmental work.'

What was introduced?

Keeping the strength - widening access



ADULT APPROACH

- Validate the child's plans and right to complete an active project.
- Support appropriate disagreement without framing it as unkindness.
- Protect unfinished work and clarify turn-taking expectations.
- Notice and name leadership and self-advocacy as well as helping.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLAY ADJUSTMENTS

- Opportunities for ownership of projects
- Respect for unfinished work
- Clear turn-taking expectations
- Longer construction projects
- Small leadership and decision-making opportunities

BALANCING RELATIONSHIP

Helper -> Rebel, supported by Builder / Imagineer creation

The child was given permission to remain caring while also holding onto an idea that mattered to him.

BALANCING SEQUENCE

Imagine -> Build -> Protect -> Complete

The aim was not to make the child less generous. It was to widen generosity so that self-respect sat alongside care for others.

What became newly available?

Growth without losing the original strength



OBSERVABLE CHANGE

Over time the child increasingly demonstrated confidence expressing preferences, persistence with self-chosen projects, respectful boundary-setting and stronger ownership of ideas.

WHAT BECAME VISIBLE

- Calm boundary-setting became more available
- Positive relationships continued while confidence increased
- Greater willingness to lead and contribute ideas
- Improved expression of wants and preferences
- Increased confidence making decisions independently
- Collaboration remained available without immediate self-sacrifice

WHAT EMERGED OVER TIME?

The child retained his caring nature while developing a stronger sense of personal agency. Helping remained a strength, but it was no longer the only route to successful participation.

INTEGRATION

Kindness and self-advocacy became more able to coexist.



Power Needs Purpose

Children who naturally care for others may still need support learning how to care for themselves. Confidence does not require reducing kindness; it can grow when kindness is balanced with voice, boundaries and ownership.

AA SNAPSHOT

PRIMARY PATTERN

Helper

BALANCING RELATIONSHIP

Helper -> Rebel

BALANCING STRATEGY

Supporting voice, boundaries and ownership

CASE CATEGORY

Voice, Boundaries & Leadership

SUPPORTING PATTERN

Builder

MAIN PRESENTATION

Over-reliance on helping with emerging self-advocacy

OUTCOME THEME

Confidence through self-expression

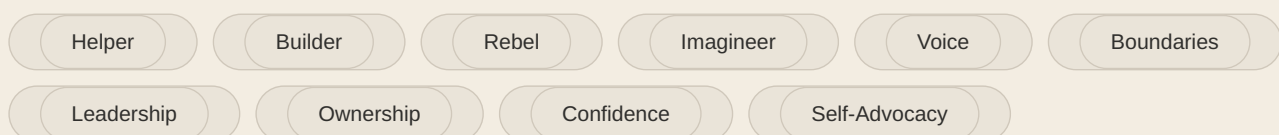
AGE / CONTEXT

4 years

CLOSING REFLECTION

“Children do not unfold through correction alone. They unfold through relationship, balance, safety, rhythm and being deeply seen.”

AA TAGS



AA EVIDENCE THEMES

- Behaviour reveals perception
- Power needs purpose
- Voice through safety
- Boundaries support confidence
- Leadership emerges through ownership
- Balance rather than correction

AA DEVELOPMENTAL REFLECTION | EVIDENCE STRENGTH: 4 / 5

This is a valuable case because the developmental work is subtle. There was no dramatic behaviour to stop. The adult noticed that a socially successful, caring child also needed permission to protect his own idea. It demonstrates AA as a model for completing strengths, not only responding to difficulty. More observations across different peer conflicts would strengthen the evidence.