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Negotiating fairness and diversity:

Stories from an Aotearoa New Zealand kindergarten.

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy in Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education

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by

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ABSTRACT

A number of research studies have utilised ‘working theories’, a key learning outcome of *Te Whāriki*, the Aotearoa New Zealand curriculum, as a lens to explore pedagogy in early childhood education. The perceived gap that this research sought to fill related to children’s working theories about fairness and diversity in the social world, alongside power/knowledge perspectives previously underexplored in existing working theories research literature.

This Participatory Action Research study was located in a kindergarten community with 3- and 4-year old children in 2014. Using a theoretical framework informed by sociocultural and feminist poststructuralist perspectives, field texts composed from a mosaic of methods included a parent questionnaire and parent focus group, teacher discussions, observations, critical incidents and telling examples, and assessment documentation. Through critically and discursively reading and re-reading field texts, aspects of diversity that children were concerned with, including exclusion, the 'shadow side' of diversity, were identified.

Children were making sense of their world(s), their identities, and the possibilities available to them, alongside negotiating relationships with diverse ‘others’. Their working theories, which related to fairness and friendship, gender, sex and sexuality, and ethnicity and skin colour, often involved normalising and limiting discourses. The subject of children’s working theories, and the perceived risks associated with them, affected teachers’ provocations and responses.

The fundamental importance of teacher reflexivity and courage in this complex domain was uncovered. The conflicting and often uncontested framing of diversity and fairness by teachers and parents was highlighted. Teachers also have a leadership role to play, supporting parents who are unsure how to support their children’s developing understandings of diversity in the world around them.

This research adds to the growing body of scholarship around ‘working theories’, recognising their value as a lens for seeing and responding to children’s ongoing theorising about aspects of diversity. The unique combination of working theories, power/knowledge perspectives, and dominant discourses offers new insights about critical pedagogy in this terrain. Diversity can be a rich resource for learning if

teachers recognise how normalising and limiting discourses can affect children realising their potential. Opening up dialogue involves risks especially in areas that intersect with dominant views of childhood innocence or the irrelevance of some issues to young children.

The importance of socially relevant curriculum that balances the interests of the child, and the interests of the community is stressed in an ‘Open letter to teachers’ which concludes this thesis. Making spaces for negotiation and meaning making, and valuing multiple perspectives and possibilities are part of renewed social justice, anti-bias teaching approaches. They are seen as part of the courageous whole setting response required to make the world a fairer, more just place for everyone.

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I am indebted to the teachers at Beech Kindergarten for walking alongside me on the early part of this journey. I have tried hard to honour you all in this work - where you were at individually, and as a teaching team, at that time. I feel privileged to have spent time at Beech Kindergarten, and hope that my contributions affirmed what you were doing on a daily basis, and supported you to continue researching your own practice.

Beech Kindergarten is a special place with its own unique culture, and the time I spent there was an integral part of my PhD research, and ongoing teaching and learning experiences. The warm respectful relationships that teachers, children, and their families share were especially noticeable in this place, where there is a deep, ongoing commitment to the cultural climate of the place. A place where oral stories are told and retold, and a sense of well-being and belonging are paramount.

To the children and families who participated in this study especially the focus children: Caitlyn, Dylan, Felix, Jack, Ruby, Rylee, Layla and Alfie, I feel privileged to have met you, and am honoured to tell your stories. My hope is that your theorising about diversity and fairness continues to be mediated by courageous teachers and parents. And that these adults help you to resist normative and limiting discourses and stereotypes so that your mana is enhanced. Then you can be who you want to be in the world, without fear or shame, and with abiding respect for others who are different from you.

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I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my life-partner Al who has sustained me during this time. Your fabulous gardening, cooking, cleaning and enduring love and support have made this possible and worthwhile. You are my rock - steadfastly telling it like it is - beside me always. I look forward to more quality time with you at home and abroad now this journey is done.

Precious children from our extended families enrich our home and our lives, continuing to make the world glow with possibilities and hope. Thanks also to the real children whose beautiful names I have borrowed to use as pseudonyms throughout this thesis.

Finally, I am indebted to my parents - the late Margaret (nee Kearins) and Frank Kelly who often went without so that we could flourish. In a house with few books, they instilled in us the importance of education, and relationships ahead of material things. In their own special way, each parent role-modelled hard work, concern for others, and a social conscience. I am proud to be their daughter.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Taylor and Francis and SAGE Publishers for permission to include two of my articles as Appendices in this thesis.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Craig

And to my extended family -

Those who dare to be different,

and those whose lives would be made richer

if only they were open to difference.

Each of us can make a difference

in our own lives, and the lives of others.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv
DEDICATION vii
LIST OF TABLES xiii
LIST OF FIGURES xiii
GLOSSARY OF MĀORI WORDS xiv
PROLOGUE: STORIES OF FAIRNESS, FANTASY AND DIVERSITY 1
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 4
The significance of this thesis 6
Approaches to diversity education 7
Paradigms for constructing diversity 7
Historical approaches 9
Contemporary approaches 13
Rationale for project 15
The ECE context 17
Te Whāriki – the New Zealand early childhood curriculum framework 18
Bicultural practice in Aotearoa New Zealand 21
Assessing children's learning 23
The potential of *Te Whāriki* 25
The 'critical' teacher 27
The thesis aims, objectives and the research questions 27
The structure of this thesis 30
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 31
Introduction 31
A fair, inclusive and just society 31
Social constructionism 31
Feminist poststructuralism 34
Drawing from Foucault's 'tool-box' 36
Power/ knowledge 37
Regimes of truth 37
Discourse 38
Performativity 40
Summary 41
Applying these concepts to children 41
Discourses and dominant discourses 42
Gender, sex and sexuality related discourses 43
Regimes of truth and the context of gender in ECE 45
Subjectivities 46
Identity 47

A sociocultural theoretical paradigm 48
Working theories 50
Additional key ideas 51
Conceptions of children and childhood 51
Agency, voice and listening 52
Looking forward 55
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW 56
Introduction 56
Diversity and difference 56
Characteristics of diversity 59
Responses to diversity, and difficult knowledge 60
Summary 63
Social justice and understanding diversity 63
Relating to others 66
Working theories / theorising 68
Summary 74
Teaching and diversity 74
Working with families 78
Summary 79
Gender, sex, and sexuality 80
Childhood innocence, moral panic, and other limiting discourses 83
Teachers and gender 85
Summary 87
Race, ethnicity and skin colour 88
(Pre)prejudice, racism, and the role of the teacher 90
White teachers, white children and whiteness 91
'Race talk' and 'colour blindness' 92
Summary 93
Looking forward 93
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 94
Introduction 94
Overview 96
The research setting 96
The participants 98
Features of Participatory Action Research 100
The process of getting started 101
Recruiting participants 102
Research phases 103
The Mosaic Approach 104
Constructing the field texts 104
Field Texts 105

Participant Observations....105
Child-related field texts....106
Teacher-related field texts....111
Parent whānau related field texts....113
Introducing the analytical tools....116
Field texts....118
Composing and reading the research texts....120
Ethical considerations....121
Access to participants....121
Informed consent....121
Confidentiality....122
Potential harm to participants....122
Participants' right to decline to participate and right to withdraw....123
Transparency/ reflexivity....123
Knowledge, truth, and credibility as an alternative to reliability and validity 124
Generalisability and transferability....126
Summary....127
Looking forward....128
CHAPTER 5: 'IS THIS PLACE FAIR FOR US?' FAIRNESS AND FRIENDSHIP....129
Introduction....129
'All of us were against Layla!'....130
'Parent / Whānau Voice'....135
More about Layla....136
Alfie's dinosaur and the master helper - Learning Story....136
Commentary....137
Fairness and justice....138
Socially valued goals reified....140
An alternative reading....142
More about Ruby....143
Commentary....144
'This house belongs to everyone'....146
This house is not for people with glasses....147
Does hair colour make a difference?....149
Commentary....150
'Making it fair'....154
Parent/whānau perspectives on fairness at the kindergarten....155
Concluding remarks....156
Looking forward....159
CHAPTER 6: 'WHAT'S HE DOING THAT FOR? HE'S A BOY!' GENDER AND FAIRNESS....160
Introduction....160

‘Gender marked’ territory and ‘crossing gender boundaries’ 162
Setting the scene for Jack’s working theories 163
Jack and his working theories 164
Jack, leader of the Speedway gang and reinforcing gender binaries.....164
Jack, masculinity enforcement officer and gender diversity in children.....166
Jack the ‘real’ boy co-parents the child he ‘growed’ 167
Commentary 168
That’s a girls’ song..... 170
Parent responses 171
Commentary 172
Kissing, marriage, and babies 173
Commentary 175
More adult voices..... 178
Commentary 180
Concluding remarks 181
Looking forward..... 183
CHAPTER 7: ‘NO-ONE WITH BROWN FACES IS COMING TO MY PARTY’: ETHNICITY AND SKIN COLOUR 185
Introduction..... 185
‘He’s a bit too brown for me. I like white’.....186
‘No-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party’ 187
Being Māori.....190
Teachers’ provocations and responses 192
The conversation post-mortem - teachers reflecting in a group.....197
‘We’re having an all-Māori Party’ 202
Commentary 202
Involving parents – rich triangulation or a missed opportunity 206
Parent Whānau Questionnaire 209
Concluding remarks 215
Looking forward..... 220
CHAPTER 8: TEACHING AND THE RISKY TERRAIN 221
Introduction..... 221
The power of discourse 222
‘Good teachers’ and ‘naughty children’.....222
The importance of theory..... 224
Risk and difficult knowledge 226
The ‘tricky’ subject 226
The value of multiple perspectives 229
Multiple readings of ‘the sandpit hui’ 230
Habitus, reflexivity and reflection..... 233
Critical reflexivity and critically reflective practice.....234
Teacher Reflections.....234

Teaching strategies or techniques 239
Looking back, looking forward 243
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE 244
Introduction 244
Review of study 244
Key 'findings' from this research 245
Children's theorising and working theories 245
The role of parents and whānau 246
Teachers and pedagogy 247
Risky subjects and risk 251
Potential value of the research/ Recognition of contribution 252
Limitations of the research design 254
The Sample 255
Participatory Action Research and workload 256
Researcher's perspective and positioning 258
Ideas for future research 258
An 'Open letter to teachers' 259
REFERENCES 267
APPENDICES 298
Appendix A - Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment Exemplars Book 15 - Excerpt 298
Appendix B - Areljung & Kelly-Ware (2016) 299
Appendix C - Consent form - Management 315
Appendix D - Information sheet for teachers 316
Appendix E - Consent form - Teachers 319
Appendix F - Information sheet for Parents and Whānau 321
Appendix G - Consent form - Parents and Whānau 323
Appendix H - Assent form - Children 324
Appendix I - Parent/ Whānau Questionnaire 327
Appendix J - Profile - Families/Whānau who attend focus group 329
Appendix K - Parent Focus Group Outline 331
Appendix L - Parent Focus Group Vignettes 332
Appendix M - Phases of the research 333
Appendix N - Individual Teacher Reflection One 334
Appendix O - Individual Teacher Reflection Two 335
Appendix P - Teacher Reflection - Focus Children 336
Appendix Q - Teacher Discussion Agendas 337
Appendix R - Teacher Discussion Agenda - 27 November 2014 339
Appendix S - 'Friends don't do that'- A Learning Story 341
Appendix T - This house belongs to everyone 343
Appendix U - A place for everyone 345
Appendix V - No-one with brown faces is coming to my party transcript 347

Appendix W - Kelly-Ware (2016) 351

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Comparison of Anti-bias goals 1989 - 2010. 11
Table 2: Comparison of Mana Tangata Contribution strands 1996 - 2017. 12
Table 3: Research Overview 95
Table 4: Teaching staff (as at 1 May 2014) 98
Table 5: Research phases at Beech Kindergarten and timeframes 103
Table 6: A mosaic of methods related to participant groups 104
Table 7: Biological sex, birth month, and ethnicity of focus children (in birth order) 108
Table 8: Recorded and transcribed discussions with teachers 112
Table 9: Analytical tool - concepts, guiding questions, and categories. 117
Table 10: Supplementary Analytical tool - concepts, guiding questions, and categories 117
Table 11: Example of Field text organisation 118
Table 12: Common themes 119
Table 13: Field texts - Entire ‘data-set’ 119

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Beech Kindergarten Treaty - February 2014 97
Figure 2: Beech Kindergarten Treaty explanation 98
Figure 3: Ethnicities of child participants 99
Figure 4: Individual Teacher Reflection Two 235

GLOSSARY OF MĀORI WORDS

ako - learning reciprocity, or cross gender version of tuakana-teina; circumstances of learning

Aotearoa - land of the long white cloud, the Māori name for New Zealand

hui - social gathering or meeting

kaiako - teachers, educators and other adults who have care and education role

kaupapa Māori - a Māori approach that assumes the normalcy of being Māori – language, customs, knowledge, principles, ideology, agenda

kōhanga reo - Māori-medium early childhood centre with a focus on retaining and revitalising language and culture

mana - the power of being, authority, prestige, spiritual power, status and control

manaakitanga - the process of showing respect, generosity, hospitality and care for others

Māori - indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand

moko - tattoo

Pākehā - ("Pākehā," n.d.) a Māori language term for New Zealanders 'of European descent'; non-indigenous New Zealander. Recently, the term has been used to refer inclusively either to fair-skinned persons or any non-Māori New Zealander

Papatūānuku - Earth mother

pepeha - an introductory speech

tangata whenua - indigenous people, people of the land, locals

Te Tiriti o Waitangi - the Māori language version of the Treaty of Waitangi

tikanga - Māori values, protocols

tino pai - Well done / Good one!

tangata whenua - People of the land (literal), descendants of the first people to settle Aotearoa New Zealand, indigenous people (used of Māori), person or people with customary authority over an area that may include land and sea. This authority is held by first settlement of an area or by succeeding to an area through active occupation and negotiation with the first peoples

tuakana/teina - senior and junior siblings, used where an older or more knowledgeable child supports the learning of a younger or less knowledgeable child

waka - canoe, ancestral canoe

whakataukī - a Māori proverb

whanaungatanga - kinship, sense of whānau connection; a relationship through shared experiences and working together that provides people with a sense of belonging

whānau - extended family, multigenerational group of relatives or group of people who work together on and for a common cause

whāriki - woven mat, made more special because it is "… a whāriki woven by loving hands that can cross cultures with respect, that can weave people and nations together" (Reedy, 1995, p.17)

Note: Except where otherwise referenced, the explanations in this glossary are from *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017, pp. 66-67).

PROLOGUE:
STORIES OF FAIRNESS, FANTASY AND DIVERSITY

Aged three I was the middle child in a family of five; I had two big bossy sisters and a worn-out mother who gave birth again before I started school. By age four, there were six of us 'Kelly kids', and from memory life felt very unfair. Little wonder that kindergarten was my respite from younger siblings at home while my big sisters were at school. First, afternoon, and then morning, kindergarten were special places for me; made more special because my dad dropped me off or picked me up on his way to work or home for lunch. I revelled in all that the kindergarten programme had to offer. Creating, singing, and dancing were regular past-times but fantasy play was my favourite. The opportunity to try out different roles like being a teacher, big sister, mother or even the baby gave me a sense of autonomy and agency that was severely limited at home. Hence, my acting and storytelling had begun in earnest by the time I started school.

I am told that I was a sensitive and precocious child. Family folklore includes tales of three-year-old me dragging a packed suitcase down to every visitor's car because 'I was going on a holiday', and my mother being asked if she had adopted a Māori child. Unlike my fair-skinned siblings, I had skin tanned brown all over from shedding my clothes the minute they got wet; a frequent occurrence as I loved water. A dearth of books in our home meant that I quickly learned to tell my own made-up stories. I loved stories and remember teachers dutifully transcribing them for me until I could write them for myself. My storytelling included changing my name to 'Nettie P. Houghton' (my maternal aunt's family name) as I often stayed with her family on their farm. These were special breaks away from family life in our small, crowded home in town. I loved being on the farm, and as the youngest child and only girl I was the recipient of serious spoiling. Life felt much fairer there and my aunt, uncle and three male cousins celebrated my biological sex and gender.

Upon starting school, I quickly learned to read and to write stories. Books provided my rich imagination with models of possible futures and possible selves (Bruner, 1986), and my identity developed. Over the years though, I came to understand my 'self' in relation to 'the diversity of the post-modern self' (Grumet, 1995). My identity was not single, unitary, stable, or fixed. Rather multiplicities existed across

place and space and time - past, present and future. Nowadays, who I used to be is still highly significant in terms of who I am now.

Growing up in a large family with an Irish Catholic heritage was undoubtedly the genesis of my strong sense of justice and fairness. Seventeen years as a lesbian involved in the 'queer' community, advocating for lesbian and gay rights, contributed to my understandings of diversity and difference, as well as prejudice, discrimination, and other sexualities beyond the 'heteronorm'. By age forty, I had cast off these identities and come to regard myself as a 'lapsed Catholic' and a 'lapsed lesbian'. Nevertheless, the residue from these identities is very much part of my personal and social politics today. I have come to see that who I am is not about identity per se, rather it is about subjectivities and positionings; a multiplicity of selves that are storied in temporal, spatial and cultural contexts.

Telling stories has helped me and countless others, especially women and girls, in my experience, to imagine different futures for ourselves. Feminist conscientisation during my early adulthood and teaching career involved imagining lives where women had choices and relied on each other for mutual support. Nowadays, stories of 'experience, strength and hope' continue to sustain me in my ongoing recovery from alcoholism. Each week, no matter where I am in the world, I attend meetings and listen to other alcoholics share their experience, strength, and hope. We do so in order that we can live sober lives (recover, and regain our self- respect, children, licences, and sanity) and avoid jail, institutions, or death. The fantasies of my childhood, and my life whilst drinking, were romanticised and escapist. The new stories I tell are shaped by my interactions with diverse others; they are positive, constructive, and highly significant to my daily living.

> Our stories cannot be told without reference to the worlds in which they occur and to the interactions that give them shape and substance
>
> (Silin, 1995, p. 51).

As children and teachers and activists; feminists, unionists, lecturers, social justice campaigners, recovering alcoholics and grandparents, our stories help us and those we encounter to imagine and create different worlds - worlds characterised by democracy, citizenship, and the common good. These worlds also involve acknowledgement of the shadows and the richness that diversity and difference

bring, and greater equity and fairness for all especially for those who do not fit the dominant norms.

Researching within a feminist poststructural paradigm has made me increasingly conscious of how societal and education discourses shape my subjectivities as a feminist, Pākehā, activist teacher educator committed to social justice. By better understanding the multiplicity of our identities and subjectivities, and theorising our personal experiences (Kamler, 2001) we begin to see how we can help others. One goal that has emerged for me throughout this research is developing greater reflexivity in myself, and encouraging it amongst teachers and parents so that we can better support children as they journey in a complex and increasingly diverse world.

Fairness, fantasy and friendship were significant to four-year olds back in my 'classroom' teaching days (as they were in Paley's[1]), and remain significant in my life today. This doctoral journey has enabled me to fit together pieces of my past and present - "…to unify the narrative fragments of my own life story" (Silin, 1995, p. 143), and to appreciate my own otherness. I hope the stories in this thesis help others to be different, to be open to difference, and to imagine and build democratic worlds beyond normative boundaries in terms of sex, gender, sexualities, and ethnicities. After forty years of being involved in the early childhood education (ECE) sector in various guises, I say - long may the stories of friendship, fairness, diversity, and justice continue!

[1] Vivian Gussin Paley is an inspirational teacher, writer, and lecturer. Issues of social justice are discussed, and what we now call 'working theories' are debated in her many books, as children weave their own stories and revisit play themes over many days. Advocating for a repositioning of dramatic play as central to ECE settings, Paley believes it is crucial for children to develop social competencies, and to be literate. Her work with young children in American kindergarten classrooms has continued to inspire me since I first heard her speak at a conference in Aōtearoa New Zealand long ago.

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Young children are at an age when their identities and subjectivities are developing; they are becoming increasingly aware of who they are, and what they can do, individually and in relation to others. As their lives expand beyond their homes and immediate families, into the world of early childhood education (ECE) and the wider community, they are exposed to diversity and difference in numerous forms. The social world that children inhabit is complex, multi-faceted and often socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse. Learning about diversity and fairness is increasingly important for children as the demographics of Aotearoa New Zealand's population (and elsewhere) are changing rapidly.

This country's population of approximately 4,750,000 is made up of people who identify as European (74%), Māori (15%), Asian (12%) and Pacific (7%) ethnicities (Statistics New Zealand, 2016). Recently, there has been a noteworthy increase in diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand, with increasing numbers of refugees and migrants arriving from a wider range of countries than ever before. The latest Census figures identify this country's five largest ethnic groups as New Zealand European, Māori, Chinese, Samoan, and Indian (Statistics New Zealand, 2013 - Press Release - 10 December,). Significantly, 23% of people living in this country were born overseas, the fourth highest rate in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (Ministry of Social Development, 2016).

According to Hayward (2012) "New Zealand children under 14 are amongst the most ethnically diverse national cohort in the world - a remarkable demographic transformation" (p. 139). This ethnic diversity is also evident in ECE settings with 71 different languages reportedly being spoken by adults and children (MoE, 2015a). MoE statistics for the period 2009-2014 show increases in ECE enrolments from children from European/Pākehā backgrounds as less than 2% compared with growth in child enrolments for Māori (26.5%), Pasifika (32%), and Asian (61.3%) ethnicities (MoE, 2015a). This diversity among children in ECE settings is not mirrored in the teacher workforce (Cherrington & Shuker, 2012; Grey, 2013b). Grey (2013b) points out that, "although the children in early childhood centres are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse, the teachers are still

predominantly white, middle class and female, and so have different values, beliefs and attitudes to the children they are teaching" (p. 134).

Multiple ethnicities are another significant feature of the country's population. The 2013 Census reported more than 23% of children identified as having more than one ethnicity (up from 20% in 2006), compared with 11 percent of the population overall (up from 10 % in 2006). Thirty-one percent of children were registered with more than one ethnicity in birth registrations between 2012 and 2014.

As a society, Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of income inequality, leading to alarming social issues and consequences (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Increasing numbers of children experience child poverty (Rosewarne & Shuker, 2010) with detrimental effects on their learning and development. Robertson (2016) argues that,

> according to the 2016 Household Incomes Report, the incomes of the top 10% of [New Zealand's] population are now almost ten times the amount of the bottom 10 %. Most New Zealanders aren't getting their fair share – the benefits of growth are clearly going to the top. (para 5)

Family structures are also becoming increasingly diverse (Du Plessis & Diggelmann, 2017). Describing the 'norm' as the traditional Pākehā idea of family as a nuclear family with mum, dad and their children, they describe the many different kinds of families in Aotearoa New Zealand.

> Māori whānau[2] include people of several generations (e.g. grandparents, parents and children) who are related by descent or marriage. They may or may not live together in the same house but share a strong sense of connection. Extended-family households may include several generations - children, parents and grandparents. These are more common among Māori, Pacific and Asian households. Sole-parent families are usually the result of parents separating or children being born to mothers who live alone. Families with lesbian or gay parents may have children from a previous relationship, or children conceived through donor sperm or with a surrogate mother. In blended families adults and children who have been part of other

[2] Whānau - extended family, multigenerational group of relatives or group of people who work together on and for a common cause

> families come together to form a new family, often after separation or divorce. (para. 2)

Increasing cultural and family diversity, and income inequalities are global challenges. There is widespread support for education, and specifically ECE, having the potential to contribute to addressing these challenges.

> Given the substantial body of research that points to the potential efficacy of early childhood education and care in redressing disadvantage…we contend that there is a social and political obligations for leaders of early childhood education and care to be deeply concerned with, and not just cognisant of, issues of social justice (Hard, Press & Gibson, 2013, p. 325).

The significance of this thesis

As children encounter diverse others beyond their families, they are likely to encounter fairness, justice, and inclusion, and conversely unfairness, injustice, and exclusion. The research presented in this thesis concerns children's meaning making about fairness and diversity in the social world. Fairness and diversity are not separate, distinct categories, they are interrelated (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010). Derman-Sparks and Olsen Edwards (2010) suggest that each aspect of identity, for example, ethnicity or gender is linked to fairness because "living in a highly diverse and inequitable (unjust) society affects children's development" (p. 3).

Fairness is fundamental to social justice, equity and inclusion; these notions are central to anti-bias education[3]. One of the four core goals of anti-bias education is that "each child will recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts" (Derman Sparks & the ABC Taskforce, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010, p. xiv), (Table 1). Nowadays, the term 'anti-bias' is not widely used (Evans & McAllister, 2016). Vandenbroeck (2007) describes changing conceptions of diversity and equity in European early childhood education as 'beyond anti-bias education' (p. 21). Nevertheless, the kindergarten

[3] The origins of 'doing anti-bias work in ECE' can be found in the work of Louise Derman-Sparks and the Anti-Bias Task Force and their seminal text published in 1989. Since then Anti-Bias Curriculum, anti-bias approaches and anti-bias movements have developed, "… changing the direction of [teachers'] work in early childhood to explicitly address discrimination, promote equity and engage in activist pedagogies as core business" (Scarlet, 2016, p. xxv).

teachers in Evans and McAllister's research, like the kindergarten teachers in this research, and ECE teachers throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, are cognisant of issues related to inclusion, social justice, equity and children's rights (United Nations, 1989). There is also widespread acknowledgement that cultural competency is necessary for their work with children and families, as spelled out in teachers' legislative, ethical and pedagogical responsibilities and requirements (MoE, 1996, 2017; Education Council, n.d., 2017).

A historical context and trajectory for how education about diversity has been conceived and taught follows.

Approaches to diversity education

Educational (fairness) approaches have evolved over time in relation to addressing cultural and linguistic diversity. Multicultural education approaches developed in the 1970s and 1980s evolved into critical multiculturalism, intercultural education, and culturally responsive pedagogies common in education today. These approaches and what they entail vary across countries, contexts, education sectors and even between authors. The terms 'multicultural education', 'intercultural education', and 'culturally responsive pedagogies' are social constructs with associated discourses. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, yet they each have different histories, and represent particular understandings or discourses in different contexts over time (Baldock, 2010).

Paradigms for constructing diversity

Over time, diversity has been constructed based on three paradigms - deficit, (cultural) difference and empowerment. In educational literature, these paradigms are commonly discussed in terms of how diversity and difference are perceived and addressed (Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003; Yelland, 2008; Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Purdue & Surtees, 2012). The cultural difference and empowerment paradigms inform the research that is the subject of this thesis. In these paradigms, diversity and difference are conceptualised in their broadest senses. Diversity is seen from inspirational perspectives, rather than deficit, deprived, or narrow Western viewpoints.

Deficit or culturally deprived paradigm

From the nineteenth to mid-20th century, 'deficit' or 'culturally deprived' paradigms were widespread in ECE (Helen May, 2013) and wider education where notions of addressing deprivation and deficits were common. Deprivation and deficit were typically measured against the cultural, educational, and social norms of the white middle-class, the dominant group in society, and the teaching workforce. Deficits were often associated with culturally different families on low incomes. Such views invariably led to educators hearing only those perspectives that were consistent with their own. Inherent within this paradigm was the assumption that children and families were deficient or lacking in readiness, motivation, experience, language and/or understanding. Little emphasis was given to possibilities that systems may be failing children. The official response from policymakers was the provision of compensatory programmes to attempt to remedy deficits (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; Yelland, 2008).

Cultural difference paradigm

More recently, a noticeable shift away from viewing diversity from deficit or culturally deprived perspectives has occurred. The cultural difference paradigm takes a broad and inclusive approach to diversity education, emphasising the "impact of cultural differences on the lives, experiences, and identities of diverse groups in ways…that are unique and specific" (Goodwin, Cheruvu & Genishi, 2008, p. 4). Unlike the deficit paradigm, the cultural difference paradigm is not grounded in comparisons between "racially, culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse peoples to a white, middle class standard" (ibid, p. 4).

Within this paradigm, the wider social contexts in which children are located are acknowledged. There is explicit recognition that educational settings are typically middle class, and based on western culture. Cultural differences are recognised alongside the discontinuities that likely occur when children move from one culture (home) to a different culture (school). Whilst teachers try to lift the cognitive, social and academic attainments of children, they may not recognise that to accommodate children from diverse cultures and backgrounds, they themselves may need to change. These changes may be in the way they think and interact as well as changes in organisational structures (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012), or "…institutionalised ways of doing things in order to be more socially just" (Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013,

p. 255). Other changes may include needing to taking action to limit inequalities (Hyland, 2010), and developing increased cultural competence (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; MoE & Education Council, 2011).

Empowerment or enhancement paradigm

The empowerment or enhancement paradigm and associated discourse is most commonly found in official documents nowadays (Alton-Lee, 2003). Teachers are expected to subscribe to this paradigm which is premised on understandings that families and children have certain strengths and expertise that can be built on or extended. Inherent is the belief that people can change their circumstances, and parents can become effective advocates for their children, provided they have access to appropriate knowledge (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003, p. 10).

Historical approaches

Educational approaches to working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have evolved since the 'assimilation and integration' policies of the past. In the 1970s and early 1980s 'multicultural education' with "its roots in racial inequities that fuelled the civil rights movement" was being promoted in the western world (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 3). Stephen May (1994) described how multicultural education fostered, "'cultural pluralism' at the school level. By this it was thought, the educational 'underachievement' of minority students could be redressed" (p. 4).

Various authors have critiqued multicultural education, calling it 'chomp, stomp and dress up' (Whyte, 2012), or 'tourist curriculum' (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010). Seen as a beginner's approach to working with culturally and linguistically diverse families, critique centres on the portrayal of difference as foreign or exotic, compared to the dominant culture or 'norm'. Trivialising or tokenistic approaches to culture can lead to stereotyping individuals and "culture out of context, far removed from the everyday experiences of groups" (Glover, 2016, p. 10).

The 'cultural iceberg' model (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998) illustrates that cultural differences extend far beyond the surface level of 'tourist curriculum'. Diversity should be part of daily on-going curriculum rather than one-off or occasional visits to ways of life of 'other' people (Derman-Sparks & Olsen

Edwards, 2010). Going beyond the superficial study of culture through traditional food, dance and costumes is a complex task; one that teachers may avoid because it is uncomfortable, or seen as difficult or even dangerous (Britzman, 1991, 1998; Johnston, Bainbridge & Shariff, 2007; Robinson, 2005a, 2005b).

Educational policy and practice needed to change in relation to population diversity and demographic changes. Multicultural education, focused mainly on cultural awareness, was followed by 'anti-racist' and 'anti-bias' strategies and approaches. Their goal was to increase understanding, and "assist educators and children to reduce racial discrimination" (Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013, p. 254). As opposed to curiosity, the goal of tolerance, was the primary objective of education about diversity. Anti-bias approaches required that cultural pluralism be complemented by structural pluralism in order that institutional change in education settings might result in reducing the transmission of dominant group culture (Stephen May, 1994,). As a result, in inclusive school cultures guided by philosophies of equity, diversity is seen as an asset rather than a potential problem (Whyte, 2012).

This trajectory of changing educational approaches to diversity has parallels in the ECE sector. The seminal text *The Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children* published in the America (Derman-Sparks & the Anti-Bias Taskforce, 1989) preceded a revised, renamed edition, *Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves* (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010). Similarly, in Australia there have been three edited editions of *The Anti-bias approach in early childhood* (Creaser & Dau, 1996; Dau, 2001; Scarlet, 2016). The Anti-Bias Curriculum (ABC) provoked anti-bias approaches and movements. "The direction of work in early childhood [changed] to explicitly address discrimination, promote equity and engage in activist pedagogies as core business" (Scarlet, 2016, p. xxv). *Te Aotūroa Tātaki: Inclusive early childhood education: Perspectives on inclusion, social justice and equity from Aotearoa New Zealand* (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012) continues this tradition, and a revised edition is in the pipeline (Alex Gunn, personal communication, May 2018). In these inspirational texts, the editors and authors urge ECE teachers to engage in cultural politics for change, understanding how individuals and groups may be "privileged, marginalised, judged, included and excluded through everyday practices and language" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p.

3). The original (1989) and revised (2010) anti-bias goals developed for adults working with young children are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Anti-bias goals 1989 - 2010.

'The Anti-Bias goals' 1. To be conscious of one's own culture, attitudes, and values and how they influence practice 2. To be comfortable with difference, have empathy and engage effectively with families 3. To critically think about diversity, bias and discrimination 4. To confidently engage in dialogue around issues of diversity and discrimination (Derman-Sparks & the Anti-Bias Curriculum Taskforce, 1989).
The Four Core Goals of Anti-Bias Education 1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities. 2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity: accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections. 3. Each child will recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts. 4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010, p. xiv).

The latest 'anti-bias' text (Scarlet, 2016) had its genesis in these goals (1989, 2010), and is testimony to their continued relevance in ECE settings today. In the initial draft of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1993, p. 153), the seminal anti-bias text authors were referenced in a footnote (Derman-Sparks et al., 1989), at the end of this Contribution strand statement.

> Making a contribution includes developing satisfying relationships with adults and peers. The early development of social confidence has long-term effects and adults in early childhood education settings play a significant role in encouraging children's ability to initiate and maintain relationships with peers (p. 73).

Synergies are still evident between the anti-bias goals (Derman-Sparks et al., 1989, 2010) and the learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, and attitudes in Goal One of the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (MoE, 1996), and the commensurate goal in Mana Tangata Contribution[4] (MoE, 2017) outlined in Table 2 despite them being expressed differently.

[4] In the revised *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) under the Mana Tangata Contribution strand material previously identified as learning outcomes now appears under a section entitled 'evidence of learning and development' (p. 37). Note: 'working theories' also appear under this strand in the revised version.

Table 2: Comparison of Mana Tangata Contribution strands 1996 - 2017.

Mana Tangata Contribution strand - Goal One
Children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background
Learning Outcomes: Knowledge, skills and attitudes
Children develop: an understanding of their own rights and those of others; the ability to recognise discriminatory practices and behaviour and to respond appropriately; some early concepts of the value of appreciating diversity and fairness; the self-confidence to stand up for themselves and others against biased ideas and discriminatory behaviour; positive judgments on their own gender and the opposite gender; positive judgments on their own ethnic group and other ethnic groups; confidence that their family background is viewed positively within the early childhood education setting; and respect for children who are different from themselves and ease of interaction with them (MoE, 1996, p. 66).

Mana Tangata Contribution		
Goal	**Learning Outcomes**	**Evidence of learning and development**
Children experience an environment where:	*Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:*	*These outcomes will be observed as learning in progress when, for example, children demonstrate:*
There are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background	Treating others fairly and including them in play/te ngākau makuru	Respect for others, the ability to identify and accept another point of view, and acceptance of and ease of interaction with children of other genders, capabilities and ethnic groups.
		Confidence that their family background is viewed positively in the ECE setting.
		Confidence to stand up for themselves and others against biased ideas and discriminatory behaviour.
		A positive learner identity and a realistic perception of themselves as being able to acquire new interests and capabilities.
		Awareness of the strategies they use to learn new skills and generate and refine working theories (MoE, 2017, pp. 24, 37).

Contemporary approaches

Multicultural education has been much criticised for its shortcomings. The criticism included: that deficit assumptions about minority groups were not addressed; there was a narrow emphasis on racial identity; it failed to address power relations in society; and marginalised groups and the breadth of their diversity were not recognised (Vandenbroeck, 2007). The international *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* and *Policy guidelines on inclusion in education* (UNESCO, 2006, 2009) responded to these concerns. Miller and Petriwskyj (2013) describe the guidelines as, "encompass[ing] a rights-based approach to education, critical awareness of the role of education in combating racism and discrimination, provision for the heterogeneity of learners and learning in children's home languages" (p. 254).

Concern has been expressed about the implementation of these guidelines, and intercultural education generally based on: a lack of resources; gaps in teacher education programmes; insufficient professional development; and lack of time for reflection and debate. Such concerns are also shared in this country (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Grey, 2013a; Loveridge, Rosewarne, Shuker, Barker & Nager, 2012).

Following the critique of multiculturalism, other educational approaches to diversity have evolved focused on critical thinking and unequal power relations. These approaches are variously called critical multiculturalism (Schoorman, 2011), intercultural approaches to diversity (Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013), critical race theory (MacNaughton, 2003), or education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist (Sleeter & Grant, 1986).

Intercultural approaches to human diversity in education involve a range of expectations for teachers. There is an expectancy that students will be equipped with skills to become socially active in creating change, and shaping their own destinies (Cushner, McClelland & Safford, 2015). Providing children with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills to learn with and alongside diverse others requires teachers to have intercultural competence. Intercultural competence involves relevant theoretical and cultural knowledge leading to 'culturally responsive pedagogies', and professional practice involving critical thinking and reflexivity (Gonzales-Mena, 2005; Vuckovic, 2008a; Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013).

Reflexivity involves teacher self-awareness which is critical to their identification and appreciation of diversity. Teachers need to understand 'what' and 'how' they are (Vuckovic, 2008a). Teachers will be able to relate to diverse others if they recognise worldviews beyond their own, particularly indigenous worldviews (Colbung, Glover, Rau & Ritchie, 2007), and understand their own personal as well as group (ethnic) identities. Teachers' attitudes towards racial, ethnic, and cultural issues are evident in the curriculum, the theories they draw from, and learning experiences that they provide or facilitate (Farago & Swadener, 2016; Glover, 2016; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Gelding, 2016; Newman, 2016). Becoming conscious of one's biases, both conscious and subconscious, in areas such as race, gender, culture, and abilities is imperative, alongside a willingness to confront these stereotypes, prejudice and bias (Campbell, Smith & Alexander, 2016; Derman-Sparks & Olsen- Edwards, 2010; Evans & McAllister, 2016; Glover, 2016; Gunn, 2012; Scarlet & Bryant, 2017; Surtees, 2012).

Engagement with theoretical frameworks including critical and poststructuralist theories can support teachers to address unequal power relations in practice. These theories "tend to be used in early childhood to address issues of equity and social justice" (Scarlett, 2015, p. 14). Whilst the revised version of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) introduces critical theory, it stops short of explicit mention of poststructural theory, unlike its counterpart, *Belonging, being and becoming, The early years learning framework for Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations, 2009).

In theory, the pedagogical emphases of intercultural education and 'culturally responsive pedagogies' are on inclusion, social justice, equity, and developing children's empathy. The primary focus of education about diversity has shifted from curiosity, to tolerance, to appreciation, whereas contemporary emphases go further. Working for social justice requires an activist stance that recognises power relations, teachers and children's agency, and education's transformative potential to change the status quo (Grieshaber & Ryan, 2005) through critical curriculum.

In keeping with intercultural education goals, a critical curriculum is inclusive and socially relevant; a broader curriculum that addresses the "constructs of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexual orientation openly and actively in the

classroom" (De Lair & Erwin, 2000, p. 154). This broadening of the curriculum supplants the 'cultural diversity' of old that was often "perceived within the context of ethnic diversity, and within the dominant discourse of 'multiculturalism'" (Robinson, 2002, p. 416).

Rationale for project

Discussions about diversity and difference in education and society are increasingly significant given the increased cultural and linguistic diversity of pluralist societies in the western world. These changes have resulted from immigration, refugee resettlement programmes, and globalisation (Hayward, 2012). The demographics of Aotearoa New Zealand have changed markedly over the past few decades in relation to increasing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity (Ministry of Social Development, 2016). Children growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand are now immersed in vast ethnic diversity especially if they live in metropolitan areas of densely populated parts of this country.

Children are being educated and cared for in ECE settings in unprecedented numbers, and the demographics of settings match the demographics of society in Aotearoa New Zealand. Participation increased steadily between 2000 and 2017, when 50 % of children enrolled were identified as Pākehā/European, 23 % as Māori, 15 % as Asian, and 8 % as Pasifika. The remaining children were identified as 'Other' as their ethnicity was unknown (MoE, 2018). The prior ECE attendance of children starting school rose from 90.0% in 2000 to 96.2% in 2015 (an increase of 6.2%). Children are also spending more hours in ECE; the average number of weekly hours per enrolment rose from 13.5 in 2000 to 20.7 hours in 2017 - a rise of 53.3%. Participation of 3-4 year-olds in ECE is higher than the OECD average for example: rates for 3-year-olds were 87% in New Zealand compared with 71% across the OECD (OECD, 2014). Hence, ECE settings have greater capacity to influence more children in this country than ever before.

ECE settings such as the kindergarten, where this research was located, can be seen as social and cultural spaces for children living life with, and alongside others (Moss & Petrie, 2002). They are ideal places where early learning about diversity and difference can be supported and reinforced through judicious teaching using inclusive pedagogies (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010). Broström (2013)

expresses the ideal of the preschool as "a democratic meeting space… that is inclusive of all citizens, open to their participation and gives them a voice" (p. 245). Meanwhile, Langford (2010) refers to ECE "pedagogy that is a democratic space in which everyone is central to the early childhood institution" (p. 114). Greater conscious engagement with diversity can foster more equitable outcomes for children and their families. Inclusion can be furthered through deeper acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity even if such diversity is not present in the specific kindergarten environments (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; 2011).

In the study presented in this thesis, the teachers and I sought to embrace multiple perspectives in the complex area of children's (and adults') thinking and actions in relation to diversity and difference. Additionally, I hypothesised that through sharing our individual social justice philosophies, the teachers and I might become more reflexive about our attitudes, beliefs, values, and stereotypes. Then the ECE settings where we work would become more democratic, and we would be better able to openly and actively address aspects of diversity. The understandings and "culturally-responsive practices" of members of this learning community could be strengthened and improved through Action Research (MacNaughton, 2001a; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009; Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010). This is seen to be especially so if the action research features conversations in the style of dialogic pedagogy found in the work of Freire (1986, 1996) and Paley (1979, 1986, 2000) for example.

It is also my expectation that others will benefit from hearing about specific practices that contributed to inclusive responses to diversity, and effective culturally responsive pedagogy. The dissemination of the 'findings' including possibilities for 'using diversity as a learning resource' (Booth & Ainscow, 2011) while recognising the 'shadow side' (Murray & Dignan, 2011), can support ECE communities to flourish where children achieve their full potential, and families participate fully. Working towards a society that is fair and just for everyone is an ethical responsibility that we all share as educators.

The ECE context

For the purpose of this thesis, ECE teachers' work is seen to consist of being engaged in the education and care of infants, toddlers, and young children [5] attending services licensed by the MoE, and partially funded by the New Zealand Government. Working in teams, ECE teachers are responsible for overseeing the implementation of curriculum through planning, evaluating, and assessing children's learning on a daily basis. The interesting genesis of ECE in this country began with kindergartens being established in the 1870s, and the first crèche attached to a kindergarten in 1887 (Helen May, 2013). Nowadays the ECE sector is made up of a variety of different services[6].

> Early childhood education in New Zealand is the result of historical, cultural and political factors, as well as a response to dominant and emerging theories of how children learn. It has variously promoted social regulation, philanthropic concern for children, support for mothers, equality for women, cultural assimilation and survival, and economic outcomes. Services have emerged in response to these discourses and the sector has become diverse and complex (Loveridge & McLachlan, 2009, p. 22).

A fair, inclusive, and just society is pivotal to *Te Whāriki* the bi-cultural ECE curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand (MoE, 1996), where primacy is given to a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the importance of children learning with and alongside diverse others (Nuttall, 2013). The curriculum's aspiration statement points to children's agency and citizenship, describing a vision for children to grow up as "competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (MoE, 1996, p. 9; MoE, 2017, p. 5). The aim is

[5] In *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) the authors identify three distinct groups of children present in ECE settings in Aōtearoa New Zealand: infants (birth -18 months); toddlers (1-3 years); and young children (2.5-school entry).

[6] The ECE teacher-led sector in Aōtearoa New Zealand is comprised of kindergartens (sessional or 'school day', private, corporate, and community based - formerly known as 'state' kindergartens run under the auspices of kindergarten associations), education and care settings (full-day private, corporate, and community based), and Kōhanga reo (Māori language immersion settings)

that these goals are translated into localised whāriki (each setting weaves its own whāriki), and culturally specific pedagogical practices.

Te Whāriki – the New Zealand early childhood curriculum framework

In Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki*, is described as,

> a curriculum guideline originally published in 1996 and revised in 2017 by the New Zealand (NZ) Ministry of Education. It outlines the curriculum that the Ministry of Education requires every early childhood service in NZ to follow if it is to retain its licence to operate and care for and educate children (My ECE, n.d.).

Throughout this work I refer to both the 1996 version of *Te Whāriki* that was in use in 2014 during the kindergarten phase of this research, and the revised version (MoE, 2017) which contains significantly fewer learning outcomes, along with updated information and explanations.

Te Whāriki was developed through collaboration and consultation with Māori - a partnership approach as envisaged by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*[7]. The curriculum text and structure reflects this partnership, and "…the special place of Māori as the indigenous people of Aotearoa, and that we have a shared obligation to protect Māori language and culture" (MoE, 2017, p. 8) is explicitly recognised. The principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* derive from this indigenous worldview (Jenkin, 2010). The metaphor of a whāriki or 'woven mat' describes the framework made up of four guiding principles and five strands (wefts and warps). The principles are: Whakamana Empowerment, Kotahitanga Holistic Development, Whānau Tangata Family and Community, and Ngā Hononga Relationships, and they frame the strands: [8]Mana Tangata Contribution, Mana Aotūroa Exploration, Mana Reo Communication, Mana Atua Wellbeing, and Mana Whenua Belonging[9] (MoE, 1996, 2017). In relation to fairness and diversity, the principles and strands

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[7] *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is the Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of Aōtearoa New Zealand, signed in 1840 between the British Crown and Māori, the indigenous peoples of Aōtearoa. *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* underpins *Te Whāriki*, the bi-cultural ECE curriculum (MoE, 1996; 2017).

[8] Mana - the power of being, authority, prestige, spiritual power, authority, status and control (MoE, 2017, p. 66) - also linked to empowerment and agency.

[9] "Each strand has dual English and Māori names; while closely related, different cultural connotations mean the two are not equivalents" (MoE, 2017, p. 22).

most often cited in this thesis are Whakamana Empowerment and Mana Tangata Contribution.

> Te Whāriki, the New Zealand bicultural and bilingual curriculum, provides us with an example of a focus on identities that does not reduce the pedagogical framework to a focus on the self-sufficient individual. On the contrary, the individual is constructed as a member of a community (Vandenbroeck, 2005, p. 3).

Accordingly, *Te Whāriki "*emphasises the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning and of reciprocal and responsive relationships with people, places and things" (MoE, 1996, p. 9). Diversity and difference are recognised in the curriculum particularly within the Mana Whenua Belonging and Mana Tangata Contribution strands which focus on "links with the family and the wider world being affirmed and extended" (p. 54), families knowing they have a place, equitable opportunities for all, affirmation of individuals, and learning with and alongside others (p. 64). In the revised *Te Whāriki* foreword, the Minister of Education at the time, Hon Hekia Parata describes how the curriculum, "emphasises our bicultural foundation, our multicultural present and the shared future we are creating" (MoE, 2017, p. 2).

According to *Te Whāriki* teachers are responsible for upholding children's mana, and supporting them to develop skills, knowledge, attitudes, dispositions[10] and working theories[11] that enable them to realise their full potential, and become lifelong learners (MoE, 1996; 2017, Education Council, 2017). Parents and teachers have the responsibility of supporting children as they journey in a complex and increasingly diverse world. If children are to form "conceptions of themselves as social beings" (Donaldson, Grieve & Pratt, 1983, p. 1) during the period of early

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[10] Dispositions - "Knowledge, skills and attitudes combine as dispositions, which are tendencies to respond to situations in particular ways. As children learn, they develop a growing repertoire of dispositions, and the ability to use them in ways that are sensitive to the context" (MoE, 2017, p. 22). "Learning dispositions associated with *Te Whāriki* include: courage and curiosity (taking an interest), trust and playfulness (being involved), perseverance (persisting with difficulty, challenge and uncertainty), confidence (expressing a point of view or feeling) and responsibility (taking responsibility). Other learning dispositions include reciprocity, creativity, imagination and resilience" (MoE, 2017, p. 23).

[11] Working theories - "The evolving ideas and understandings that children develop as they use their existing knowledge to try to make sense of new experiences. Children are most likely to generate and refine working theories in learning environments where uncertainty is valued, inquiry is modelled, and making meaning is the goal" (MoE, 2017, p. 23)

childhood, they need to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996, 2017). Mana, dispositions and working theories are the three key learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki*, or the 'trio of constructs for learning' (Gunn, 2015).

The central *Te Whāriki* concept of Whakamana Empowerment, (MoE, 1996, 2017) is consistent with 'preparing children to stand up against unfairness' another of the four core goals of anti-bias education (Derman Sparks & the ABC Taskforce, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010), (Table 1). This goal is in harmony with the notion of 'making a valued contribution to society' (MoE, 1996, p. 9). Additionally, taking responsibility, recognising justice, and resisting injustice are related to the 'learning disposition of responsibility' (Carr, 2001; MoE, 2017). An activist stance is evident in these behaviours which recognise children's agency, and that they are 'capable and confident' (MoE, 1996, 2017). These behaviours are integral to critical multiculturalism or intercultural approaches to human diversity in education (Baldock, 2010) that seek social transformation rather than the maintenance of the status quo reflected in responses such as 'tolerance' (Nieto, 2002).

The research presented in this thesis, had an activist and praxis focus consistent with Whakamana Empowerment, the guiding principle of *Te Whāriki* defined as "giving power or authority that enables a person to take an action or role" (MoE, 1996, p. 99). Tilly Reedy (2013), one of the curriculum authors, explains mana, a central concept within each strand, as closely associated with Whakamana Empowerment. "…the learner is empowered in every possible way…nurtured in the knowledge that they are loved and respected, that their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional strength will build mana, influence, and control; that having mana is the enabling and empowering tool to controlling their own destiny" (p. 47).

Threading the principles and strands together, "in collaboration with children, parents, whānau and community to create a local curriculum for their setting" (MoE, 2017, p. 10), teachers weave their own distinctive whāriki. *Te Whāriki* is a unique journey and each teacher understands *Te Whāriki* in their own way (Ritchie, 2013). The Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2) in *Te Whāriki* has learning outcomes made up of skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to fairness and

diversity, standing up for rights and against discrimination, and developing respect for others who are different (MoE, 1996, p. 66; MoE, 2017, pp. 36-40). Adult responsibilities outlined in *Te Whāriki* emphasise aspects of diversity that this research is concerned with, including calls to support "the cultural identity of all children" and to affirm "and celebrate cultural differences" (MoE, 1996, p. 18). Over time, the focus has shifted from, "the early childhood curriculum actively contributes towards countering racism and other forms of prejudice" (MoE, 1996, p. 18) to an explicit role for kaiako[12]. The latest version states that "children have opportunities to discuss bias and to challenge prejudice and discriminatory attitudes" (MoE, 2017, p. 39).

Bicultural practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

The ECE curriculum reflects the 'partnership' between Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand and tauiwi[13] expressed in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* "in text and structure" (MoE, 1996, p. 9). There is an expectation that children will have "the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi" (MoE, 1996, p. 9).

The theoretical framework of *Te Whāriki* includes Māori worldviews which add depth, and richness to each whāriki, making it appropriate for all peoples (Tilly Reedy, 2003). An 'ethics of care' (Noddings, 1992, 2002; Ritchie, 2013), and respect for self, others, and the environment (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau & Craw, 2010) are complementary to tikanga[14] Māori values of manaakitanga[15], mana,[16] whakawhanaungatanga[17] and respect for Papatūānuku[18]. Other key philosophical underpinnings to *Te Whāriki* include upholding and respecting the mana of each child, and their families and whānau (MoE, 1996; Gunn, 2016), and democratic

[12] Kaiako - the term used in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) to describe teachers, educators and other adults who have a responsibility for the care and education of young children in ECE settings.
[13] Tauiwi - foreigner, European, non-Māori, colonist, person from afar, outsider, alien, stranger
[14] Tikanga - Māori values, protocols
[15] Manaakitanga - ethic of hospitality, generosity, care
[16] Mana - the strands of *Te Whāriki "*align with five domains of 'mana'; a Māori concept loosely translated as agency, authority, power or prestige. The implications of the Māori constructs of these strands of belonging, well-being, contribution, communication and exploration, is that they are sources of authoring or agency, sited in: place, spiritual mental and physical well-being, people (the community or the collective), language and knowledge of the world" (Carr et al., 2009, pp.19-20).
[17] Whanaungatanga - kinship, sense of whānau connection, a relationship through shared experiences and working together that provides people with a sense of belonging
[18] Papatūānuku - Earth, earth mother

citizenship (Mitchell, 2013, 2018 in press), which are enacted on a daily basis as children's learning is 'socially and culturally mediated' through their various relationships (Vygotsky, 1978).

Te Whāriki points to bicultural issues in relation to the empowerment of children, particularly Māori children and their families and communities (Rau & Ritchie, 2005, 2011). The curriculum asserts that "adults working with children should understand and be willing to discuss bicultural issues, actively seek Māori contributions to decision making, and ensure that Māori children develop a strong sense of self-worth" (MoE, 1996, p. 40). Teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand have embarked on bicultural journeys intended to honour *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (Tilly Reedy, 2013; Ritchie, 2013) to varying extents.

"The development of bi-cultural competency is fundamental to the provision of quality ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand" (Jenkin & Broadley, 2013, p. 10). Their advice, 'Just do it' is reflected in the title of their chapter. Reflecting the values embodied in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* in ECE programmes and environments is an ongoing challenge for the sector (Ritchie, 2013). The extent to which teachers are meeting their obligations in terms of bicultural practice has been much explored (Campbell & Gordon-Burns, 2017; Forsyth & Leaf, 2010). What teachers are doing/ might do to improve their knowledge, understandings and practices to be authentic rather than tokenistic has also been well documented (Ritchie, 2008; Ritchie et al., 2008, 2010; Williams, Broadley & Te Aho, 2012). In a retrospective study summarising ten years of reporting on ECE settings, the Education Review Office (ERO, 2016) identified that,

> only a few services were fully realising the intent in practice by working in partnership with whānau Māori and through the provision of a curriculum that was responsive to the language, culture and identity of Māori children... *Te Whāriki* needs to be well understood to be implemented as a bicultural curriculum. While the intent of *Te Whāriki* is recognised in some services, greater expectations and more guidance will encourage services to implement a bicultural curriculum for all children (p. 10).

The teachers at the kindergarten, where the research for this thesis took place, were providing some leadership in the area of biculturalism. The Kindergarten Treaty

(Figure 1), which referenced the Treaty of Waitangi, set out how everyone would behave in relation to each other. This connects with the phrase, 'in the interests of peace and good order' identified in the English text Preamble (Figure 2). Māori and the Crown were keen to promote law and order when the Treaty of Waitangi and Te Tiriti o Waitangi were signed in 1840. The 'Waka[19] Project' was also evidence that indigenous knowledge and Māori ethnicity were valued in this place. These practices are in keeping with the notion that Māori knowledge, once made accessible to children, quickly becomes part of their knowing (Ritchie, 2013).

Assessing children's learning

In Aotearoa New Zealand, assessment is embedded through responsive and reciprocal relationships, and is in itself, a cultural practice which makes learning visible (MoE, 2004; 2007; 2009). Teachers are engaged in processes of 'noticing, recognising, and responding' (Carr, 2001), and documenting children's learning in narrative assessments known as Learning Stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). Learning Stories are "observations in everyday settings, designed to provide a cumulative series of qualitative 'snapshots' or written vignettes of individual children displaying one or more of the five target domains of learning dispositions" (Carr, 2001, p. 96).

Assessment documentation has much to offer children, including opportunities to remember, re-visit, recognise, and reflect on their own learning processes. The ability to revisit their learning is essential to children's appreciation of themselves as learners (Appendix A). When revisiting these records of learning, children are empowered, viewing themselves as confident and competent learners (Claxton & Carr, 2004; Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012; MoE, 1996, 2004, 2017). Through teachers' documentation, children become visible and seen as subjects with agency. Rather than simply artefacts, this type of documentation should be seen as a 'verb' not a 'noun', as in critical reflection, 'process', inquiry, and reifying learning (Lines, Roder & Naughton, 2012). The concept of reifying learning comes from

[19] Waka - canoe, ancestral canoe. 'Canoe traditions' are referred to in Treaty Explanation (Figure 2). Wall display featured 7 named waka or canoes understood by many to have been part of the Great Migration by Māori to New Zealand from their ancestral home in Hawaiki (Canoe Traditions, n.d.).

Wenger (1998) when he describes reification as the following quote from Areljung and Kelly-Ware (2016) suggests:

> Wenger (1998) refers to 'reification' as the process of giving concrete form to an abstract understanding; as in writing something down (such as rules), naming an abstract phenomenon (such as 'gravity'), or producing tools or pictures (such as maps). When something is made concrete and public, people can start to negotiate its meaning (p. 4).

In and beyond Aotearoa New Zealand, 'pedagogical documentation' is discussed in terms of questions and possibilities (Fleet, Patterson & Robertson, 2006). Documentation provides teachers with windows to see children's ideas, interests, strengths, participation, and areas for extension. In addition, documentation supports teachers to see aspects of their practice that have been successful, and those that need improvement (Dockett & Fleer, 2003). Positive outcomes can be accomplished through documentation since it can "make visible things that otherwise would have remained invisible: knowledge, learning processes, ideas, relationships and expressions" (Sparrman & Lindgren, 2010, p. 249). Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2007) concur, arguing that,

> documentation can be kept and returned to, and must be seen all the time as a living record of the pedagogical practice, the process of documentation can also function as a way of revisiting and reviewing earlier experiences and events, and by doing so not only create memories, but also new interpretations and reconstructions of what happened in the past (p. 153).

Sharing assessment documentation with families supports them to engage in children's thinking and meaning-making processes. Parents and whānau can contribute to teachers' assessment documentation about their child, and these contributions can add richness and depth to the stories that help children to construct their learner identities (MoE, 2004, 2007). "Learning Stories are an attempt to capture...aspects of learning, while at the same time providing a site for teachers to co-construct learning journeys and learning pathways" (Carr & Lee, 2012, p. 129). The triadic dialogues between parents, teachers and children that can emanate from Learning Stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012) and/or informal conversations about children's learning have the potential to reveal rich insights, and enable

teachers to play a mediation role in children's learning as expected in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017).

Worryingly, the primacy of Learning Stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012) is under threat, as teachers, under pressure to replace or supplement hard copy Portfolios with on-line platforms (Kelly & Clarkin-Phillips, 2016), with minimal non-contact time, are documenting learning as casually written anecdotes, learning notes (Blaiklock, 2010) or snippets, as seen during this research.

The potential of *Te Whāriki*

Te Whāriki is a critical curriculum framework, with transformative potential, in keeping with critical multiculturalism (Schoorman, 2011). Significant possibilities exist, and as each ECE setting weaves their own 'whāriki' (MoE, 1996, 2017), teachers need to strategise curriculum in conjunction with their children and families to create inclusive ECE programmes. Gunn (2003) recognises that "turning equitable and inclusive aspirations of the curriculum into practice remains, in my experience, a challenge" (p. 130).

Despite the potential of *Te Whāriki*, the curriculum document has been critiqued by a number of scholars from within and external to Aotearoa New Zealand (see for example Nuttall's edited texts, 2003, 2013). Macartney (2008) argues that *Te Whāriki* provides a strong basis for inclusion in terms of its vision and conceptual framework. In a later work with her colleagues, she argues that, "if this ideal is to become a reality, the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of social justice and inclusion within *Te Whāriki* 'need to permeate the consciousness and pedagogical practices' of all teachers (Porter & Smith, 2011, p.32)" (Macartney, Purdue & Arthur, 2013, p.131).

Broström (2013) has suggested that difficulties in interpreting *Te Whāriki* in practice may be related to what he sees as one of its shortcomings, that "…explicit discussion and formulation of aims, goals, and educational content seem to be missing…Te Whariki is too general" (p. 251). Meanwhile, Cullen (2003) and Hedges (2013) concur that the complexities of *Te Whāriki* require teachers to have sophisticated professional knowledge and a strong theoretical base – both of which are lacking.

Louise Taylor (2007) describes that whilst adherence to the curriculum framework document has become a central requirement for ECE teachers in New Zealand, in her research with seven ECE teachers over two and a half years, she found that superficial understandings of the intent and meaning of *Te Whāriki* were common. Teachers were accepting taken-for-granted knowledge in the curriculum as fixed and static, and not grappling with what it meant to be a bicultural teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand. Taylor (2007) cited Ritchie (2003, p.94) arguing that despite the notion that "cultures are constantly changing, shifting, and borrowing from each other, and this process includes the re-assignment of meanings", this process is happening to a questionable extent in New Zealand (p.153).

The revised *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) is the government's response to widespread concerns about curriculum implementation in the ECE sector (Education Review Office [ERO], 2013; OECD, 2012; MoE, 2015b). In 2015, the government established the Advisory Group on Early Learning (AGEL). The advisory group's work can be seen as the precursor to the revision exercise that took place with regards to *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). The AGEL Terms of Reference (MoE, 2015b), noted concerns about *Te Whāriki*, citing both the ERO report on the implementation of *Te Whāriki* (ERO, 2013) and *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: New Zealand 2012* (OECD, 2012). The MoE (2015) identified that, "ERO found considerable variation in the understanding of *Te Whāriki* and teacher practices, with most services not using the curriculum framework in depth to reflect on, evaluate and improve practice" (para. 2). They also quoted the OECD (2012), who recommended that "New Zealand could capitalise on the strengths of its ECE system by looking at options for improving the implementation of *Te Whāriki.* This could include strengthening parental involvement in curriculum design and implementation" (para. 3).

Te Whāriki is a curriculum framework and as teachers implement it, they are faced with the question, 'what counts as curriculum?' This question has long been debated as it relates to what knowledge is valued in this place (Carr, 1997; Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012; Carr, Lee & Jones, 2004a, 2007a, 2009; Gunn, 2015; Stephenson, 2009b). The question of 'what counts as curriculum?' is covered in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), and in the last two chapters of this thesis. Who is involved in

curriculum design, and how they are involved are other significant issues relevant to this research.

The 'critical' teacher

A critical curriculum that addresses reciprocal power relations and the broader diversity of marginalised groups requires critical teachers (Vandenbroeck, 2007). Encouraging children's social integration is discussed alongside strategies available to teachers in *Te Whāriki* under the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (MoE, 1996, 2017), (Table 2). This strand recognises children's agency, the importance of equity of opportunity irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background, and the child as an individual and as a member of a group (MoE, 1996, p. 64). These specific goals relate to ECE settings as microcosms of society and the wider world. So how might teachers, seeking a fairer, more just, and equitable society, support children's understandings, acting and relating around 'otherness' in terms of diversity and difference?

Both the Code of Ethics (NZTC, 2004)[20], and the Registered Teacher Criteria (NZTC, 2009), contain expectations that teachers will critically examine their own beliefs; reflect on and refine their practice, and strive to encourage learners to think critically about significant social issues (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, n.d.). Many aspects of diversity and fairness explored in this thesis are related to significant social issues. So, how do teachers in a kindergarten setting encourage children to think critically about social issues of significance to them? This final question leads into the specifics of this research project, and the aims, objectives and questions that informed the study.

The thesis aims, objectives and the research questions

The thesis aims were:

[20] The Code of Ethics was current at time of the research but has since been replaced with *Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Education Council, 2017).

- to investigate children's ongoing inquiries in an ECE setting into their relationships with others in their everyday lives and worlds;
- to investigate how teachers, children and parents/ whānau in an ECE setting understand and respond to diversity and difference;
- to investigate how the involvement of parents/ whānau in the ongoing assessment of children's learning about diversity and difference extends teachers' understandings of children's meaning-making; and
- to explore, alongside teachers, the ways in which personal experiences, values and beliefs shape understandings and teaching about diversity and difference.

As a researcher, and a teacher educator interested in pedagogy, I had several objectives in mind from the outset of this research project. I wanted to discover the various ways that teachers explored the potential of, and possibilities for, 'using diversity as a learning resource' (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). I was interested in the strategies that teachers used to support children's theorising in these areas, and how their subjective experiences, values and beliefs shaped their understandings and teaching about diversity and difference (Yelland, 2005; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012). Given that 'working theories' is one of the two key learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki*, albeit the 'neglected' one (Hedges & Jones, 2012), and there has been a recent surge of research interest in them, the teachers and I were keen for this construct to be at the forefront of our investigations into diversity and fairness.

Fairness and diversity were navigated on an ongoing basis at the kindergarten. What these terms meant, how they were constructed, in what situations and by whom, was part of the minute-by-minute negotiations going on in the place and space where this research was situated. Hence, the reference to 'negotiating' in the title of this thesis suggests that exchanges of meaning were taking place between participants, in different spaces in a kindergarten, where power was ever present and (un)recognised.

I was interested in seeing how families understand diversity and difference, how they were, and might be, involved in negotiating their children's developing understandings in the areas of diversity and difference, and to what extent their involvement in the research and assessment practices at the kindergarten might help

the teachers and me to understand children's thinking in the complex terrain of their 'working theories'- theorising in the social world.

In keeping with the Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)[21], the mesosystem, that is the connections between the ECE setting and the child's home, was considered worthy of explanation to shed additional light on children's thinking and teachers' pedagogy.

These aims and objectives led to four research questions, one each for children and families/whānau, and two for the teachers who were an integral part of this research.

Research questions:

1. When learning about diversity and fairness in the social world, what working theories do children (3.5 -5 years) express? And how are these expressed?

2. How do families describe, encourage, and respond to children's explorations of fairness and difference?

3. How do teachers provoke and respond to children's working theories about the social world?

4. How might teachers promote an 'inclusive response' to diversity by supporting children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences?

[21] The diagram of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model that appeared in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, p.19) no longer appears in the 2017 revisioned *Te Whāriki* curriculum framework, and the text has been revised. However, 'Bio-ecological model' now appears as a subsection in 'Underpinning theories and approaches' (pp.60-62), and Bronfenbrenner's (2005) most recent ideas about children's worlds rapidly changing and connected across time are included along with an example of the theory in action relating to kaiako in New Zealand responding to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC, United Nations, 1989) in their work.

The structure of this thesis

The remainder of this thesis is organised thus:

Chapter Two sets out a range of theoretical perspectives that have informed this project, and ends with a theoretical framework for the study. **Chapter Three** presents literature that informed this study in relation to the research questions, and highlights key factors for consideration. A gap was found in the existing literature around 'working theories' related to children's learning about diversity in the social world especially about issues that might be considered problematic for teachers; for example, difficult, dangerous or uncomfortable issues such as ethnicity and gender. In **Chapter Four** the methodology and methods are outlined, providing a description of what and how I constructed field texts (generated data) and composed research texts (analysed the data). A 'discussion of findings' is presented in **Chapter Five, Chapter Six,** and **Chapter Seven** related to fairness and diversity, namely friendship, gender, and ethnicity from the perspectives of child and adult participants. **Chapter Eight** relates specifically to teaching in the social world, specifically teachers' provocations and responses, in what is called the 'risky terrain'. Finally, **Chapter Nine** concludes the thesis describing conclusions, implications for practice, and limitations of the research. It ends with an 'Open letter to teachers' based on the implications of this study for them as partners with families in children's learning.

CHAPTER 2:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The theoretical framework used in this research complemented the social and philosophical contexts of the kindergarten community, the research topic, and my ways of seeing and knowing the world. The interpretive epistemologies of social constructionism and feminist poststructuralism alongside sociocultural theory have been threaded together in the framework that underpins this study. This theoretical framework enabled me to investigate the shared experiences and perspectives of the participants - teachers, children, and their families - in the context of ECE. In this chapter, each theoretical perspective is briefly outlined, and relevant concepts drawn from each theory are highlighted, then these concepts are applied to children to illustrate their relevance to this research.

A fair, inclusive and just society

Being responsive, and making a difference for children involves holding the imaginary of a just and fair society in mind, while we question and judge our everyday practices as well as the system (Thomson, 2002). This idea is pivotal to my life's work. It captures the essence of the tension between holding onto ideals, and the pragmatics of social justice work in education. Thomson describes how, "it is these dreams that provide us with hope and with ways of being (ontologies) and ways of understanding the world (epistemologies) and how it might be (axiologies)" (p. 183).

This is the standpoint from which I wanted to investigate everyday practices related to diversity and difference, and fairness in an educational setting. The imaginary of a fair, inclusive, and just society (Thomson, 2002) is compatible with the social context of the kindergarten as a research site, *Te Whāriki* the ECE bi-cultural curriculum (MoE, 1996, 2017), the selected methodology of Participatory Action Research (Mills, 2000), and the research questions.

Social constructionism

According to social constructionism, making sense of the world is a process that occurs through engagement with the world. This engagement involves acts of

interpretation that vary across culture, time, and place; meaning making is a social rather than a lone endeavour (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 2015; Crotty, 1998). These basic premises under a social constructionist theoretical orientation underpin many alternative approaches to studying human beings as social animals, such as poststructuralism, deconstruction, and discourse analysis (Burr, 2015). There are varied constructionist approaches that do not share the same characteristics although there is a 'family resemblance'. Potter (1996) points out that "they all tend to be oppositional movements of one kind or another to traditional social science positions, and in particular their realist assumptions" (p. 127). A critical stance toward assumed or taken-for-granted knowledge is a key assumption of this approach (Burr, 2015). "The ways in which we commonly understand the world are historically and culturally specific and relative; our cultures determine how we view the world and inform how and what we engage with, and what we ignore" (pp. 9-10).

Knowledge, power, and language are central ideas in social constructionism, a theory which questions realism, and is anti-essentialism. Knowledge is sustained by social processes, and knowledge and social action go together in terms of power and language (Burr, 2015). Taken-for-granted concepts such as 'celebrities', 'good health' or 'at risk youth' have actually been created by people interacting in societies over time (Drewery & Claiborne, 2014, p. 5). Other key premises of social constructionism include: language being one of the key means that we employ to understand the world; language being a precursor to thought; and finally, language as social action (Burr, 2015; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012).

Key social constructionist ideas are evident in the fields of ECE and child development. The genesis of a social constructionist worldview in ECE is an amalgam that had its origins "…in part from what is known as the 'new sociology of childhood' (Prout & James, 1990), in part from postmodern theorists, and in part from poststructuralist and feminist poststructuralist theories" (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 71). From a social constructionist perspective, children's development is seen as: culturally constructed; shifting and multifaceted; and bound by time and place (Burman, 1994; Cannella, 2002; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, 2007; Woodhead, 1999).

Constructions of children and childhood are constituted through power relations and dominant discursive regimes (Moss & Petrie, 2002). Drawing from Foucault, Moss and Petrie (2002) and other authors point to various discourses and disciplines constructing childhood in terms of versions and images, and how these various constructions affect policy, research and practice in ECE. Who we think the child is? Our image of the child has a significant bearing on our work with them (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Anglo-Western views of children's development and developmental progress are not facts or "truths that will stand firm for all time, or apply to every culture and society in the world with a universal 'one size fits all' approach" (Drewery & Claiborne, 2014, p. 5). In ECE internationally, this common belief in the plurality of childhoods is mirrored in the widespread rejection of 'developmentally appropriate practice' (Yelland, 2008), and embracing of 'the cultural nature of human development' (Rogoff, 2003).

Our biases and cultural understandings can limit our views of child development (MacNaughton, 2003). "A social constructionist view of knowledge production makes clear for us that what gets taken as normal or true in any given situation is the result of countless human choices and interpretations" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p. 177). For example, dominant constructions of 'normal' and 'other' are evident in ECE settings in relation to aspects of diversity i.e. gender, culture, or ability. These constructions can lead to inequitable practices in ECE, as some practices "work in the interests of some ideas, knowledge and understandings whilst simultaneously problematising others" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p. 178). There are inequities inherent in dominant constructions of 'normal', hence teachers should avoid making comparisons on the basis that some individuals and "groups deviate from 'white, middle-class, social, cultural, and educational norms'" (Yelland, 2008, p. ix). However, social constructionists view people and the meanings they develop as fluid, dynamic and various. This means that conditions favouring attitudes and practices that include or exclude cannot be seen as static (Gordon Burns et al., 2013).

Underpinned as it is by social constructionism, feminist poststructuralism, a macro-level theory, provides theoretical concepts fundamental to this study including discourse, multiplicities in terms of identity and subjectivity, and performativity. A brief explanation of feminist poststructuralism follows where key concepts

associated with this theory and utilised in this thesis, and my understandings of them are discussed.

Feminist poststructuralism

lisahunter, emerald and Martin (2013) describe feminist theory as providing a critique of social relations. These authors argue that feminist theory, "analyses inequality and its nature, specifically gender inequality, with an orientation to gender politics, power relations and sexuality" (p. 36). Meanwhile, poststructuralism "problematises the idea that 'truth' is knowable; indeed, it often seeks to disrupt commonly held understandings about what is 'normal' and 'true'" (Albon, 2011 as cited in Mukherji & Albon, 2015, p.28). Robinson (2015) puts it simply, stating,

> poststructuralism is a really important framework to allow us to look at the contradictions, and the very diversity and the difference that actually is existing in the world, the different ways we think about the world, and the different ways that we practise in the world, and understanding why we practise in that way (12.23-12.45).

These perspectives taken together make up 'feminist poststructuralism' a well-established, but not unproblematic theoretical paradigm (Hogan, 2012). Weedon (1987) describes feminist poststructuralism as:

> a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes, and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change. Through a concept of discourse, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it. It is a theory that decentres the rational, self-present subject of humanism, seeing subjectivity and consciousness as socially produced in language, as sites of struggle and potential change (p. 40).

Research methodologies underpinned by feminist poststructural theory enable us to *"*celebrate the multiple and contradictory; value subjectivity; and challenge social inequities" (Louise Taylor, 2013, p. 9).

These ideas are consistent with my research agenda of investigating teaching and learning about fairness and diversity, and my politics related to transforming social relations rather the perpetuating the status quo. Hence, the theory of feminist poststructuralism is fit for purpose given that, according to Weedon (1987) this theory "offers a useful, productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society and the possibilities of change" (p. 10).

Given that *Te Whāriki* provides a vision for an inclusive and just society (Ritchie, 2013), notions of power and agency for effecting change in inequitable situations are significant to this project. I was open to new possibilities in terms of strengthening children's learning about diversity and eager to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions. The theoretical framework and methodology were expressly chosen with these ontological ideas in mind, to support these goals.

Central to feminist critique of social relations is the exploration of how power operates. There are close links between power and discourse throughout the works of Foucault (1974, 1980, 1994) and others. Despite his resistance to being defined as a poststructuralist, Foucault's work has frequently been linked to this theoretical paradigm (Davis, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005; Peters & Beasley, 2007). Despite critique of his work by feminist writers, I have utilised some key concepts from Foucault in my theoretical framework because they fit my purpose. McLaren (2002) argues that feminist critique focuses on many of the same issues that feminists find useful among Foucault's ideas, "…such as his rejection of metanarratives and a normative framework, his notion of power, and his critique of traditional philosophical models of subjectivity" (p.2). The key Foucauldian concepts that I have utilised are now discussed, followed by the introduction of performativity (Butler, 1990, 1999) another construct utilised in the analysis framework in this research. I have chosen to use Butler's notion of performativity in relation to children and adults doing both gender and teaching because I am keen to look beyond 'normative' understandings in these spheres (Robinson, 2015).

Drawing from Foucault's 'tool-box'

From the outset, my aim was to use Foucault's 'tool-box'[22] in this thesis (Brown & Jones, 2001; MacNaughton, 2003, 2005; McLaren, 2009). Concepts of power, discourse, power/knowledge, and regimes of truth drawn from the early work of Foucault (1974; McHoul & Grace, 2002) were considered useful concepts to assist me as the following discussion shows. Armed with macro level theories (critical, feminist poststructural, and sociocultural), Foucault's tool-box, and my distinctive subjectivities, I was ready to examine 'diversity' discourses and discursive practices available to teachers, children, and to their families. Foucault's work has been significant to feminist writers, for example Middleton (1998) and MacNaughton (2005). McLaren (2009) explains the synergies, contending that there are four distinct intersections between Foucault's work and feminist theory. Both theoretical perspectives see the body as a site of power, view power as local, view male as privileged, and emphasise the power of discourse.

To Foucault (1980), discourses are more than 'ways of thinking' and producing meaning. Rather, discourses constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind, and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987). Knowledge viewed in this way, is inextricably connected to power, and is often written as 'power/knowledge' (Foucault, 1980). The power/knowledge produced is enabled or constrained by changing discourses throughout history as notions of 'truth'. Foucault's study of 'truth' questions how discourses shape and create meaning in systems that gain status and currency, and dominate how subjects are individually and socially defined, and organised. These processes occur while other discourses are side-lined and suppressed, yet these are possible sites for contestation, resistance and challenge (Sawicki, 1991, MacNaughton, 2005). According to St Pierre and Willow (2000), Foucault's work has changed "how we think about language and how it operates in the production of the world" (p. 485).

[22] Foucault (1975) argued that his words, ideas, his books were 'tool-boxes' and that people could use them as "a spanner or a screwdriver to short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power" (as cited in Patton 1979, p. 115)

Power/ knowledge

Throughout this project, Foucault's construct of power/ knowledge is visible as I seek to understand power relations that exist within and between the research participants, discourses, ideas and the environment. Power is everywhere and, like MacNaughton (2000), I see power suffusing child-child and child-adult relationships, and in pedagogy as noted in Areljung and Kelly-Ware (2016):

> Seeing that power is operating whenever a teacher chooses to acknowledge and build on a child's comment or action, and that some of what children say and do is never noticed and some is silenced, we find it crucial to employ a power perspective on this issue (p. 2).

The critical issue of power/knowledge in pedagogy is explored as the participants negotiate diversity and fairness, and improving or changing social practices in one kindergarten community. I was also interested in adult-adult relationships including researcher-teachers and teacher-parent relationships, hence power is explicit in the analysis framework in this research. This construct was highly relevant to identify areas and strategies for change in terms of language, subjectivity, social processes, and the institution itself.

Key ideas about knowledge from poststructuralist perspectives include: knowledge is situated; knowledge is subjective; and knowledge is contested. Haraway (1988) introduced the notion of 'situated knowledge, arguing that all knowledge comes from 'somewhere' (p. 590, as cited in Brooker, Blaise & Edwards, 2014). lisahunter, emerald and Martin (2013) describe knowledge as a "situated and positioned construct of the participants on the scene" (p. 9). Hence, knowledge is considered as subjective rather than objective, and not seen as something to be discovered. Contestable knowledge relates to the "question[ing] of 'truth claims' (e.g. that all children learn in ages and stages) so all knowledge is contested and contestable" (Scarlet, 2015, p. 14). 'Regimes of truth', another tool available to me from Foucault's 'tool-box', is explored in the next section.

Regimes of truth

Foucault's study of truth produced a construct known as 'regimes of truth'. According to Foucault (1997),

> each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth – that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (p. 131).

MacNaughton (2003) takes Foucault's concept of 'regimes of truth' and explains it in relation to early childhood settings, noting that social institutions,

> survive and thrive through creating and maintaining 'regimes of truth' about how we should think, act, and feel towards ourselves and others (Gore, 1991, 1993) …This regime (system) defines the normal and desirable ways to think, act and feel in early childhood institutions. In doing so, it creates and maintains a system of morality that says what is and what isn't a 'good', 'true' way to be an early childhood professional (p. 84).

'Regimes of truth' linked to dominant discourses such as being a 'good teacher' are relevant in this study. The construct of 'good teacher' derives from current or traditional knowledge debates about the nature of education, professionalism and quality, and child psychology. Regimes of truth can also be related to being 'good parent' or a 'good child', a 'desirable woman', or a true and 'proper boy' for example. Hence, we see that "regimes of truth establish fields of force, exert controls over thought and behavior, our knowing and not knowing" (Silin, 1995, p. 170).

In the following section, definitions of discourse are explored, followed by a discussion about discourse from feminist poststructuralist perspectives. Next dominant and deficit discourses, and the power that these discourses have is explored in relation to inclusion or exclusion of children and their families in ECE settings.

Discourse

In sociolinguistics, discourse (with a small 'd') generally refers to written or spoken communication and debate, including verbal interactions, utterances, and sequences between conversation parties - speakers and listeners (Wallis & Nelson, 2001). In a variety of traditions, analysis of discourse is more than the analysis of the structure

of language - it investigates the relationships between language, structure, and agency. In this thesis, discourse is understood as Discourse (with a capital 'D') from Gee's (1996) theory of discourse. Gee describes his theory as, "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artifacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'" (p. 131). From this theoretical perspective, Discourses are: ways of being 'certain kinds of people'; identity kits'; or 'forms of life' in which people share everyday theories about the world, informing people what is typical or normal or common sense from the perspective of a particular Discourse (Gee, 1996, 2001, 2010).

Feminist poststructuralists share a belief that, "…how we learn is through taking up and using discourse and how we do this is linked to our subjectivity and to power" (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 80). Discourses have power that is expressed through them, and exercised by them. They can shape our ways of seeing, knowing and being (MacNaughton, 2003; Weedon, 1987). Discourses also "carry with them norms for behaviour, standards of what counts as desirable and undesirable, proper and improper" (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002, p. 82). "A discourse groups together ideas, feelings, words, images, practices, actions and looks around particular areas or domains of our social life and they provide a framework for us to make sense of and act in our social world" (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 81). St Pierre and Willow (2000) caution that, "once a discourse becomes 'normal' or 'natural' it is difficult to think or act outside it" (p. 485). These 'normal' or 'natural' ways of thinking can become dominant, and affect the ways that people, adults and children think and act, as the stories in this thesis will illustrate.

Discourses can lead to deficit thinking about others in terms of groups of people, or ways of being in the world. A teacher's positioning in relation to minoritised, including indigenous, children is largely determined by the explanations, stereotypes, pictures, and metaphors that they have internalised from the discourses available to them (Russell Bishop, 2012). Some of these discourses offer solutions, while others "merely perpetuate the status quo" (p. x). Discourses can lead to inclusive or exclusive practices in ECE settings and beyond, depending on whether differences between people are viewed as ''abnormal and undesirable" or "positive and valuable" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p. 10). Knowledge and meaning about

differences such as ethnicity and gender for example are formed and produced through discourse. “Each discourse constructs the topic differently, thereby producing different meanings and knowledge about it, and about how it should be responded to” (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p. 9).

Dominant discourses are powerful, affecting everyone in educational settings. Particular concern is noted about the limiting effects of some discourses on children’s participation, agency, and voice (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer, 2015; Russell Bishop, 2012; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Gunn, 2012). Dominant discourses “act to silence and marginalise alternative discourses” (Arthur et al., 2015, p. 19). The power that operates in and through discourses can cause people “to be dismissed for getting it wrong or marginalized for not being normal” when they act in ways that do not fit with common dominant discourses or templates (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 83). Hence, normalising discourses are prime sites where disruption is necessary if fairness and democracy are to be achieved.

Another construct utilised in the analysis framework in this research that can support understandings of gender and teaching beyond ‘normative’ thinking is Butler’s notion of performativity.

Performativity

Following the publication of *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990), words such as ‘performativity’ and ‘performative’ featured in discussions about gender and other aspects of identity. Performativity involves the repetition of certain ways of saying, being and doing. Over time, repeatedly performing certain speech acts, and ways of being and doing, build up to produce a person’s identity, whether that is gender identity or ‘teacher identity’, for example (Butler, 1990, 1999). Butler utilises the construct of performativity in her work aimed at disassembling the ‘normative’ pigeonholes or categories which society attempts to fit people, including children, in to. The notion that gender is constructed through performativity is at the crux of Butler’s work to “unsettle the stabilising gender categories that attempt to normalise and regulate people” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 67).

Through Butler’s works, I have come to understand that the gender, sexual and cultural identities of children are less about who they are, as about what they do on an ongoing basis. Teaching and parenting, and their enactment as performances for

example, can also be seen as constructs shaped by forces such as dominant discourses about 'getting it right', 'good teaching' or 'good parenting'. Hence, multiple identities can be performed, and each makes up the whole child/person.

A key aspect of gender as a social construct is that "particular acts or performances are understood to be appropriate to one's sex (Blaise, 2009, p. 453). Gunn and MacNaughton (2007) argue that children do gender in a myriad of ways and that children's performances can change at a moment's notice given the circumstances, context, or other players. Gunn (2010) argues that, "…regardless of our biological sex, we can all be a mix of feminine, masculine or anywhere in between because we express our gender via subject positions available to us, and the discourses we access with different people at different times – so there is no single and fixed way to be 'properly' masculine and feminine" (p. 12). Despite Gunn's assertion that there is no fixed or proper way to be masculine or feminine (gendered), children are influenced by dominant discourses in terms of what it means to be a boy or a girl, based on their biological sex. Blaise and Taylor (2012) argue that who children are and how they perform who they are, that is, what they do, are also fashioned through the power of what is acceptable, desirable, and rewarded.

Summary

From a social constructionist theoretical orientation, concepts from poststructural theory in association with feminist theory, and the work of Foucault contribute to the theoretical framework that underpins this research, and the analyses found in this thesis. Made up of various conceptual tools - power/knowledge, discourse, and regimes of truth, this framework was used to support an investigation of how teachers and children negotiated fairness and diversity in a kindergarten community. The framework helped me to understand how power played out in children's lives through the discourses they were exposed to at the kindergarten, and in their families and communities at the time of this research. Dominant discourses were expected to inform teachers' and children's theorising and negotiations about fairness and diversity through their interactions with others.

Applying these concepts to children

Thinking about the impact of these constructs within children's realities in the kindergarten provides a context for the research topic of diversity and fairness. The

following section explores power, discourse, and subjectivity from a feminist poststructural perspective as these constructs afford ways of seeing that are utilised in this project in relation to young children. Dominant discourses are the subject of the next section. Gender, sex, and sexuality related discourses, and how these might be constructed by adults about children, or children about each other, are explored following a general discussion about discourses and dominant discourses. Next regimes of truth are explored also in the context of gender in ECE. Subjectivities from a poststructural perspective, and identities from a sociocultural perspective, are explored next given that they are central to children's understandings of self and others. This chapter concludes with a final section that introduces sociocultural theory and some additional key ideas relevant to this research.

Discourses and dominant discourses

Discourses have a powerful effect on how people see themselves (their identities and subjectivities), how they act (their agency), and how they ascribe meaning to their experiences and those of others. In ECE settings, discourses have power that can have positive or negative effects on children, enhancing or limiting children's participation, agency, and voice (Arthur et al., 2015; Russell Bishop, 2012; Gunn, 2012). Discourses can lead to practices of inclusion and exclusion (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Paley, 2009; Siraj-Blatchford, 2006), and discourses can show or hide children from realities of the world which they are a part of (Blaise & Taylor, 2012; Smith, Campbell & Alexander, 2017). How teachers act in relation to children is determined to a considerable extent by the discourses that they subscribe to (Russell Bishop, 2012; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012).

Dominant discourses affect children; they shape their beliefs, and behaviours, and they shape their identities, and how they see the identities of others. These discourses originate from the various contexts and institutions of their lives that they are exposed to - home, popular culture (Giugni, 2006), the media, and the ECE setting. Children try out different discourses and make meaning through their play (Makin, 2007). Among four-year-olds, dominant discourses often relate to peer relations, pro- or anti-social play, and issues of inclusion and exclusion (Bateman, 2012a, 2012b; Danby, 2008). Normative understandings limit, or narrowly define, acceptable ways of being a boy or a girl or a friend in an ECE setting. They negatively impact on the wellbeing of young children who are neither naïve nor

innocent as they are often posited to be (Blaise, 2014; Blaise & Taylor, 2012; Glover, 2001; Robinson, 2005a, 2005b; Robinson & Davies, 2014).

In this research, young children were seen to be making sense of themselves and others. A range of discourses were evident in the ECE setting in relation to children's meaning making, and how teachers saw children and their meaning making, including about gender, sex and sexuality.

Gender, sex and sexuality related discourses

Children's knowledge about gender and sexuality is formed and produced through discourse. Blaise and Taylor (2012) explore how the discourse of 'childhood innocence' is utilised to keep children/ some children 'in their place'. This dominant discourse means that children's ways of knowing and being and relating in this domain are often unseen, ignored, or silenced. Children are often disallowed the knowledge of adult lived realities, or alternative realities (Blaise & Taylor, 2012; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Robinson, 2008; Silin, 1995, 1999). This can be especially problematic given that children live in the same world as adults, and when they do not all fit within narrow normative boundaries or 'little boxes' (Ervin, 2014).

Dominant discourses related to sex, sexuality and gender, and how these might be constructed by adults about children, or children about each other include: femininity and hyper-femininity, masculinity and hegemonic masculinity, and normativity and heteronormativity. Discourse related to the constructs of femininity and masculinity is highly evident as children's understandings of gender change with age. Two dominant discourses that children are exposed to are, 'hyper-femininity' and hegemonic masculinity. Hyper-femininity is defined as "an exaggerated adherence to a stereotypic feminine gender role" (Murnen & Byrne, 1991, p. 480). In *Cinderella ate my daughter*, Orenstein (2012), used this construct to describe the highly commercial 'princess' marketing aimed at young girls, arguing that this marketing serves to regulate girls' gender performances when they are at an impressionable stage of identity development. Connell first used the term 'hegemonic masculinity' in 1982 to describe practices that legitimise men's dominant position in society, and justify the subordination of women and other gender identities or marginalised ways of being a man, perceived as 'feminine' in a given society (Connell, 2005).

Other discourses evident in ECE, that are related to ways of seeing, knowing and being are normativity (lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015), and heteronormativity (Gunn, 2008). Heteronormativity - the presumption that everyone is heterosexual is a dominant discourse that has a powerful influence on people's lives. Heteronormativity relates to normativity, "a set of ideas, attitudes, biases, and discriminations that can shape the way people think, speak and act and serve to "other" those marginalised or alienated by the normalised or dominant identities, positionings and practices" (lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015, p. 207). Addressing heteronormativity, I argue that "teachers and other adults can limit children's agency, and their ways of being, by saying and doing things (and by their silences), and these actions perpetuate normativity" (Kelly-Ware, 2016, p. 149).

Normativity and the promotion of heterosexuality are the 'natural, normal default' settings of many early childhood teachers, who remain largely unaware of it. Through countless actions and words, on a daily basis, these notions are reinforced in early years' settings around the globe. The inability or unwillingness of teachers to address gender and sexualities beyond normative boundaries likely relates to the "risk aversion" by teachers due to the "perceived risks associated with difficult knowledge", or diversity "being rendered invisible" and/or the view that exposure to worldly knowledge may "damage young children" (Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016, p. 4). Some authors conclude that the narrow ways in which gender and sexualities are seen by teachers and other significant adults in children's lives is related to adult blindness to, or children's lack of awareness of, other ways of being (Lyall, 2013; Simpson Dal Santo, 2014).

Heteronormativity is prevalent in ECE settings in Aotearoa New Zealand, and is reinforced by *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum according to Gunn et al., (2004) and Surtees (2003, 2008). Based on two decades of experience teaching, lecturing and researching in the New Zealand ECE sector, Surtees (2008) expresses the view that, "children are sexualised beings, that early childhood centres are sexualised sites, and that teacher talk and practice about and around sexuality in these sites acts to police sexualities" (p. 10). In her qualitative study that explored teacher talk and practice about and around sexuality and the subsequent regulation of sexualities in ECE settings, Surtees interviewed three experienced ECE teachers. Surtees (2008) concluded that children would be empowered if teachers adopted

new ways of thinking, talking and practising about sexuality. Consequently, teachers would be afforded opportunities for learning about aspects of sexuality previously overlooked and denied.

Children are exposed to discourses such as those described in this section. These and other discourses become 'regimes of truth' which affect their gender performances, and the performances of others as they seek to police or regulate each other in this domain (Robinson, 2015). Regimes of truth are discussed in the following section before the discussion moves to the topics of subjectivities and identity.

Regimes of truth and the context of gender in ECE

In ECE settings, certain ways of being, doing and saying become 'regimes of truth' (Chapter 2). Regimes of truth or normal ways of 'being' are dominant discourses that have much power. They are often assumed or taken-for-granted, and not unpacked, deconstructed or problematised according to Gordon-Burns et al., (2012). Peers, teachers, and even absent parents and siblings can reinforce these regimes of truth. In terms of gender, sex and sexuality, these regimes of truth are often associated with the dominant discourses of 'normativity' and 'heteronormativity' which prevail in ECE despite contrary expectations implied in *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum (MoE, 1996). Regimes of truth in relation to gender and fairness were evident from my perspective as a participant-observer at Beech Kindergarten, and in the subsequent field texts generated (Research Visual Diary and Transcripts of recorded discussions with teachers).

With the central goals of social inclusion and upholding the mana[23] of each child (Tilly Reedy, 2013), the authors of *Te Whāriki* state that children [will] develop: "respect for children who are different from themselves and ease of interaction with them" (MoE, 1996, p. 66). Yet, in dramatic play, and in real life, research shows that children come up against gender binaries (Smolleck & Dunne, 2015; Prioletta, 2015; Gunn, 2016), measured against a heteronormative standard (Bird & Drewery, 2000; Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016; Robinson, 2005a, 2005b). Ervin (2014) describes the situation thus:

[23] Mana - the power of being, authority, prestige, spiritual power, authority, and status

> Every day, our children are shown the box they are expected to live inside of and are encouraged to shrink down the parts of themselves that don't fit that narrow mold (sic). As adults, we sometimes forget how much gender messaging and gender policing goes on in the world." (para. 2)

In an article titled '*Little boxes: Six ways to make room for bigger truths*', Ervin (2014) argues that adults should help children, "see past the binary choices they are being offered – boy/girl, tomboy/girly-girl, jock/wimp, gay/straight, cis/trans" (para. 10).

Some messages that children absorb from their immediate surroundings limit their exploration and play, and prevent them from realising their full potential. Limitations may come in the form of unfair or untrue messages, including invisibility and blindness, about gender roles (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010, p. 91). These messages may be evident in children's working theories about difference as they make sense of their biological sex, their gender identity, the identities and subjectivities of others, and gender roles. Teachers' curriculum obligations suggest that they should be challenging children's perceptions of acceptable/unacceptable ways to perform gender (Gunn & MacNaughton, 2007). Gunn (2012) reminds us "resisting gender essentialism and working with gender diversity can facilitate inclusion" (p. 132), a key goal in ECE.

Subjectivities

How people come to understand themselves is related to their subjectivities, whereas who people are and what they do relates to their identities (MacNaughton, 2003). Identity and subjectivity have particular and different meanings ascribed to them from poststructural and sociocultural perspectives. These concepts are now explored, first subjectivities from a poststructural perspective, and identity from a sociocultural perspective as they are part of the theoretical framework used herein.

According to Butler (1999), subjectivity is produced through processes of repetition in performativity; that is repeated ways of saying and being and doing produce subjectivity. Butler would have us understand that the "I" of the subject is always becoming, rather than being fixed or static. So, it follows then that we are all human 'becomings' as well as human beings. Weedon (1987) defines subjectivity as, "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of

herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (pp. 32-33). She contrasts humanist essentialist discourses that view a person as "unique, fixed and coherent" with poststructuralism where a person's subjectivity is "precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (p. 32).). Makin (2007) sees subjectivity as how "individuals make meaning in social contexts" (p. 279). Ryan, Ochsner, and Genishi (2001) describe subjectivities as "the ways we come to understand ourselves" (p. 51). Subjectivities, or understandings of self are formed when people negotiate subject positions within discourse. This view is consistent with Osgood (2006) who argues that in ECE "practitioners' subjectivity or 'way of being' comes about from an active engagement and negotiation of the discourses through which they are shaped and in which they are positioned" (p. 7).

Identity

In sociocultural theory, a person's identity is considered as something that is fashioned and refashioned in interactions between people, as opposed to a person's personality or character which are thought to be biologically determined (Holland & Lave, 2003; Bauman, 1996). Our diverse identities result from participating with other people in social settings over time, and relate to who we are, as well as our membership of shared groups defined by society (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Fleer, 2010). Colvin, Dachyshyn and Togiaso (2012) assert that,

> It is the everyday ways we live our lives and thus engage in our encounters with others that serve to bind us together or divide us…from these everyday encounters we derive our identities. In other words, we come to be and know who we are (p. 159).

The individual and collective works of Lave and Wenger link the construction of identity with learning, suggesting that learning implies becoming a different person. They argue that one's experiences of identity in practice are linked to ways of being in the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). These ideas are part of "the emerging educational discourse on identity" according to Sfard and Prusak (2005, p.14). These authors equate identities with stories about persons, suggesting that identities are the stories.

Meanwhile Gee (2001) discusses the link between identity and Discourse, arguing that:

> Discourses can give us a way to define…a person's 'core identity'. Each person has their own unique trajectory through 'Discursive space'. That is, he or she has, through time, in a certain order, had specific experiences within specific discourses (i.e. been recognized, at a time and a place, one way and not another), some recurring and others not. This trajectory and the person's own narrativization (Mishler, 2000) of it are what constitute his or her (never fully formed or always potentially changing) 'core identity' (p. 111).

'Narrativization' connects with Bruner's (1986) work where he explores the notion of 'identities as stories'. In his discussion of self, Bruner questions, "How shall we deal with Self? I think of Self as a text about how one is situated with respect to others and towards the world - a text about power and skills and dispositions that change as one's situation changes from young to old, from one kind of setting to another" (p. 130). Bruner's references to dispositions, age, and context link with learning through a sociocultural lens (Carr, 2001). In a later work, Bruner (2002) argues that,

> It is through narrative that we create and re-create selfhood, and self is a product of our telling and re-telling. We are, from the start, expressions of our culture. Culture is replete with alternative narratives about what self is or might be (p. 86).

This viewpoint links to the culture in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE settings which can also be seen to provide children with alternative narratives about possible selves (Carr, 2014).

The remaining sections of this chapter are dedicated to theories and concepts more closely related to ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand through the curriculum *Te Whāriki*. Some of the sociocultural and other theories that underpin *Te Whāriki* were evident in footnotes in the original draft of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1993). However, references and explanations were deleted from the original version (MoE, 1996). Some theories have been made explicit in the revised curriculum document (MoE, 2017, pp. 60-62).

A sociocultural theoretical paradigm

A sociocultural theoretical paradigm is based on understandings that humans are social beings best understood within the contexts of the societies where they live,

work, play, and learn alongside others. Meaning making occurs through participation, experiences and interactions in their cultures, societies, and institutions (Rogoff, 1998, 2003; Smidt, 2009; Anne Smith, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985, 1995). Sociocultural theory is central to *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017; Nuttall, 2003, 2013; Te One, 2013), most notably the work of Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner (Anne Smith, 2011; Nuttall, 2003, 2013; Te One, 2013). In *Te Whāriki*, 'curriculum' is also defined in a way that reflects sociocultural understandings as, "the sum total of experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development" (MoE, 1996, p. 10).

These principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* are interconnected, and following Vygotsky (Smidt, 2009), "learning leads development and occurs in relationships with people, places and things, mediated by participation in valued social and cultural activities" (MoE, 2017). Knowledge is viewed as culturally and socially constructed (Rogoff, 2003), and importance is placed on the significant contexts in the child's life, for example home, the ECE setting and the wider community. The child and society are looked at together, the child-in-the-society (Silin, 1995, 2005), and importance is afforded to the meso-system, part of the 'Ecological Systems' theory, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, as cited in MoE, 1996, p. 19). The mesosystem is the connections between the various systems in a child's life, in this case the ECE centre and home, and how the relationships between these spheres greatly affect the child, especially their well-being and learning.

In Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere, ECE is seen to take place in partnership with children's families (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2002; Terreni, 2003c; Whalley, 2001; Whalley and the Pen Green Centre Team, 2007). Arthur et al., (2015) describe the importance of children's learning in their families, and stress the valuable connections between what children bring from home with the ECE setting's curriculum.

> Sociocultural-historical perspectives on learning recognise the family context as the site where children learn the 'cultural tools' (Vygotsky, 1978) of their family … children learn the culturally relevant tools, concepts and practices from co-constructing understandings, creating and sharing

> meanings and established shared understandings of their everyday family life, in other words, the world as they know it (pp. 16-17).

Connections between the ECE setting, the child's home and other settings are significant, and several key notions connected to the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) are relevant to this project. These are 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992), and 'virtual school bags' (Thomson, 2002). Central to the sociocultural theoretical paradigm, these notions recognise that children bring with them knowledge and ways of knowing from home and their lives beyond the ECE setting.

Working theories

From a sociocultural perspective, as children think and articulate their thoughts in various settings - the ECE centre, or in their families and communities, they are developing 'working theories' for making sense of the world (MoE, 1996, 2017). Whilst the term 'working theories' might conjure up scientific thinking, its meaning in the context of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand relates to children's theorising that they refine and apply across new situations (MoE, 2017). The genesis of 'working theories' as it appears in *Te Whāriki* is said to have originated in Claxton's (1990) 'mini theories'[24]. Latterly, working theories have been termed 'islands of interest' (Davis, Peters & Duff, 2010). Working theories are explained in greater detail in the revised version of *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum (MoE, 2017) and have been the focus of a number of research projects between 2011 and 2018 as discussed in the Literature Review.

When the curriculum is connected to their everyday lives and interests, children learn best. Teachers seeking to understand, support, and extend children's learning and development need to be cognisant of their prior cultural, social, and historical knowledge, and make this learning visible in the ECE classroom (Arthur et al., 2015).

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[24] 'Mini theories' are referred to in the footnotes of first draft of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1993, p.153) - "…our knowledge consists of …purpose built situation specific packages (of strategies, attitudes and expectations), and our natural learning ability involves a gradual process of editing these 'mini theories' so that they come (i) to contain better knowledge and skill, (ii) to be better located with respect to the area of expertise for which they are suitable" (Claxton, 1990, p.66).

Additional key ideas

In addition to key ideas from social constructionism, feminist poststructuralism and sociocultural theories, several other ideas from the sociology of childhood, and research with young children underpin this research. These ideas also affected the assumptions I made as I worked alongside teachers to generate and analyse data (see later section on field texts and research texts).

Conceptions of children and childhood

This research focuses on pedagogy – that is teaching and learning. It involves young children at a formative stage of their lives, and their education. Notions of children and childhood affect our interactions with them. Woodrow (1999) argues that,

> the beliefs we hold about children and the images of childhood on which we draw, affect our understanding and implementation of our role as early childhood professionals in many ways. These notions of early childhood underpin our interactions with children, are embedded in our responses to children's ideas and behaviour, and are influential in the choices we make in relation to overall curriculum and pedagogy (p. 7).

The current foregrounding of children's voices and perspectives in education, and in research designed to improve education has been linked to a paradigm shift in the way children are viewed generally, and in early childhood education specifically (Carr, 2000; Clark, 2007; Dockett & Perry, 2011; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Makin & Whiteman, 2006; Pascal & Bertram, 2009; Peters & Kelly, 2011; Stephenson, 2009a; Te One, 2007).

Many academics have reiterated this view arguing that the paradigm shift to participatory, and more inclusive practice has been influenced by a number of agendas, for example: children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC, United Nations, 1989); the sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1997); a deepening understanding of sociocultural theory in practice; increasing awareness and appreciation of the education approach in Reggio Emilia centres in Italy (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998); and work that investigates the power relations between adults and children.

As my research involved young children, and teaching and learning about fairness and diversity, the key principles which I envisaged underpinning this research

included: a) that children are the most knowledgeable about their lives; b) that power is shared through collaboration between adults and children; c) that research processes adapt to, and are respectful of, children's and family/ whānau communication styles; and d) that research processes are flexible and easy to understand (Commission for Children and Young People, 2005, pp. 9-11).

In keeping with Carr et al., (2012), I too included children as participants in my research project on the basis that children can develop a stronger and more authentic understanding of their own meaning making practices through research that seeks their views.

Agency, voice and listening

'Agency', 'voice' and 'listening' are key concepts increasingly found in ECE literature, research, and pedagogy (e.g. Davies, 2014; MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; Rinaldi, 2001; Silin, 2005; Anne Smith, 2007, 2013; Williams & Norton, 2008). These concepts are relevant to this project when considering children's responses to diversity. The view that children are agentic/ social actors with agency, and as such have the right to be listened is highlighted in Aotearoa New Zealand (Anne Smith, 2007, 2016; Dalli & Te One, 2012). Nuttall (2005) describes the recognition of children's agency as the greatest contribution of sociocultural theory. She argues that children should have opportunities to contribute to culture, curriculum, and community, not just experience them, and that it is the responsibility of more powerful members of society, teachers and other significant adults in children's live, to nurture foster and celebrate their agency as they grow and learn.

Agency is defined as "a person's ability to act on and shape their own life; when children exercise choice within a sociocultural context" (Arthur et al., 2015, p. 427). "A sense of agency can help young children to see themselves as competent members of society" (McArdle & Ohlsen, 2016, p. 212). These views are consistent with the way the term agency is used and understood throughout this research. *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017), and the literature used throughout this thesis, is premised on these notions that children are able to consciously act, demonstrate, recognise, and express themselves in various ways in relation to self and others.

In ECE settings, children's agency is increasingly being recognised in terms of their abilities to make choices and decisions; to act on and shape their own lives and identities (Arthur et al., 2015; McArdle & Ohlsen, 2017; Whitty, 2017). Their agency is visible in their social interactions (their relationships) with peers and teachers as social interactions make up a large part of their day (Arthur et al., 2015; Carr & Lee, 2012; MacNaughton, 2003). Lee, Carr, Soutar and Mitchell (2013) argue that "the collective and reciprocal nature of *Te Whāriki* implies that even when children are in charge of their own agenda, they will be expected to watch out for the agency of others as well" (p. 78).

Agency is also linked with democratic learning in ECE settings, seen when children investigate, and share their ideas and knowledge. ECE settings should provide opportunities for children to exercise their citizenship, and participate in democratic processes (Greenberg, 1992; MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; Mitchell, 2011; 2013; 2018 in press). Rather than some future focused preparation, Moss and Urban (2010), and others (Archard, 2013; Nutbrown & Clough, 2009), argue that democracy and democratic citizenship, "…are not something we prepare children to practice and become as they grow older. They are something young children can and should live here and now" (Moss & Urban 2010, p. 49). Communities where these opportunities exist are "inclusive communities that listen, care and act for the collective good" (Mackey & Lockie, 2012, p. 77).

Glover (2016) also refers to children's agency when she suggests that when children question how and why people might be different, as they hypothesise about diversity and social groups, we can identify bias. This recognition can occur if teachers position themselves in an open and curious stance, drawing upon 'a pedagogy of listening' (Rinaldi, 2001). Rinaldi argues that "listening is an active verb, which involves giving an interpretation, giving meaning to the message and value to those who are being listened to" (p. 4).

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) reinforce this kind of ethical listening as vital for teachers and other adults when mediating children's learning through engaging in dialogue with them about sensitive topics related to diversity. Listening is an ethical and political encounter, which "opens us up to 'otherness' and difference, connectedness and relationships as we struggle to make meaning of what is said

and thought, leaving behind our preconceptions of what should or can be said by children" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 15). Macartney (2012) concurs, arguing that a pedagogy of listening is "an orientation to teaching and learning that expects, encourages, invites and embraces diversity, difference, ambiguity and uncertainty" (p. 173).

Children have valid perspectives to be heard as they are rich, complex, agentic subjects engaging actively with the world (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Pascal & Bertram, 2009; Peters & Kelly, 2011). MacNaughton and Smith (2005) challenge researchers to consider the questions, "whose voices are silenced and whose voices are privileged in your research with young children?" (p.121). The child should not be not sheltered, or kept from the world as they are neither an object nor an innocent. Instead, according to Dahlberg et al., (2007) the child "embodies that world, is acted upon by that world - but also acts on it and makes meaning of it" (p. 51). Children are living in the present; their worldviews are forming as they make choices about many aspects of their daily lives.

For many years the late Anne Smith advocated for children to have a voice in areas that matter to them. In Anne Smith (2007a), she argues that, "children have traditionally lacked voice and visibility, but slowly a recognition of children's roles as social actors who are active co-constructors of meaning and 'experts' on childhood is emerging" (p. 162). Anne Smith's (2013) ongoing argument that children's voices are often absent from research led her to identify them as 'a missing piece of the puzzle in understanding childhood'. In her final work[25] Anne Smith illustrates what children's 'living rights' look like when interpreted and enacted within their daily lives in six different contexts: in their families, early childhood education and care settings, school, child protection services, health, and the workplace (Anne Smith, 2016).

In this research a conscious effort was made to foreground children's voices, and to position children as 'knowledgeable subjects' with 'living rights'. Respectful and child-friendly methods were used to elicit children's voices in terms of data generation (composing field texts).

[25] *Children's Rights: Towards Social Justice* (Smith, 2016) was launched a month before Anne died.

Looking forward

This chapter has presented a range of concepts and ways of thinking and seeing that are 'put to work' in this project as tools which frame my methodology and methods (Chapter 4). Drawn from particular theoretical and philosophical orientations, and blended together, they make up the theoretical framework that forms the basis of this research.

Beginning with the imaginary of a fair and just society (Thomson, 2002) and a social constructionist worldview, I have drawn on various constructs and ways of seeing from mostly feminist poststructuralism, and the work of Foucault, including discourse, power/knowledge, regimes of truth, and multiplicity in terms of identity and subjectivity. Butler's notion of performativity changes the way in which gender, along with teaching and parenting, are viewed. Dominant discourses in relation to gender, sex and sexuality are also explored, aimed at creating spaces for multiple possibilities, and ways of seeing.

Sociocultural theories, closely linked to *Te Whāriki* also provide concepts related to learning and 'cultural tools' (Vygotsky, 1978), learner identities (Bruner, 1986), the 'cultural nature of human development' (Rogoff, 2003), 'funds of knowledge' (González, Moll & Amanti, 1992), and 'virtual school bags' (Thomson, 2002). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory reinforces the importance of connections or alignment between systems that relate (in)directly to a child's learning and development. Conceptions of children and childhood, and key principles relating to research involving young children were also explored, including recognition of their agency and voice.

The following chapter (Chapter 3) explores literature from Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond, relevant to the specifics of this study. The dearth of literature related to using the learning outcome of 'working theories', to view children's explorations of diversity and fairness in the social world through, is highlighted. Teachers' provocations and responses to children's theorising concerning diversity and fairness are also explored.

CHAPTER 3:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, literature pertaining to aspects of diversity and difference, related to pedagogy, is synthesised to set the scene for this research. First, diversity and difference are investigated from various theoretical perspectives, alongside aspects or characteristics of diversity, followed by responses to diversity including reference to 'difficult knowledge' (Britzman, 1991, 1998). Then literature connected to social justice and understanding diversity in ECE is explored, followed by material that discusses children's thinking using 'working theories' as a lens. Aspects of teachers' work related to inclusive responses to diversity in ECE are canvassed next including the importance of reflective practice, and involving families in children's learning. Literature is explored relating to gender, sex and sexuality, ethnicity and skin colour, aspects of diversity found in the research, and their relationships to fairness. The closing section revisits the research questions, and looks forward to the Methodology chapter. The perceived gap that this research seeks to fill is highlighted as children's working theories about diversity in the social world, and power/knowledge perspectives previously underexplored in existing working theories research literature.

Diversity and difference

For the past decade or more, much of the academic literature about diversity and difference in ECE has focused on creating spaces for multiple perspectives, and minority voices to be heard. Numerous authors have written about identity/identities and diversity/diversities, drawing on critical, feminist, and poststructural perspectives (Baldock, 2010; Brock & Rankin, 2008; Dau, 2001; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Genishi & Goodwin, 2008; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2005; Scarlet, 2016; Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000; Spodek & Saracho, 2010; Yelland, 2005). The gamut of characteristics relating to identities and diversities, including aspects of diversity that this thesis is concerned with, namely gender, sex and sexuality, and ethnicity and skin colour are covered in this body of literature, reinforcing the

prominence of critical perspectives on diversity and difference throughout ECE in the western world in the 21st century.

Diversity and difference are terms frequently found in contemporary educational literature. Commonly understood as recognising individual or group differences between people, these differences can be viewed/responded to on a continuum from a positive to negative perspectives depending on the aspect of diversity, one's positioning and perspective (Davies & Harré, 1990; Moss, 2016), and the theoretical lens used. Recognition is widespread that membership of various groups carries benefits and rewards or disadvantages (Gordon Burns et al., 2012; Hyland, 2010).

Concerned with relationships, knowledge around diversity is contestable based on different ways of knowing. Consequently, identity-related diversity has multiple meanings, and can be understood from various theoretical perspectives. For example, from a social constructionist perspective, diversity and difference are constructs that mean different things to people depending on their perspectives (Burr, 2015). Various theoretical perspectives, "essentialist, modernist, social-constructionist, materialist, postmodernist and poststructural - have contributed to shifts in thinking, policy and practice" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p. 3). Diversity can be understood superficially as visible differences that exist between people, or diversity can be problematised or troubled, that is, understood at a deeper level with all of its complexities, inequities and omissions (Rhedding-Jones, 2005).

In mainstream education, diversity has been seen as a noun, i.e. "a state of being or something that is seen" (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008, p. 6). This perspective reflects the modernist views and ways of thinking upon which ECE was created. There is extensive support, including in a host of international curricula and education policy documents, for this modernist view that "diversity is a rich resource for life and learning, rather than a problem to be overcome" (Booth & Ainscow, 2011, p. 23), and "something which should be recognised, accepted, respected and many aspects can be celebrated" (Murray & Dignan, 2011, p. 28).

Whilst acknowledging that diversity has multiple meanings, Booth and Ainscow (2011) conceptualise diversity as,

> seen and unseen differences and similarities between people: diversity is about difference within a common humanity. Diversity encompasses everyone, not just those seen to depart from an illusory normality" (p. 23).

Despite referring to an 'illusory normality' and diversity being 'corrupted' sometimes so that it is linked with otherness, Booth and Ainscow (2011) note that diversity can be viewed by dominant groups in society from a position of superiority. In lisahunter, Futter-Puati and Kelly (2015), we described this positioning as related to "the dominant discourse of normativity" (p. 207).

The modernist view of diversity fails to recognise that bias is built into the system through historical advantages and disadvantages rooted in social institutions and systems (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012). "There is a 'shadow side' to diversity: stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and racism, sexism, classism etcetera" (Murray & Dignan, 2011, p. 28; Rhedding-Jones, 2000). Reay (2012) argues that despite diversity having been co-opted in right-wing rhetoric and educational policy, diversity and difference "are still always about inequalities" (p. ix). This view is consistent with Rhedding-Jones (2005) who argues that "the label of diversity is 'loaded' with complexities, innuendos, and omissions" (p. 144). These inequalities, innuendos, complexities and omissions are made visible, according to Tzuo, Yang and Wright (2011), when diversity is explored using the lens of power, and inequity between the dominant and the oppressed such as found in the works of Foucault (1980) and Freire (1986) from reconceptualist and poststructural theoretical perspectives. Similar critical views about diversity can be found in works by MacNaughton (2005), Derman-Sparks and Olsen Edwards (2010), Gordon-Burns et al., (2012), and Scarlet (2016) among others.

Engaging with diversity, like 'listening' described in the previous chapter (Chapter 2) is an ethical, social and political act (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; Davies, 2014). Diversity is reconceptualised as a verb rather than a noun from a critical and postmodern perspective. From this perspective, diversity is, "something to be enacted or expressed, something that is dynamic and agentic" (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008, p. 6). These are key reason why teachers (and researchers) should 'trouble' diversity (Lawson, Boyask & Waite, 2013; Reay, 2012). Troubling or problematising diversity, and seeing it from various perspectives, is vital in order

to better understand how to teach children in ECE settings about relationships with diverse others during this crucial time in their social learning.

Diversity can be viewed from different theoretical perspectives and constructed based on different paradigms. Diversity can also be seen in relation to various aspects, characteristics, or categories, and commonalities as well as differences, as the follow section illustrates.

Characteristics of diversity

Children belong to families and communities that are diverse in many ways. Within recent ECE related literature, this diversity commonly includes: ethnicity, language, beliefs and values, geographic location, family structure, gender and sexuality, abilities and economic circumstances (Arthur et al., 2015). Cherrington and Shuker (2012) also emphasise "culture, linguistic diversity, family background and make-up… and the special educational, social or health needs of children" (pp. 76-77). Anti-bias campaigners Derman-Sparks and Olsen Edwards (2010) add racial and gender identities, economic class, different abilities, and different ages to the mix, consistent with Giugni (n.d.). Gordon-Burns et al., (2012) highlight marginalised groups specifically referring to: "women; people with disabilities; people identifying as non-heterosexual; people from Māori, Pasifika and other cultures; children and young people; and others with perceived differences" (pp. 3-4). Finally, Scarlet (2016) includes asylum seekers and refugee families, and trans and gender diversities to the diverse others that ECE teachers encounter among families and communities.

Religion and spirituality are other aspects of diversity that warrant consideration in contemporary ECE settings. Spirituality is integral to Māori ways of knowing which underpin *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). Spirituality is also integral to children's holistic development (Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007). Several authors make strong cases for religious and/or spiritual inclusion in ECE settings (Dau & Jones, 2004; Hannigan, 2012; Williams & Norton, 2008). Williams and Norton (2008) include spirituality alongside social class and sexuality, arguing that these dimensions of diversity (the silent 's's'), may be very powerful in children's lives, yet they are frequently ignored by adults including teachers, because they constitute

‘difficult knowledge.’ Talking about them renders one liable to public criticism or reproach according to these authors.

In contemporary societies, the breadth of diversity that accounts for similarities and differences between people is vast as this discussion has shown. The following section discusses inclusive responses to the diversities and responses that relate to ‘difficult knowledge’. Some possible underlying discourses are also highlighted.

Responses to diversity, and difficult knowledge

Responses to diversity and difference can be seen to draw on discourses such as a discourse of tolerance, or respect, or appreciation. Positive, constructive, and inclusive responses to diversity are also possible as discussed under contemporary approaches in the Introduction (Chapter 1). Despite its complexities, diversity adds to our lives as: a learning resource (Booth & Ainscow, 2011); an asset rather than a potential problem (Whyte, 2012); something to be celebrated, albeit with a shadow side (Murray & Dignan, 2011); and something agentic and dynamic to be expressed or portrayed (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008).

Public disapproval, contempt, censure, and condemnation are at the far end of the continuum of negative responses to diversity, or raising aspects of diversity. Such responses are often related to various aspects or categories characterised as ‘difficult or dangerous knowledge’ (Britzman, 1991, 1998). These ideas have links to the theoretical and political implications of knowledge. They connect with Britzman’s (1998) discussion of how parts of ourselves resist what she terms ‘difficult knowledge’. Johnston, Bainbridge and Shariff (2007) shed light on this notion in relation to encounters with difference. In their research, student teachers read picturebooks about Canadian national identity that featured various characteristics or aspects of diversity. These authors argue that when people,

> come face to face with disruptions to their socially constructed subject positions as well as their fears and uncertainties of otherness, such encounters may challenge the [person’s] sense of self ... and characterise what Britzman (1991) calls ‘difficult knowledge’, a concept meant to signify both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individuals’ encounters with these traumas in pedagogical contexts (p. 75).

Some teachers possibly lack the courage to engage in discussions about sensitive issues i.e. skin colour, social class, gender roles or sexuality with children (Derman Sparks & the ABC Taskforce, 1989; Derman Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006). These issues can be seen as uncomfortable or related to 'difficult or dangerous knowledge' (Britzman, 1998). Teachers may also be wary about invoking parental concern or censure about things they may discuss (Johnston, Bainbridge & Shariff, 2007; Robinson, 2005a, 2005b). Their wariness is also likely to extend to challenges they make (or wish to make) to children's ideas based on notions from home. "Teachers and parents want to protect children from knowledge of the social world that they themselves find discomforting" (Casper et al., 1996, pp. 290-291), including for example income disparities or privileges, and disadvantages associated with economic class (Williams & Cooney, 2006).

Negative responses, avoidance, or silence about aspects of diversity can often be related to fear, and with fear comes risks. "These fears and risks are deeply personal even in our professional work" according to Scarlet (2016, p. xxxii). Fears can include: fear of the unknown; fear of getting it wrong; fear of strangers/others; fears for personal safety; fear of loss of dominant position or employment; or fear of being marginalized for not being normal (Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016; Johnston, Bainbridge & Shariff, 2007; MacNaughton, 2003). Possible discourses underlying such responses may include one of some of the following: assumed white supremacy (Siraj-Blatchford, 1996); male dominance; homophobia and/or heteronormativity (Robinson, 2005a); and "bias, prejudice and negative stereotypes" (MoE, 1993, p. 77) for example.

Inclusion and exclusion

Moss (2008) introduces the notion of the 'cultural climate' of ECE settings, arguing that teachers can be open-ended (avoiding closure), open minded (welcome the unexpected), and open-hearted (value difference) in relation to diversity and inclusion. These responses relate to 'inclusion', a term evident in policy expectations of practice in educational settings. Acknowledgement and acceptance of aspects or characteristics of diversity and difference in their many guises relates to inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

The *Policy guidelines on inclusion in education* (UNESCO, 2009) focus on four vital pillars of education for the 21st century: learning to know, to be, to do, and to live together. According to Grey (2013a), this report recognises that "children learn from being involved in their communities and that learning is culturally embedded, hence the ultimate goal is to support an individual's effective participation in society to reach their potential" (p. 98). Living together demands an inclusive response to diversity, vital if people, especially teachers and children are to engage constructively with other cultures and worldviews in an increasingly global world (Vuckovic, 2008b). These views are widely supported in the literature reviewed for this project (Cushner, McClelland & Safford, 2015; Gordon- Burns et al., 2012; Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012; Yvette Taylor, 2013; UNESCO, 2006, 2009).

Inclusion and its counter 'exclusion' have been theorised in countless ways over many years (Allan, 2008; Grey, 2013a; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Thomas & Loxley, 2001). Inclusion itself is a discourse with strong links to equity, fairness, and social justice (Grey, 2013a; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Genishi & Goodwin, 2008; Scarlet, 2016; Yelland, 2005). The 'social model of inclusion' (Ballard, 2012) is underpinned by discourses of rights and acceptance whereby everyone is valued, and treated with respect according to Grey (2013a). This model informs the research that is the subject of this thesis. Slee and Allan (2011) see inclusion as a "social movement against educational exclusion" (p. 177), consistent with Moffat (2011) who argues that inclusion is about accommodating every learner through removing obstacles in the way of their learning. Drewery and Claiborne (2014) describe the inclusion of all children with no exceptions, as 'socially just education'. Finally, Gordon-Burns et al., (2012) "see inclusion as a community responsibility, reliant on relationships for its success" (p. 177).

Noteworthy exceptions

Three deliberate exclusions in this literature review related to education and diversity are: children with 'special educational needs'; a children's rights perspective; and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). The rationale behind these exclusions follows. The 'social model of inclusion' (Ballard, 2012) informs this research, hence children with special educational needs or different abilities have been consciously excluded. A plethora of ECE literature exists about the inclusion of children with special needs, as well as a 'children's rights'

perspective, related to the UNCROC (United Nations, 1989). DAP is also not relevant to this discussion as it "privileged certain ways of being and knowing that did not recognize the diverse qualities of children and their families in a global context…suggest[ing] that there was a universal state that we should all be striving for that was based on Western ways of doing and knowing" (Yelland, 2008, p. xi). Remnants of this thinking are possibly visible in the thinking of some teachers for example, although sociocultural perspectives have largely overtaken such 'narrow' thinking.

Summary

Diversity can be understood superficially as visible differences that exist between people, or diversity can be problematised or troubled, that is, understood at a deeper level with all of its complexities, inequities and omissions (Rhedding-Jones, 2005). Diversity and difference involve a broad range of aspects or characteristics - seen and unseen, only some of which feature in this research, namely gender, sex, sexuality, and ethnicity and skin colour. These aspects of diversity are framed in a selection of ECE related literature that follows.

Diversity is a construct that relates to people's individual and social identities. Difference and diversity can be understood in various ways depending on the theoretical lens through which they are viewed. Responses to diversity vary on a continuum from positive to negative, and can lead to inclusion or exclusionary practices depending on the 'cultural climate' of the ECE setting. Discourses related to diversity and difference, extend from rights-based discourses about including everybody, to a range of discourses that possibly underlie fear-based responses. Nowadays, in educational policy and rhetoric, diversity is a commonly recognised phenomenon; often understood in terms of inequalities, fairness, equity, and social justice - as it is in this thesis.

Social justice and understanding diversity

In ECE, there is a wealth of contemporary literature that relates to teaching about diversity and difference with a social justice and equity focus (Canella, 2002; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Scarlet, 2016). 'Social justice' is commonly described as being underpinned by principles of equity, fairness for all individuals, and respect for their basic human rights (Brodyk,

2010; Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). “Social justice is based on a belief that all people have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and fair allocation of social resources” (Lee, 2011, p. 119). A fair allocation of resources can be seen to be based on the principle of equity rather than equality as sameness is not fairness (Rivalland & Nuttall, 2010) from a social justice perspective. Social justice is closely linked to notions of inclusion and exclusion emphasised in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) in relation to cultural diversity and belonging for children and their families. Understandings of diversity relevant to children’s thinking are now explored with an emphasis on social justice.

The advancement of social justice and equity with their foci on challenging dominant discourses and practices in ECE can be explicitly linked to the anti-bias movement and the reconceptualising movement in the late 1980s (Derman-Sparks & the ABC Taskforce, 1989; Jipson, 2001). “Concerned to address a range of issues including power, gender, culture, sexuality and economic status, the reconceptualist movement has provided hope for those concerned with equity and social justice” (Davies & Semann, 2013, p. 1). Core to these movements is the notion of social justice characterised by activism and collectivism. Common goals of social justice work in education include a more socially just society, and the ‘full inclusion of sociocultural Others’. This is seen as a community, or whole-setting responsibility, requiring community courage to challenge unequal structures, and dismantle barriers that support discrimination to continue (Canella, 2002; Gordon Burns et al., 2012; Giugni, 2007; Robinson, 2005a; Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006).

All over the world, “children are aware of, and interested in human diversity from a very young age”, and how they view diversity will likely, “depend on the messages children receive through the process of socialisation” (Glover, 2001, pp. 3, 13). This notion is in keeping with socially and culturally mediated learning (MoE, 1996). Children explore and develop understandings about diversity and inclusion primarily through relationships (Arthur et al., 2015; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Scarlet, 2016; Dau, 2001; Genishi & Goodwin, 2008). Beyond their immediate families, many of these relationships occur in their ECE setting. Sorting out their individual and social identities are key experiences for young children who can be prevented from reaching their full potential when they absorb messages that limit their exploration and play. These messages may be in the form of bias,

prejudice, negative stereotypes (MoE, 1993), or unfair or untrue messages about aspects of their identities, and the identities of those closest to them - their friends and their families (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Sapon-Shevin, 2007).

ECE settings have been variously described in terms of young children's citizenship involving social learning about themselves and diverse others. ECE settings have been envisioned as: potential 'civil forums' (Dahlberg et al., 1999); "political spaces…potential sites of equitable and transformative social engagement" (Blaise, Edwards & Brooker, 2014, p. 6); and microcosms of society (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). Viewed in these ways, ECE settings become sites where greater democracy between adults and children, and dominant and marginalised cultures and groups in society are the primary goals. The authors mentioned in this paragraph, and many other authors, share the view that everyday practices in ECE settings need to disrupt the social order or power relations that currently exist in society, rather than perpetuating the status quo (Vandenbroeck, 2007).

Based on research findings, and their observations, ECE teachers are cognisant that children begin to construct understandings about ethnicity and gender, noticing and commenting on differences and expressing bias when they are as young as two years old (Dau, 2001; Derman-Sparks et al., 1989, 2010; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Derman-Sparks et al., 2011; Glover, 2001, 2016; Lillian Katz, 1976; MacNaughton, 2003; Ramsay, 1998; Vittrup, 2015). Glover (2001, 2016) argues that children notice and make judgements about differences, evaluating them as positive or negative, good or bad. "When the judgements are negative, we say that children have developed a bias" (ibid, 2016, p. 5). Negative stereotypes and biases prevalent in society are harmful to children to the extent that they affect their ability to relate to others, and to realise their full potential (Glover, 2001, 2016; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010).

Children's understandings of diversity occur particularly with others who are different from their family. They recognise racial and gender cues especially when exposed to differences among their peers and people in the wider community (MacNaughton, 1999a, 2001c, 2004b; Davies, 1994, 2013). Along with recognition of racial and gender cues comes the ability to notice similarities and differences between people, and to "absorb the spoken and unspoken messages about

differences" (Hohensee & Derman-Sparks, 1992, p. 1). "Central to effecting change is that negative attitudes towards difference and diversity are countered with new understandings and knowledge" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p. 7). This evidence is used as a justification for targeting the early years as the place for 'properly educating' children about tolerance and respect for diversity (Vittrup, 2016b, p. 37).

Another way that children are likely to develop understandings about diversity and fairness is through relating to others. Through relationships, children can learn about the social processes of exclusion, and rejection by their peers.

Relating to others

Core to the early childhood profession's mission and ethics, are the goals of developing 'positive self-concept, empathy and respect for others, ability to think for oneself and the confidence to resist unfairness" (Derman-Sparks in Dau, 2001, p. ix). These goals are consistent with the principle of Whakamana Empowerment, and the Mana Tangata Contribution strand of *Te Whāriki* which contains an expectation that children will learn the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to develop "an understanding of their own rights and those of others" (MoE, 1996, p. 66). MacNaughton (2003) also recognises that relating to others is how children "construct their own understandings in, and meanings of, their social world in their interactions with others" (p. 71). Teachers can help children to make sense of 'self' and 'others' in the social world, and of difference and similarities (Glover, 2016), issues which are frequently silenced in children, in learning communities (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008; Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006).

Children's voices, their thinking and their agency are ever-present in their peer relations. Friendships are a special kind of peer interaction in ECE settings (e.g. Bateman, 2012a, 2012b; Danby, 2008). The child's social circle is expanding beyond the home, extended family and neighbours when they begin attending an ECE setting, and children's 'social competence' is to the fore (Dunn, 2004). Barbour, Barbour and Scully (2011) suggest that peer influence shapes children's personal conduct and social competence through shared feelings, and exchanging ideas to build friendships. Characteristics of diversity such as gender and ethnicity also affect children's friendships - who they play with/ where they play/ what roles that they adopt or are given (MacNaughton, 2000).

Social interactions often involve children making choices, and choices offer children chances to exercise their agency. But what if the choices children make are about excluding others? Exclusion is problematic in ECE settings where there is often a strong focus on inclusion (MoE, 1996, 2000, 2017). In problem solving situations, children can often choose the solution to their problem, and then comes whether they, or others, can accept the outcome. Reynolds (2008) describes a scenario in an ECE setting where a child makes a choice to sit next to another child who does not want them to sit there and states "You can't sit by me". The first child exerts that it is his choice to sit where he wants (p. 126). Recognising that all children have the right to be included, Reynolds (2008) suggests that in the end it is a child's choice as to who they sit next to, or play with. In a similar vein, Shumaker (2012) argues that choosing not to play with a peer is acceptable, pointing to the importance of children learning social awareness and building resilience when faced with disappointment.

Alongside choice comes responsibility, and in *You can't say you can't play* Paley (2009) argues that school is different from home - it is a public rather than a private place. At home, children can make their own choices, but school is for everybody and teachers need to ensure that the rules are fair for all. When Paley introduced this new rule to counter exclusion and rejection in her American kindergarten classroom - 'you can't say you can't play', she and children had to work through the struggles that ensued around the new rule, and exercising choice about who can play when, and in what role. Typical of her work, Paley's (2009) emphasis was on supporting children's developing moral reasoning in a group context through storytelling and acting. Including other children in one's play relates to children's social and moral reasoning (Wainman et al., 2012).

Acting fairly in relation to others requires one to develop empathy, sometimes known as 'theory of mind'. Theory of mind refers to our understanding of people as mental beings, each with his or her own mental states i.e. thoughts, wants, motives and feelings. Theory of mind is used to describe our awareness of our own minds and the minds of others'. Children interpret other people's talk and behaviour by considering their thoughts and wants, enabling them to predict and ascribe beliefs, desires and intentions to them (Astington, 1993; Astington & Jenkins,

1995). The ability to distinguish between pretence and reality is an essential feature of theory of mind (Dau, 2001).

Ideas about responsibility for self and others are central to a Māori worldview (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau & Craw, 2010). "Working together for the common good develops a spirit of sharing, togetherness and reciprocity, which is valued by Pasifika and many other cultures" (MoE, 2017, p. 36). In cultures committed to collectivism or communitarianism, the wellbeing of the group and responsibility for others are positioned ahead of the rights of the individual (Gonzales-Mena, 2002; Mead, 2003; Terreni & McCallum, 2003). However, seeing cultures based on the dualism of either collectivism in orientation or individualistic is limiting, and stereotypes peoples. It is typical of 'modernist' thinking in contrast with post-modern thinking which is characterised by diversity and multiple perspectives. There are dangers in dualistic thinking according to Gonzales-Mena (2002), and her goal like mine, "is to move beyond either/or thinking and learn to look for even larger pictures" (p. 15).

Working theories / theorising

Children can be seen making sense of diversity in the world around them through their 'working theories'. 'Working theories' is one of the three key learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) alongside dispositions and mana. To provide a context for the reader, a brief trajectory is explored including the 'neglect' or scant attention that working theories received in the ECE sector in Aotearoa New Zealand until recently. The research attention they are now receiving, and their primacy in the updated version of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) is also documented in this section.

'Working theories' is a construct that is relatively new to ECE teachers despite its presence in *Te Whāriki* since 1993, having had the status of 'neglected sibling' (Hedges & Jones, 2012) in relation to the construct of dispositions. Carr, one of the four authors of *Te Whāriki*, responded to this suggestion calling dispositions 'the bossy big sister' in the relationship (Hedges, 2015, July). Carr noted that the superiority of dispositions over working theories[26] was contrary to her expectations.

[26] Evidence of the pre-eminence of dispositions can be seen throughout government-funded professional development contracts and resources such as *Kei Tua o te Pae: Early childhood exemplars for assessment* (MoE, 2004, 2007, 2009).

Meade (TLRI, 2008) had made a similar point years previously, when she described the situation,

> We've ended up a bit out of balance, with little focus on working theories, except where they cross over with dispositions. We need to know what is happening in centres to give children more of a stretch with their thinking, their theorising (p. 3).

Following Meade identifying that 'working theories' were amongst topics in need of research attention in the ECE sector in Aotearoa New Zealand (TLRI, 2008), they have been explored by various academics in research projects (Claxton & Carr, 2004; Hedges, 2011; Peters & Davis, 2011a, 2011b, 2012; Hedges & Jones, 2012; Hedges & Cooper, 2014; Hargreaves, 2013; Davis & McKenzie, 2018). To date, there have been three major and several minor empirical studies looking specifically at working theories in ECE settings, including the research at the centre of this thesis. The majority of publications had their origins in the three large-scale New Zealand government-funded research projects under the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI)[27]initiative. These projects have typically researched how "children develop the ability to enquire, research, explore, generate and modify their own working theories about the natural, social, physical and material worlds" (MoE, 1996, p. 90).

Te Whāriki has now been revised (MoE, 2017) and working theories have been given similar status to dispositions in the document (MoE, 2017, p. 23). They now share a symbiotic relationship, as children learn through their relationships with people, places, and things. The working theories construct has been explained in more detail, possibly as a result of the contemporary research (TLRI and associated projects) focused on their development.

The usefulness of working theories in children's lives is affirmed in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). The curriculum authors propose that:

> knowledge, skills, and attitudes are closely linked…and combine together to form a child's "working theory"…children are developing more elaborate

[27] Teaching and Learning Research Initiatives are contestable New Zealand government funded research projects in the ECE, compulsory and tertiary sectors of education. Research projects are funded by the government for one, two or three year's duration.

> and useful working theories about themselves and about the people in their lives … [these] become increasingly useful for making sense of the world, giving the child control over what happens, for problem solving, and for further learning (MoE, 1996, p. 44).

And they further suggest that, "children develop working theories through observing, listening, doing, participating, discussing, and representing…As children gain greater experience, knowledge, and skills, the theories they develop become more widely applicable and have more connecting links between them" (ibid, p. 44).

The important decisions that children make about themselves (their individual, social and learner identities) lead us to consider their theorising, specifically their working theories about the social world. Working theories are in keeping with sociocultural perspectives on children's learning which are understood in relation to their participation within communities, recognising that children have skills and knowledge relative to their prior experience (Edwards, 2007). Adults may gain insight into such theories in dialogue with children, or through watching, and listening to them during their play. The working theories that children develop about themselves and people in their lives are increasingly likely to be about the identities based on the similarities and differences they observe, and discuss within their families, communities, and the kindergarten.

These ideals are linked to social justice, because if prejudice, bias, or unfairness exist during this influential time, children will be negatively affected in terms of their social identities – that is how they think about themselves and their "gender, economic class, racial identity, heritage, religion, age group and so on" (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010, p. xiii). The mana[28] of children will also be negatively affected if not upheld in the ways that the Māori and non-Māori authors of *Te Whāriki* envisaged (MoE, 1996), and children will not realise their full potential.

Based on the body of recent publications about working theories that employ a range of theoretical perspectives and concepts, in Areljung & Kelly-Ware (2016)

[28] Mana - the power of being, authority, prestige, spiritual power, authority, and status (MoE, 2017)

we argued that contemporary thinking about working theories is in transition (Appendix B). These publications draw from constructivist theory (Hedges 2008), sociocultural theories (Davis & Peters 2012; Hedges & Jones 2012; Peters & Davis 2015), complexity theories, as well as the work of Deleuze (Hargraves, 2013, 2014), and the theories of Piaget (Lovatt & Hedges 2015), and Vygotsky (Hedges 2012). Hence, any fixed, static meaning of 'working theories' is elusive given that this construct is constantly being shaped by the different theoretical perspectives employed.

In teacher-led and parent-led ECE settings in Aotearoa New Zealand, the significant role of the adult/teacher in relation to children's working theories has been highlighted in assorted TLRI research studies. Supporting children's ongoing theorising as they make sense of their worlds is seen as a key teacher responsibility, (Hargraves, 2013) and a vocabulary of teaching strategies has emerged related to children's working theories. For example, in Hedges (2011) two-year research project with teachers in two ECE settings, teachers used strategies including 'responding to, extending and complicating', children's working theories. Whereas, in their two-year research project that featured parents and children in five Playcentres,[29] Peters and Davis (2011) identified teaching strategies such as 'disrupting and providing spaces for uncertainty'.

They also found that adults often assumed that they shared the child's thinking only to disrupt children's working theories by making assumptions or not fully grasping children's developing thinking about particular topics (Peters & Davis, 2011). Conversely, adults were quick to provide children with answers or solutions, rather than 'providing space' for them to find out more information and revise or modify their theories, or to work things out for themselves. There was a noticeable tendency for adults to steer conversations with children in different directions. Thus, adults often hijacked children's thinking, and moved the topic to safe and familiar ground for the adult (Peters & Davis, 2011). Meanwhile, Hedges (2011) found one of the

[29] Playcentres are a type of ECE setting in Aōtearoa New Zealand licensed by the Ministry of Education and covered by ECE regulations as they apply to parent-led as opposed to teacher-led services. Playcentre philosophy is based on child-initiated play and recognises the parents as the first and best educators of their own children. Playcentre families receive a unique early childhood experience with opportunities for whanau/families to learn together (Playcentre, n.d).

teachers' strategies was about waiting before offering a resolution to children's inquiries, for example by 'not supplying a direct answer' to children's questions.

In Areljung and Kelly-Ware (2016) we noted the absence of in-depth discussion of power in contemporary working theories literature (Appendix B). We argued that "when power is mentioned, as when Davis and Peters (2011) point out that power shifts in teacher-child conversations, and that teachers sometimes 'hijack' (12) the direction of children's theorising, the critical issue of power in terms of pedagogy is not fully explored" (p. 2). Subsequently, in that article, and the research presented in this thesis, there is an explicit focus on power.

The corpus of 'working theories' literature (project summaries, reports, articles, and book chapters) offers valuable insights into theories of knowledge, cognition, and teaching strategies relevant to this project. How children express their working theories, and how teachers recognise, support, and enrich them are covered in more than thirty peer-reviewed articles and book chapters published mostly in the last seven years, a selection of which are referred to herein. However, there is a dearth of research that specifically examines children's thinking around aspects of diversity and difference using a 'working theories' lens, with one exception (see Davis & McKenzie, 2018).

The subjects of children's working theories investigated in research to date, with teachers and parents, have typically related to the natural world, for example earthquakes in a three month study with 3-4-year-olds in one ECE setting (Hargraves, 2014), nature education in *The Ngahere Project* - an eighteen-month sustainability project with children aged 2-5 years in six ECE settings (Kelly & White, 2012; Kelly et al., 2013), and honey, palaeontology, and water (Davis & Peters, 2011). It is noted that the social world, beyond babies (Peters & Davis, 2014; Hedges & Cooper, 2014) and friendship and identity from a funds of knowledge approach (Hedges, 2008; Hedges & Cooper, 2014) has not been afforded the primacy one might expect under the Contribution strand of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). In studies conducted in teacher-led ECE settings (not Playcentres), researchers noted that teachers sometimes lacked the sophisticated content knowledge needed to extend children's working theories. Researchers suggested that a strong theoretical base in socio-cultural and other theories (including

complexity theory) would support teachers to better extend and provoke children's ongoing working theories (Hedges, 2011, 2012; Hargraves, 2013).

Of the three major government funded TLRI projects (Davis & Peters, 2011; Hedges & Cooper, 2014; Davis & McKenzie, 2018) researching children's working theories in various ECE settings in Aotearoa New Zealand, the latest (Davis & McKenzie, 2018) is the only one to have looked specifically at children's theorising concerning social identities, and cultural and linguistic diversity. In their TLRI funded ECE research related to children's working theories about language, identity and culture, Davis & McKenzie (2018a, 2018b) worked with teachers in a Samoan language immersion centre and an English medium ECE setting over a two year period. These researchers found that teachers can support diversity through responsive pedagogy and programme design and that "working theories about the social world help mediate (or hinder), engagement in learning and learning with others" (2018b, para.7). Davis and McKenzie argue that teachers, "need to ensure they intentionally seek to notice, make meaning, and respond to the expressions of children's working theories" (2018b, para. 7). As teachers become more culturally intelligent and culturally responsive, "they can contribute to the growing cultural intelligence of the children they work with" (2018b, para.12).

Teachers and other adults also have working theories. The following paragraph now appears on the New Zealand MoE website (MoE, n.d.).

> As human beings with the capacity for thought and action, we carry with us working theories that shape and influence the way we interact, choose, problem solve, avoid danger, see ourselves in relation to others, and much more. Working theories are developed through our experiences and interactions with the world. These experiences and interactions differ between people - and so do the working theories that guide our everyday life. We don't all react in the same way or hold the same opinions and beliefs. These theories are called "working" because they change and evolve. This happens as experiences and interactions serve to disrupt and challenge existing ideas and assumptions. It is through this process that new ways to respond and make meaning are learnt (para.1)

Summary

Children explore and develop understandings about diversity and inclusion primarily through relationships. Teachers have a vital role to play in supporting children's theorising as they children make meaning, and develop their individual and social identities through engaging with others in the social world. Children's interactions with diverse 'people, places and things' (MoE, 1996, 2017) provide opportunities for adults to find out about children's understandings potentially through the working theories that they express. Hence, working theories have much to offer in helping teachers to understand children's thinking about diversity and difference, fairness, inclusion, and exclusion.

At the outset of this project there was a growing body of literature in Aotearoa New Zealand around the construct of 'working theories' identified in *Te Whāriki* as one of its three key learning outcomes. Analysis revealed that very little literature to date had an explicit focus on working theories in the social world, beyond friendship and peer relations. These safe and uncontroversial areas of children's theorising are in contrast with the notion of 'uncomfortable', 'difficult' or 'dangerous' knowledge that I have been interested in for some time (e.g. Kelly, 2012, 2013; Kelly-Ware, 2016; Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016).

Teaching and diversity

One of the key challenges facing ECE teachers relates to finding the best possible ways to respect children's diverse lives and cultures (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009). This next section explores literature related to teachers' pedagogical responsibilities, including their ethical and legislative obligations to see families in culturally complex ways, and to teach children in culturally responsive ways (e.g. Derman Sparks & Olsen-Edwards, 2010; Dau, 2001; MacNaughton, 2008; Scarlet, 2016; Siraj-Blatchford, 1996; Yelland, 2005). The importance of teachers engaging in regular and ongoing reflexive and reflective teaching practices (understanding that who they are is how they teach) is also explored.

Teachers' pedagogical work is informed by theoretical approaches (Hedges, 2008, 2012; Lovatt & Hedges, 2015), legislative requirements i.e. government regulations (MoE, 2008, 2016), policies and practices, and by their own values, attitudes, and beliefs (Gibbs, 2005; Palmer, 2007). The mandated New Zealand ECE curriculum

Te Whāriki also describes the teacher's critical role supporting children's mana, the development of their identities, dispositions and working theories, and their acceptance of diversity and difference (MoE, 1996, 2017). To assess and evaluate children's theorising concerning diversity and fairness, teachers can document their learning including their dispositions and working theories about the social world through Learning and Teaching Stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). Teachers can use this assessment documentation to critique the responsiveness of their pedagogy to the culturally and linguistically diverse children, and their families attending ECE services now and in the future.

Teachers' understandings and pedagogical approaches to diversity and difference are shaped by their subjective experiences, values, and beliefs (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012; Grey, 2013b; Yelland, 2005). "If adults are to make informed observations of children, they should recognise their own beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes and the influence these will have on the children" (MoE, 1996, p. 30). Meanwhile, Grieshaber (2008) suggests that the complexities of life in an ECE setting provide teachers with, "many pedagogical opportunities to engage critically with difference. Interacting with children in dynamic and dialogic ways is possible when pedagogical interactions are undertaken with purposes that are meaningful" (p. 516).

The work of qualified, registered, and professional teachers involves critical reflection and reflexivity (Arthur et al., 2015; Campbell, Smith & Alexander, 2016; Evans & McAllister, 2016; MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; O'Connor & Diggins, 2002; Smyth, 1989), alongside whole team 'self-review' and 'internal evaluation' (MoE, 2006; ERO, 2009). Critical reflection and reflexivity are underscored in relation to anti-bias work as they can support teachers' self-awareness about how their worldviews can have an impact upon the children they teach (Gibbs, 2006; MoE, 1996; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012). Long, Anderson, Clark, and McCraw (2008) suggest that "learning to value difference and considering implications for classroom practice requires ongoing opportunities for examining ourselves and the world around us" (p. 254).

The following sections explore literature about discourses and assumptions that can affect children's thinking, what counts as curriculum, and valued knowledge, before a new section investigates literature related to working with families.

"Discourses that [teachers] make available to children and those that they silence" can support or hinder children's theorising (Robinson, 2002, p. 416). Discrimination and inequities have resulted from people and educational structures positioning children as beings without knowledge and voice (Williams & Norton, 2008). Their counter to this situation, is "continually search[ing] for teaching and learning possibilities that sustain opportunities for children to utilize children's voices, make sense of experience, and act upon their worlds" (p. 105). This action is consistent with enhancing children's mana, and supporting the ongoing development of their dispositions and working theories (MoE, 1996, 2017).

What knowledge is valued in an ECE setting will largely determine what counts as curriculum there. In *Te Whāriki*, curriculum is defined as 'the sum total' of everything that goes on in the setting. This definition is consistent with the notion that curriculum is "emergent and negotiated…moving in a measured way between the interests of the child and the interests of the community" (Silin, 1995, pp. 41, 47).

Stephenson (2009b) identified that every child or adult was a potential source of curriculum in her research in one New Zealand ECE setting. Whereas Manning and Loveridge (2009) in their research in a New Zealand Playcentre identified that teachers' interests can be curriculum resources too. They found that "where children can discern that a teacher has a passion for the subject…children will be predisposed to take an interest as well and the interactions that ensue are more likely to be engaging and extending for both adults and children" (p. 12). Carr, Smith, Duncan, Jones, Lee and Marshall (2009) followed 14 case study children's learning in nine New Zealand ECE settings over one-year. Their research found, "the curriculum boundaries were permeable: recognisable spaces and time, were available for initiating ideas and topics, and challenging or questioning what others say" (p. 208).

Emergent curriculum often springs from a child's/ children's personal interests and goals, but the downfall is that children 'don't know what they don't know'. Children

are unlikely to develop an interest in ethnic identities other than their own, for example, or the boundaries of gender identity if only presented with normative or heteronormative binary ways of being, and prescribed topics for investigation. Children can be 'othered' if their experience, reality, or their interests are not reflected in the "normalised or dominant identities, positionings and practices" (lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015, p. 207; Robinson, 2005a, 2005b). Hence, even though it can be difficult, teachers need to "talk when talking is tough" (Miller, Donner & Fraser, 2004). They also need to look critically beyond 'this is how we always do things' to the implicit or 'hidden curriculum' and the kinds of knowledge prioritised and marginalised in their settings (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016; Lee, 2011; Sapon-Shevin, 2010; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2011; Glover, 2001; Mukherji & Dryden, 2014).

Teachers do not always fully grasp children's thinking about particular topics according to findings from research studies in ECE settings in Aotearoa New Zealand (Kelly & White, 2012: Kelly et al., 2013; Peters and Davis, 2011b). This inability to fully grasp children's line or direction of thought can lead to teacher assumptions, and disrupting or hijacking children's working theories. Peters and Davis (2012) identified time and space (things that teachers generally have control over) as significant in their working theories project. Another noteworthy finding was that "other dilemmas [arose and these] centred on adults creating opportunities for actively listening to children and engaging in episodes of sustained shared thinking"[30](p. 155).

The importance of time and space and dialogue in education for social justice is highlighted in the literature, and in *Te Whāriki.* Young children need "adults who can encourage sustained conversations, queries, and complex thinking, including concepts of fairness, difference, and similarity" (MoE, 1996, p. 26). MacNaughton (2000) points to identities being produced through dialogue or narrative (as they are in this thesis). Broad and inclusive understandings of self and others result when

[30] In a follow-up to the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study, Sylva et al., (1999) looking at the effectiveness of teacher practices, coined the term 'sustained shared thinking' with sub-categories of 'child initiated' and 'adult initiated'. Sustained shared thinking "came to be defined as an effective pedagogic interaction, where two or more individuals 'work together' in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend a narrative" (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2008 pp. 6 -7).

teachers "critically engage in children's talk about who they are and what they can do as a result" (Skattebol, 2006, p. 508). Anne Smith (2012) noted that,

> most important of all, the time and space must exist for teachers to continue to engage in conversations with each other, with children and with participants in their communities, so that hidden ways that exclusion takes place become visible, and so that inclusive strategies to achieve social justice and equity can be fashioned" (p. vii).

In Hyland's (2010) description of 'equity pedagogy' she refers to a classroom environment with a culture of listening, questioning, and discussion around issues of social justice and fairness (p. 3). Such is the 'democratic' ECE classroom envisaged by many (Davies, 2014; Greenberg, 1992; MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; Moss and Petrie, 2002).

Working with families

Because ECE settings are usually the first 'formal' point of contact that families have with education settings beyond the home, ECE is seldom discussed *except* in relation to children *and* their families/whānau. Literature related to sociocultural understandings of ECE from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom invariably mentions key ideas and concepts including: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and the importance of connections between home and the ECE setting; 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992); 'the cultural nature of human development' (Rogoff, 2003); 'virtual school bags' full of cultural and linguistic knowledge (Thomson, 2002); and 'invisible backpacks of white privilege' (McIntosh, 1989, 1990). Children's diversity has also been described as an implicit part of their funds of knowledge (MacNaughton, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2011). These sociocultural notions related to what children bring to the ECE setting from their cultures, and from participating in their families and communities beyond the ECE setting (Lovatt, Cooper, & Hedges, 2017) are pertinent to this research.

Engaging in critical reflection and reflexivity about their teaching can support teachers to better understand their own 'habitus'[31] and the 'habitus' of families' attending the ECE setting (Bourdieu, 1991, 1998). Critical reflexivity should involve reflecting on how their upbringing, educational experiences, and past and present circumstances structure their present and future practices in education. Teachers and families have varying social and cultural capital[32] which can afford or deny them status or position within particular social arenas (Bourdieu, 1991). Teachers genuinely work in partnership with families, as expected in the ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki*, when they invite them to contribute their values, beliefs, and aspirations for their children, and to share their families 'funds of knowledge' as part of the curriculum (Carr, Lee & Jones, 2004; Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2006; Clarkin-Phillips, 2012; Haggerty, Simonsen, Blake & Mitchell, 2007; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992; Terreni & McCallum, 2003; Whalley & the Pen Green Centre Team, 2007).

Shuker and Cherrington (2016) argue that positive dispositions and attitudes affect whether teachers "perceive working with diverse children and families positively or as a challenge" (p. 172). Working in teaching teams, the values, attitudes, and beliefs of colleagues are relevant, alongside teacher's individual teaching philosophies and teaching styles, because within teams, inconsistencies are sometimes evident in these areas.

Summary

Teachers are accountable for promoting children's thinking and learning about diversity and fairness and social justice based on their pedagogical, ethical and legislative obligations. Teaching strategies available to support children's developing identities and their meaning making about diversity and social justice include: active listening, power sharing, dialogue and providing time and space in

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[31] Habitus - "refer[s] to our dispositions, attitudes and beliefs; our histories that work through our bodily practices; and our habits, often not at the conscious level and to some extent determined by the structures that socialise us to perceive and understand our world in a particular way. Where our habitus is valued within a field, we gain forms of capital, whether economic, social or cultural" (Bourdieu, 1991, 1998, as cited in lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015, p. 214).

[32] Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991, 1998). "Culture includes ways of being and doing and particular forms of knowledge. Our culture is not always valued in all social fields. What is valued in the playground or at home may not have cultural capital in the early childhood setting" (Arthur et al., 2015, p.428).

democratic classrooms. The importance of teachers engaging in ongoing critical reflection and reflexivity about their beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes and the impact they have on teaching is highlighted. Habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991, 1998) are important concepts for teachers to consider in relation to themselves and the families whose children they teach.

Finally, working in partnership with families includes them being invited to contribute their values, beliefs, and aspirations for their children (Whalley, 2001); and to share their families' 'funds of knowledge' (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992) as part of the curriculum. The importance of teachers knowing and understanding children, and taking account of their families' cultural backgrounds and aspirations for their children is highly significant to these partnerships (Terreni, 2003a, 2003b; Terreni & McCallum, 2003; Gonzales-Mena, 2001, 2009; Haggerty, Simonsen, Blake & Mitchell, 2007).

How children explore, and express their understandings about diversity and difference, and fairness in a kindergarten setting is the focus of this research. Therefore, diversity issues specific to this research are now discussed, related to gender, sex and sexuality, and ethnicity and skin colour linked to concepts of exclusion (unfairness), and inclusion (fairness).

Gender, sex, and sexuality

A key aspiration in education relates to each child being supported to reach their full potential (Education, 2017). References to gender are included in the specific learning expectations under the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2, Chapter 1) in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996). Children are expected to develop working theories and dispositions involving skills, attitudes and knowledge in relation to, "…positive judgments on their own gender and the opposite gender, and respect for children who are different from themselves and ease of interaction with them" (MoE, 1996, p. 66). Children's working theories about diversity and difference may reference these messages as they make sense of their biological sex, their gender identity and the identities of others, as well as their gender roles.

As a preface to the gender politics and dynamics of children's play, the next section discusses literature around understandings, and the constructs of gender, sex and sexuality. This discussion is relevant to the umbrella concepts of fairness and

diversity that were the subject of this research. Historical and contemporary research around gender includes how children come to explore and understand biological sex and gender during their early childhoods, and teachers' and children's understandings of gender alongside gender dynamics in play (Blaise, 2005a, 2005b, 2014; Browne, 2004; Grieshaber, 1998; Larremore, 2016; MacNaughton, 2001c). Sexuality has not been addressed particularly well in ECE according to Andrew et al., (2001) who suggest, 'perhaps we are just reflecting the difficulty the community in general has in looking at and talking about sexuality' (p. 64).

Early childhood is a crucial time when children are working out their individual and social identities (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010). They are exercising their agency, and they have a voice. Children explore, and come to various understandings about gender, sex, and sexuality through the political site of play during their early childhoods. "Children's encounters with gender, particularly in the early years, are plentiful and varied" (Gunn, 2012, p. 117), and they can be observed trying out various identities or expressions of their gender (Blaise, 2014; Gunn, 2012; Campbell, Smith & Alexander, 2016). Through play, children choose friends, materials, and activities. These choices, along with their style of play, and their reactions to other children and adults, are direct or indirect expressions of "the gender [and other] politics of children's play" (MacNaughton, 2001, p. 50).

From a development perspective, children's understandings of sex/gender were seen to follow a trajectory based on their age and socialisation. A typical trajectory found in the literature follows:

> Gender is the first core identity that gets young children's attention. It develops very early: By age 2, children begin to notice physical differences and begin to describe themselves as boys or girls, although they are not yet sure what that means (Sprung, 2007). By age 3, children have ideas about behaviors, activities and toys that go with gender…Three and four-year olds tend to define gender by behavior and appearance rather than by anatomy. By age 4 children are often rigid in their insistence on limited and stereotypical behaviours. By age 5 most children have deeply incorporated a gender identity reflecting the gender expectations of their family and the larger society (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010, p. 90).

Invariably, young children learn there are two categories of people, male or female, and that they are a member of one group. Children develop greater understanding of their own gender identity around age 5-7 years, and about gender constancy (Ebbeck, 1998; Browne, 2004). Claiborne and Drewery (2014) argue that most 4- and 5-year-olds express the view that gender is stable across life, after thinking that it is possible to change from a boy to a woman or a girl to a man when one grows up. Clothing and hairstyle are the superficial characteristics that young children appear to base their definition of a person's gender on (Claiborne & Drewery, 2014; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010).

Post developmental perspectives such as feminist poststructuralism, "can assist us to conceptualize gender as a social, historical, cultural and political construction, and to recognize that young children take an active part in gender construction" according to Blaise (2005b, p. 184). Gender is not something you are, but something you do continually throughout your life (Butler, 1990, 1999). Butler argues that gender, and how children (and adults) 'do gender', is a socially and culturally constructed performance that is mediated by others. The gender, sexual and cultural identities of children are less about who they are, as about what they do on an ongoing basis. Children explore, and come to understand gender in the context of the discourses made available to them (Gunn, 2012; Miller, Donner & Fraser, 2004).

"How these discourses are made visible in children's play depends upon the theoretical framings used to understand gender, sex and sexuality" (Blaise, 2014, p. 115). Anne Smith (2013) acknowledges that, "the expectations, attitudes and discourses of teachers and peers influence children's understandings and enactment of gender" (p. 295). Children can be seen complying with, or resisting, dominant discourses around gender such as traditional stereotypes (Blaise, 2014). They can also be seen attempting to regulate or control the behaviour of others, as they make sense of their social worlds in the ECE setting and beyond (Kelly-Ware, 2016).

Research in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand has shown that traditional explanations or dominant gender discourses prevail in ECE amongst parents and ECE teachers (MacNaughton, 2000), and student teachers (Lyall (2013). Biological determinism (nature - internally imposed on children), and socialisation theory

(nurture - externally imposed on children), or an interplay between the two, fail to recognise children's agency including resistance, the complex relationship between gender and sex, and the diverse nature of gender construction. These and other dominant theories or gender discourses including for example: hyper-femininity (Murnen & Byrne, 1991; Orenstein, 2012) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) limit options for children, advantaging some while disadvantaging others. Such discourses can be seen at play affecting how children behave or 'do gender', and how adults respond to these explorations.

Childhood innocence, moral panic, and other limiting discourses

As children engage in meaning making about gender, sex and sexuality, moves have been made to 'open up' possibilities for children beyond normative boundaries (Blaise, 2010; Victorian Department of Education & Training, 2015, Safe Schools Coalition, 2016). Such progressive relationship education, or expressions of children's realities have been controversial, and have met with responses of 'moral' and 'homophobic' panic (Blaise, 2013; Robinson, 2013; Smith, Campbell & Alexander, 2017; Affrica Taylor, 2007). This panic related to the discourse of childhood innocence, affects teachers and parents, and can 'shut down' children's meaning-making around gender and sexuality. Reports of adverse reactions (Smith, Campbell and Alexander, 2017; *The Conversation*, October 20, 2016) signal that these are areas of dangerous or difficult knowledge for teachers (Britzman, 1991, 1998).

"The topic of gender diversity is keenly contested, particularly where children and young people are concerned" (Bartholomaeus, Riggs & Andrew, 2017, p. 133). Referring to media reporting, and attacks on advocates and researchers in Australia, these authors note that,

> Educating young children about gender (and sexuality) diversity is seen by some as a fundamental challenge to 'traditional patterns of family and community life. Such objections create a climate of fear and antagonism that every teacher must negotiate even if they are willing to teach in gender-complex ways (p. 133).

In education particularly, such discourses are difficult to avoid, given that they are imbued with power. "Discourses have a powerful influence on how teachers, and

those with whom they interact, understand or ascribe meaning to particular experiences and what eventually happens in practice" (Russell Bishop, 2012, p. ix). 'Homophobic panic' can impact on teachers and other adults causing them to limit children's agency, and their ways of being, by presuming that everyone is, or is going to be, heterosexual (Robinson, 2005a). Teachers and other adults are often blind to the pervasive discourse of heteronormativity (Gunn, 2008; Robinson, 2005b; Surtees & Gunn, 2010), described as a 'monstrous spectre' in the education closet (lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015).

Meta-discourses construct men/boys, women/girls in particular ways. Teachers should resist limiting discourses that are inconsistent with inclusive education goals including equity (treating people differently to ensure fair outcomes), and recognise difference via gender diversity (Gunn, 2016; Kelly-Ware, 2016). Browne (2004) posits three main reasons for the limited success of providing children with models of doing gender that diverge from the dominant norm.

> First, insufficient account has been taken of the processes by which children learn to position themselves as girls and boys. Second, there has been little acknowledgement of the emotional investment in these positions. Third, children's tendency to ignore or discount instances of deviations from the norm and to 'other' those who cross gender boundaries has been disregarded (p. 70).

Despite gender equity being promoted in contemporary ECE settings for more than forty years (MacNaughton, 2000b) and in society at large, inequities remain as the research that is the subject of this thesis shows. Lee-Thomas, Sumsion and Roberts (2005) found variable understandings, and levels of commitment to gender equity among teachers in ECE settings. In recent times, there has been increasing awareness of, and support for, diverse sexualities in education (Blaise, 2014; Gunn & Smith, 2016; Harris & Gray, 2014; Gilbert, Fields, Mamo & Lesko, 2017; Robinson & Davies, 2014; Bartholomaeus et al., 2017; Riggs & Due, 2014; Simpson Dal Santo, 2014). Yet, discourses of normativity and heteronormativity prevail (lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015; Kelly-Ware, 2016; Robinson, 2005a, 2005b; Terreni, Gunn, Kelly & Surtees, 2010).

Nevertheless, new, and hopeful ways of reframing children's sexual agency and meaning making are being made possible according to Blaise, Edwards and

Brooker (2014). These authors describe how theories i.e. postcolonial, posthuman, queer, girlhood and masculinity studies, and new materialisms (alongside feminist and poststructural theories used in this research), "may be used to challenge taken-for-granted understandings of gender, (hetero) sexuality, 'race' and social class" (p. 6). These theories "of increasing contemporary significance to the field" (ibid, p. 6) cannot be synthesised in a sentence or two, and have no immediate relevance to this thesis.

Teachers and gender

Gender stereotypes are "deeply embedded in children's understandings of gender" (Blaise, 2014, p. 116). Blaise (2010) urges teachers to consider "opening up, rather than always closing down, spaces in the curriculum for children's gender and sexual knowledge to be heard, valued and considered" (p. 8). In keeping with the prevalence of stereotypes, Ervin (2014) implores teachers and parents to look beyond the boxes, and binaries of 'sissy boy', 'tomboy girl' and the like, and help children to do the same.

There is specific mention of boys in some of the gender-related diversity and social justice literature (Creaser & Dau, 1996; Dau, 2001; Gunn, 2012; Scarlet, 2016; Skattebol, 2006). Gunn (2012) recognises "recently deployed discourses on boys' underachievement and the feminised workforce" in the New Zealand education context (p. 116). She describes her mission, "…to unsettle any idea that there is an essential or proper way to be boy- or man-friendly as a teacher" (p. 116). This mission connects with assertions that greater recognition and support is needed for understandings of gender including that there is more than one way to be a boy (Gunn & MacNaughton, 2007; Wilson-Keenan, Solsken, & Willet, 1999; Paley, 2014; Renold, 2006; Skattebol, 2006).

The story of Campbell featured in two versions of an Aotearoa New Zealand human development text (Bird & Drewery, 2000, pp. 124-125; Drewery & Bird, 2004, pp. 211-214). Campbell, aged 6 was observed in playing in the dress-up corner of his classroom during a research project looking at children's learning. A vignette constructed from the data is followed by various positionings from which the vignette might be read, for example: the child's parent, or a retired army colonel. Next, a range of possible 'adult' responses' are listed for the reader's consideration.

The analysis accompanying the vignette shows that Campbell's play in the dress-up corner can be constructed in multiple ways depending on the reader's positioning, perspective, and the lens through which they are seeing.

Gender diversity exists in the face of gender stereotypes (Davies & Robinson, 2007; Gunn, 2012), including in children's literature (Gunn, 2006). In a small early years research project, reported in Morgan and Kelly-Ware (2016), searching for picturebooks that are gay-friendly or challenge gender stereotypes, we found sixty titles published in English in the past decade. Our research showed that, "a growing range of picturebooks [suitable for children aged 0-8 years], is available to support children's developing understandings of "queer cultures" and gender and family diversity" (Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016, p. 6).

In stark contrast to the focus on gender 'diverse' and transgender children and young people in recent literature,[33] Browne (2004) introduces the notion of gender 'deviance'. Gender 'deviance' is a discourse more in keeping with the stronghold of the gender binary, than the notion of a gender continuum (Browne, 2004). Contemporary postmodern perspectives that recognise "…complex, shifting and fluid understandings of gender identity(ies) and the performances of these" (Campbell, Smith & Alexander, 2016, p. 41), and counter-discourses to 'normal' such as those accepting of gender diversity (Gunn, 2012) are a rejection of modernist view of gender norms that lead to labels like 'deviant'.

Much of the literature about diversity, particularly gender and family diversity, focuses on heteronormativity. Whilst this is an important discourse to be disrupted (Kelly, 2012, 2013, 2016; lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015; Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016; Robinson, 2005b; Terreni, Gunn, Kelly & Surtees, 2010), in this study I was particularly interested in children's understandings beyond broader 'normative' boundaries traditionally described in the literature as 'white, middle-class' or "the dominant group or the dominant culture - the way of life defined by the dominant group as "normal" and right" (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010, p. xi).

[33] Comprehensive book lists are available at www.therainbowowl.com - a website that documents the growing international body of literature and resources that focus on trans and gender diverse young people, their families, and those who support them.

A non-normative focus on gender and sexualities is found in contemporary research literature in early years classrooms in America (Earles, 2016; Larremore, 2016; Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016). These teachers/ authors all used a feminist approach, reading picturebooks using dialogic techniques in their early years classrooms to support children's agency, empathy (Mallan, 2013) and understandings of diversity. In Bentley and Souto-Manning (2016), a teacher sought to disrupt, and extend, young children's understandings of love and marriage to include same-sex marriage (*King and King*, de Haan & Nijland, 2000). Earles (2016) explored children's literature looking at children's discursive agency. Meanwhile Larremore (2016) focused on disrupting gender pedagogies in her ECE classroom. These works have synergies with Paley's books addressing diversity in the kindergarten classroom using drama based on children's narratives. Two gender-related titled books *Bad guys don't have birthdays: Fantasy play at four* (Paley, 1991) and *Boys and girls: Superheroes in the doll corner* (Paley, 2014) focus on building children's understandings and actions around diversity, looking at who is playing where, with who and with what? As always, Paley is concerned about social cohesion, and recognising who is being included and who is being excluded.

Finally, from an intersectionality perspective (Davis, Brunn-Bevel & Olive, 2015; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016), Anne Smith (2013), points out the close connection between gender and ethnicity. She argues that these aspects of diversity "come together in complex ways to cause inequalities so it is important to view gender in the context of ethnicity and class". Similarly, Morrow (2006, p. 93, as cited in Smith, 2013) describes that "social differences do not operate in isolation, because social class, age, ethnicity, religion and location intersect to influence children's childhoods and gender identities" (p. 295).

Summary

This section has canvassed gender, sex and sexuality from feminist poststructural perspectives, looking at relevant discourses including childhood innocence, moral and homophobic panic, and other limiting discourses including normativity and heteronormativity. The importance of positioning and lenses is illustrated in the example previously discussed of Campbell, a boy playing in the dress-up corner.

The following section explores literature related to pedagogy related to race and ethnic differences.

Race, ethnicity and skin colour

"Young people's thoughts and feeling about diverse cultures are at least partially shaped by what they learn in the classroom" according to Macfarlane (2004, p. 17). Exposure to cultural and linguistic diversity is likely to promote children's thinking around diversity and difference - fundamental components of intercultural education (Chapter 1). This is especially so in terms of race, ethnicity, and language differences according to Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards (2010).

Borrowing from their glossary, ethnic group, ethnicity and race[34] are described in ways that are consistent with how these terms are used in this thesis.

"**Ethnic group**: A sizeable group of humans whose members identify with one another through a common heritage derived from where their ancestors lived (e.g., Puerto Rico, Ireland, India).

Ethnicity refers to the identification of group members based on shared heritage and distinctiveness that make the group into a 'people' (p. xii)

Race: A social construct that fraudulently categorizes and ranks groups of human beings on an arbitrary basis such as skin colour and other physical features" (p. xiii).

Nowadays, race and ethnicity are viewed as cultural constructs, rather than biological realities (Cushner, McClelland & Saffer, 2015). Race and ethnicity function as processes used by people to categorise themselves or others[35]. Children are caught up in these categorisation processes as research in the ECE sector shows (MacNaughton, 1999a, Glover, 2001, 2016). Children will notice differences within their ECE settings, and from such noticing, they develop their social identity. This is done through categorisation - "I'm brown, you're red". They will then make judgements based on what they are seeing (Glover, 2016). Almost all of the four- and five-year-olds that Ramsey (1982) interviewed believed that people were

[34] Race is not a term widely used in Aōtearoa New Zealand although there is a Race Relations Commissioner and Conciliators employed in the Public Service.
[35] The official government Census in Aōtearoa New Zealand uses the term 'ethnicity' when asking the population to describe their affiliations.

basically white, and that black people's skin had been sunburned, painted, or dirtied, including black children themselves (as cited in Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 41). MacNaughton (2005) described children wanting to 'wash their skin lighter'. This idea could be described as a 'working theory' that children have about skin colour, dirt and bathing.

Much of MacNaughton's research (2000a, 2001b, 2004b, 2005) in contemporary Australian ECE settings focuses on 'whiteness' and 'otherness'. She describes how specific discourses relate to particular types of difference, using the example of 'whiteness' as a racial discourse as distinct from the category of 'white people' which represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin colour (Leonardo, 2002, as cited in MacNaughton & Williams, 2009, p. 255). There is no evidence in the literature of research having been done in Aotearoa New Zealand with a focus on 'whiteness'. There is also a dearth of material from Aotearoa New Zealand about how teachers and other significant adults support children to understand 'race' and 'ethnicity', beyond our bi-cultural frame. However, a number of recent projects have focussed on cultural and linguistic diversity, for example Mitchell, Bateman, Ouko et al., (2015) and Davis and McKenzie (2018).

In their research in three settings - an integrated ECE centre with health and social services and a predominantly Pasifika and Māori community; a centre with a predominantly Asian community; and a centre for children from refugee families, Mitchell et al., (2015) sought to explore, "the values and practices of early childhood teachers who are working with children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds in New Zealand" (p. 7). Findings showed the importance of relationship based practice, a willingness to learn as well as teach, a culture of listening and a willingness to change, and the importance of recognising and supporting language, culture and identity.

As children learn about themselves and their families in terms of their individual and social identities, they may encounter multiple racial or ethnic groups in their own family make-up. These are complex issues for a young child to make sense of. Their parents may be racially or ethnically different from each other, or one or more of their parents may identify as mixed heritage, or the racial identity group of their

parents differs from them because they are adopted (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 1996).

(Pre)prejudice, racism, and the role of the teacher

According to Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010), the notion of 'pre-prejudice' is often found in very young children's thinking. These authors argue that, based on young children's limited experience or imitations of adult behaviour, their "early ideas and feelings may develop into real prejudice if reinforced by societal biases" (p. xiii). Literature shows that older children in ECE settings are capable of prejudice defined by Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) as "an attitude, opinion, or feeling formed without adequate prior knowledge, thought, or reason. Prejudice can be prejudgement for or against any person, group, or gender" (p. xiii).

The role of the teacher is significant supporting children to make sense of diversity and difference in terms of race, ethnicity, and language differences (Grey, 2013b; Glover, 2016; Husband, 2012; Park, 2011; Siraj-Blatchford, 1996). Hyland (2010) also identifies the importance of power, arguing that "it is essential that teachers help children see that gender, race, culture and sexual orientation can be expressed in multiple ways and that some of these ways have more power than others" (p. 7). Robinson and Jones-Diaz (2005) argue that teachers need to, "engage in the reflective process of deconstructing whiteness and decentring normalizing practices that privilege white dominance as normal and natural" (p. 79). A number of authors reference discourses such as 'white dominance' arguing that these are fear-based responses to ethnic differences (Davis, MacNaughton & Smith, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Berikoff, 2008).

In *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) teachers are charged with actively working towards "countering racism and other forms of prejudice" (p. 18). The curriculum authors acknowledge the important responsibility that adults have in terms of empowering children and helping to develop their thinking. The curriculum authors argue that "the expectations of adults are powerful influences on children's lives. If adults are to make informed observations of children, they should recognise their own beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes and the influence these will have on the children" (MoE, 1996, p. 30). A significant issue in ethnically diverse ECE settings and school classrooms is the relative homogeneity of the teaching profession. This

homogeneity where teachers are still predominantly white, middle class and female is in direct contrast with the children they teach (Grey, 2013b).

White teachers, white children and whiteness

Teachers, particularly 'white' teachers have their own journey in relation to being the dominant group in terms of inclusion, and children and families who are ethnically different from them (Davis, 2006; Derman Sparks et al., 2006, 2011; Paley, 2000; Ramsay 1998). MacNaughton and Williams (2009) explain that colonialism was made possible through the use of 'race' discourses that distinguished between white people and black people, and positioned white as the norm and superior to black people. Meta-discourses of whiteness were introduced and used to justify white people's domination or power over black people. Citing Leonardo (2002, p. 31) these authors make an important distinction between people and discourse, arguing that "'Whiteness' is a racial discourse, whereas the category of 'white people' represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin colour" (p. 255).

Davis (2006) argues that white teachers "need to consider and explore how their white constructs and understandings of the world, and of others, influence their curricula practice in ways that exclude and discriminate against these 'others'" (p. 28). This view is connected with Cushler, McClelland and Safford (2015) who argue that, "white privilege exists when white people, who may have been taught that racism is something that puts others at a disadvantage, are not taught to see the corresponding advantage that their color brings to them" (p. 177).

Meanwhile, in *White Teacher*, Paley (2000) describes her journey of self-discovery in relation to race and difference. In the foreword, she suggests that "anything a child feels is different about himself which cannot be referred to spontaneously, casually, naturally and uncritically by the teacher can become a cause for anxiety and an obstacle for learning" (p. xix). Paley (2000) confesses to finding it difficult to be non-judgemental and matter of fact in her descriptions of what children were saying, "when race or colour was involved" (p. 8).

Paley had three key realisations about her teaching. First, that "race is often the 'hidden curriculum' within a classroom", second "that much of her teaching leant towards colour-blindness" and third, that is was difficult "to know how to respond

when a child mentioned anything that alluded to colour differences" (Lee, 2011, p. 120). As a white teacher in an American kindergarten classroom for 37 years beginning in the 1950s, Paley faced many issues that resonate with the work of teachers and researchers internationally then and now. For example, in Aotearoa New Zealand, Alton-Lee, Nuthall and Patrick (1987) were surprised to hear a child say, "Take your brown hand off my book" when they began using personal microphones with students in a primary school classroom. They too concluded that they had discovered race as the 'hidden curriculum' in the classroom.

'Race talk' and 'colour blindness'

For teachers, knowing how to respond when children mention or allude to ethnicity, race or colour differences is often problematic. 'Race talk' is always difficult or never easy (Pollock, 2004). In the literature reviewed for this project, diverse identities or constructs are sometimes described in the context of 'inviting difficult conversations' or unpleasant conversations, or teacher 'resistance to having unpleasant conversations' (Vittrup, 2016a, 2016b; Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006). Terms such as 'color-blindness' (Gutiérrez, 2007) and 'colour-muteness' appear in the literature, and it is noted that colour-blindness is a privilege available only to white people (Robertson, 2004; Sapon-Shevin, 2007, 2010; Vittrup, 2016a). This notion of white people's colour-blindness has synergies with McIntyre's (1989) seminal work about 'backpacks of white privilege'[36] that is still in use in tertiary classrooms today. Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2006) answer a question typically asked by white ECE teachers[37] in their seminal text *What if all the kids are white? Anti-bias multicultural education with young children and families*. This question "echoes the persistent confusion about the role of whites in the multicultural movement and, in particular, the engagement of white children, families, and teachers in multicultural education" (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 1).

[36] Peggy McIntyre's (1989, 1990) notion of white people carrying a 'backpack of white privilege' challenges us to think about what it might be like to not be white. McIntyre wants the reader to be conscious that whiteness sits at the top of a hierarchical scale.

[37] These anti-bias campaigners have been holding workshops with teachers for more than twenty years and identify that this has been a frequent question throughout that time period.

This question has synergies with speaking the Māori language in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE settings, according to Forsyth and Leaf (2010). These authors argue that,

> difficulty and unease in implementing te reo Māori into our mainstream centres can result in some teachers seeking justifications not to do so. Often the commonest of these is 'we have no Māori children in our centre so there is no need for us to use the language' (p 33).

Summary

This section has canvassed literature related to teaching and learning about differences related to race and ethnicity. As children learn about themselves and others in terms of their individual and social identities, they may encounter multiple racial or ethnic groups. Children's theorising about diversity and difference is likely to be prompted by exposure to cultural and linguistic diversity, and these are complex issues for a young child to make sense of. A range of constructs in this arena have also been explored including: (pre)prejudice, whiteness, colour blindness and colour muteness, race talk, and dominant discourses.

Looking forward

This chapter presented a review of the literature informing this study. The following chapter (Chapter 4) outlines the research design and methodology used to explore the research questions. The kindergarten setting, participants, and ways in which field texts were constructed over a seven-month period in 2014 are explained. A detailed description of the analyses processes including the analytical tools is provided. Ethical issues relevant to this study are also explored.

CHAPTER 4:
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore children's working theories about diversity and fairness, alongside how teachers were promoting inclusive responses to diversity. Parents and whānau were also participants, since connections between the kindergarten, peers, and the child's home (mesosystem) were predicted to shed light on children's thinking, and teachers' pedagogy from a family viewpoint. Tripartite or three-way meaning-making about children's developing understandings in the areas of diversity and fairness was expected to add ecological validity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to this research.

This chapter describes the kindergarten setting, the participants, and the ways in which the research took place over a seven-month period in 2014. The methodological approach to the study, how data was generated (field texts were constructed), and analysed (research texts were composed from the field texts to be read in different ways) are outlined. Ethical issues relevant to this study are also explored.

Clough and Nutbrown (2007) describe methodology as the values, principles, philosophies, and ideologies that underpin research. "The methodology that you hold structures how you perceive and understand your research topic and the knowledge that you construct. You may have a variety of values and principles, thus your research may have several methodologies" (Roberts-Holmes, 2011, p. 22). Certain theories and a researcher's worldview drive the research process, according to Mutch (2013). Mutch's example (p. 105) has informed my research overview (Table 3) which describes the theories that underpin the research, the research topic and questions, the research sample (participants) and the methodology and methods utilised throughout the research project.

Table 3: Research Overview

World view

Subjective - "Subjective understanding of the nature of reality - things exist 'in the mind' and in the culture's agreements about what does and doesn't exist and their relation" (lisahunter, emerald & Martin, 2013, p. 49).

Macro-level theories

Critical theory - a theoretical approach that aims to uncover and seek redress for disadvantaged and silenced groups (Mutch, 2013, p. 3). "Critical theory perspectives challenge disparities, injustices, inequalities and perceived norms" (MoE, 2017, p. 62).

Feminist theory - a theoretical and methodological approach to research that is underpinned by women's views of the world and women's ways of working (Mutch, 2013; lisahunter et al., 2013).

Poststructural theory - Poststructuralism problematises the idea that 'truth' is knowable; indeed, it often seeks to disrupt commonly held understandings about what is 'normal' and 'true' (Albon, 2011). "There are multiple ways of viewing reality and these depend on the position from which we look - a position which is ever changing. The position of the researcher is therefore very important and poststructuralist researchers will position themselves clearly within the text so that the reader gets a sense of 'where they are coming from' and how this might have impacted on the study" Mukherji & Albon, 2015, p. 28).

Sociocultural theories - humans are social beings best understood within the contexts of the societies where they live, work, play and learn alongside others. Meaning making occurs through participation, experiences and interactions in their cultures, societies, and institutions (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978)

Mid-range theory

Social constructionism - things that appear natural, obvious, taken for granted are constructed / inventions or artifice of given societies (Burr, 2015). So how we view gender, race or even diversity depends on our perspective, ways of knowing/ theoretical orientation and therefore needs to be troubled/ problematised (Burr, 2015; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012)

Topic: Negotiating diversity and fairness: Stories from an Aotearoa New Zealand kindergarten.

Research Questions:

1. When learning about diversity and fairness in the social world, what working theories do young children (aged 3-5 years) express? And how are these expressed?
2. How do families describe, encourage, and respond to children's explorations of fairness and difference?
3. How do teachers provoke and respond to children's working theories about the social world?
4. How might teachers promote an 'inclusive response' to diversity by supporting children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences?

Sample:

6 teachers (varying designations: Head Teacher, Teacher, Relieving Teacher, and Senior Teacher); and 45 children, and their families/ whānau in one kindergarten setting in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Methodology

Mixed methods, mainly qualitative

Participatory Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, 2005)

Data also known as 'Field texts' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in recognition of their constructed nature, including 'Critical incidents' (Tripp, 1993; 1996) and 'Telling examples' (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1983;1984)

'Narrative' storytelling including vignettes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Rose, 1996) and 'Narrative [formative] assessments' (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012)

A 'critical ethnographic' approach where I was both observer and participant in a naturalistic setting - the kindergarten (Mukherji & Albon, 2015)

Methods

Field texts constructed from a 'mosaic' of methods (Clark, 2005b; Clark & Moss, 2001) including: observations, photographs (Clark, 2005a) and notes of informal conversations with children, video/audio transcripts of conversations between children with peers, and with teachers; narrative assessments of children's learning, teacher discussions and parent/whānau focus group transcripts, parent/whānau questionnaire responses, staff meeting notes, e mails, critical incidents and reflective journal entries, and diary and field notes recorded in Research Journal.

Overview

This Participatory Action Research took place in a kindergarten setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. Qualitative field texts were constructed using a mosaic of methods over seven months from May until November 2014. The six teacher participants were all known to me, and I was familiar with the setting having visited on numerous occasions over the past decade in various guises. The team volunteered for this research project after hearing me discussing it informally at a seminar we were attending. Their Team Appraisal Goal of enhancing professional practice through research and self-review also fitted with the topic. I had previously worked as a kindergarten teacher, and still held teacher registration with a current practising certificate. Hence I was a professional colleague with *insider knowledge* of ECE teaching and the setting (Adam, 2013).

The research setting

The research was located in a community-based, not-for-profit kindergarten that was run under the auspices of a kindergarten association in a city in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research setting will be referred to as 'Beech Kindergarten' (pseudonym) or called 'the kindergarten' throughout this thesis. During the Reconnaissance phase of the research in 2014, the kindergarten had a roll of 45 children with several children sharing full-time places so there were more than the 40 names on the roll. There was usually an approximate 50/50 split of girls and

boys on the roll. When children turned 5 years old they left the kindergarten for school, and new children were enrolled to keep the roll full, so the numbers of girls and boys fluctuated slightly at times. The kindergarten was sessional, with a maximum of 40 children attending from 8.30am each day, Monday through Friday. Most days, half of the children were picked up by their families/ caregivers after four hours at 12.30pm. Extended sessions were also offered whereby 20 of the mostly older 'morning' children stayed on until 2.30pm four days a week. The kindergarten's operation was based on school terms. Every ten weeks or so there was a two-week break where the kindergarten was closed to children and their families. During this time, the teachers undertook professional development and spent time on annual leave.

The kindergarten had its own treaty which was developed through children and teachers brainstorming ideas about respecting and caring for people, places and things (Figure 1). Significantly, the Treaty explanation refers to the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Beech Kindergarten Treaty - February 2014

Be safe and kindly
Turn taps off when you are finished
Save birds when they are dying
Make friends
Recycle rubbish
Make soil with worms, compost and scraps
Teachers help keep you safe
Don't go out the gate without Mums or Dads or cross the road
Only walking feet inside the kindergarten
Have gentle hands
Have celebrations
Hold on tight when climbing
Keep care of animals our chickens, fish and butterflies and bees
Use manners, say please and thank you and listen to your friends when they are talking
Use kind words
If the teacher is talking you have to say "Excuse me"
Have lots of fun at our amazing kindergarten

(Reproduced from hand-written chart on wall - photographed 17 June 2014).

Figure 2: Beech Kindergarten Treaty explanation

At the beginning of the year we like to have a korero about 'ways of being' in our kindergarten. This is timely as we celebrate Waitangi Day on February 6th. With this we explored the story of when the Waka came into New Zealand many many (sic) years ago. This was a time when the giant Moa birds roamed Aotearoa and extremely large eagles occupied the sky. Māori settled and built many Marae upon the hill tops. Many years later a very different ship came with Captain Cook and his men on it. The Māori people and the Pakeha people had to learn to get along and so they wrote the Treaty about some rules of the land.

At our kindergarten we made our own Treaty. We came together and brainstormed some ideas about respecting and caring for our people, place and things. Some most amazing ideas came from the children and we are all trying to follow our own Treaty

(Reproduced from typed explanation on wall - photographed 17 June 2014).

The participants

The two kinds of participants involved in this research project: were adults including teaching staff, and children's parents; and children attending the kindergarten. Four qualified and registered early childhood teachers were employed in permanent positions to staff the kindergarten, and they had a regular qualified and registered relieving teacher (Table 4) who filled in during teaching staff absences. Jasmine, Davina, Grace, and Kelsey (pseudonyms) were all female, aged between 40-50 years. Three of the teachers were parents of adult, teenage, or primary school aged children. All four permanent teachers gained their undergraduate or graduate ECE teaching qualifications at tertiary institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand. Together with their Senior Teacher Margaret, their regular relieving teacher Naomi, children on the roll, and their parents/whānau (all referred to using pseudonyms), all participated in this research project. Jasmine, the Head Teacher agreed to be the principal teacher-researcher throughout the research, and she was the primary liaison teacher for the project.

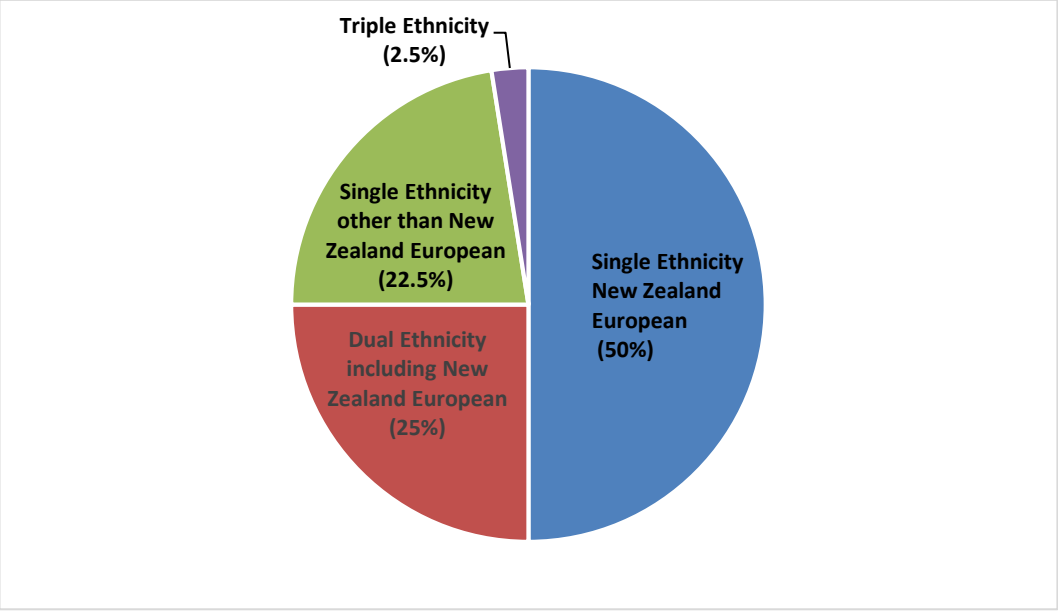
Table 4: Teaching staff (as at 1 May 2014)

Pseudonym	Designation	Experience as a qualified teacher
Jasmine	Head Teacher	16 years
Kelsey	Teacher	13 years
Davina	Teacher	7 years
Grace	Teacher	4 years
Naomi	Relief Teacher	Unknown
Margaret	Senior Teacher	25 years

The kindergarten employed a part-time administrator who supplied me with information about children and their families, and distributed and collected consent forms and other documentation. However, she did not wish to be formally involved as a participant in the research.

The kindergarten administrator provided me with information about the children's ages and ethnicities that had been supplied by families (current as at 1 May 2014). She explained that when children were enrolled, families could select up to three ethnic groups, and three iwi or tribal affiliations on the kindergarten enrolment form. From this information (Figure 3), I identified that almost half of the children (19/41) on the kindergarten roll at that time were identified as New Zealand European (single ethnicity). Nine (9) children identified as having another single ethnicity: 5 children were identified as Māori; 3 were identified as Indian; and 1 child was identified as British. Ten (10) children were identified as having dual ethnicities: 5 were listed as New Zealand (NZ) European/ Māori; 1 as Māori/ NZ European; 1 as Samoan/ NZ European; 1 as NZ European/ Tuvaluan; 1 as NZ European/ Japanese; and lastly 1 as NZ European/ Filipino. Two (2) children identified as having three ethnicities - New Zealand European/ Kiribati/British and Māori/Samoan/Cook Island Māori. Figure 3 illustrates the percentage proportion of children identified as having one, two or three ethnic identities.

Figure 3: Ethnicities of child participants



At the time of the research, the kindergarten's demographics in terms of children's ethnic identities were comparable to the population demographics of Aotearoa New Zealand, with a substantial proportion of the population identified as having a single ethnicity - European, a smaller but still sizeable proportion of the population identifying as Māori, and a lesser proportion identifying as Pasifika. Four children identified with an Asian ethnicity (3 as Indian and 1 as Filipino) and this is similar to 12% of the country's population identified as belonging to Asian ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2016).

Features of Participatory Action Research

This project was conceived using 'Participatory Action Research'. One feature most commonly associated with Action Research is 'spiral self-reflective cycles' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, 2005; Mills, 2000). Whilst Participatory Action Research generally includes these cycles, there are seven other noteworthy features associated with the particular model chosen to inform this project. The specific features are that Participatory Action Research is: a social process; participatory; practical and collaborative; emancipatory; critical; recursive (reflexive, dialectical), and finally that Participatory Action Research aims to transform both theory and practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, pp. 566-568), similar to changing or improving social practice (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009).

These features were key to how I envisaged this research, and they will be highlighted throughout the following chapters. From the outset, there were obvious synergies between these key features of Participatory Action Research, the setting, and the research topic. For example, team teaching and action research are relational processes that occur(ed) within the social context of the kindergarten as a research site; teaching and learning with children is social and collaborative; *Te Whāriki* the ECE curriculum (MoE, 1996) has emancipatory potential with its bicultural focus, and view of infants, toddlers, and young children as confident, competent and agentic; and the research topic, of working theories about fairness and diversity from multiple perspectives, required critical and reflexive thinking by the participants, and the researcher.

The purpose of Action Research is to improve practice, celebrate achievements, and highlight aspects of practice for change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005;

MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009, Mukherji & Albon, 2015, 2018; Mills, 2000). In doing so, participants create an environment of enquiry in which they seek to acknowledge and act on areas for improvement rather than justify their practice through review. I chose this methodology as I understood that Action Research could justify and extend what the teachers were doing in relation to diversity and difference, and enhance how they thought about these constructs (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009; Louise Taylor, 2010). McKernan (1998) argues that Action Research that is emancipatory in nature frees teachers to make them more autonomous.

One of the criteria for success of Participatory Action Research is whether participants have developed a stronger and more authentic understanding and development of their practices, and what changes have occurred (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). This outcome links with MacNaughton (2001) who argues that an Action Research project can 'grind to a halt' without critical reflection as critical reflection is the 'motor that drives the research process' (p. 212).

Early in the process during preliminary discussions with the teaching team, we agreed on our respective roles as participants: I would be the chief-researcher, the teachers would be co-researchers/participants with Jasmine as the principal teacher-researcher, and the children and their families/whānau would be participants. Since this was my PhD, the analysis of field texts was my prerogative as was the final thesis. Hence, the teachers were clear about our respective roles and that their co-researcher status was nominal in terms of the final written result. Nevertheless, we proceeded on the basis that this collective endeavour was a Participatory Action Research project as it was in keeping with their philosophy (under revision) and their Appraisal goal (Initial informal discussion, Research Diary, April 2014).

The process of getting started

The process of getting started involved several formalities. Once I had gained ethical approval from the University of Waikato, Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (19 December 2013) and my proposal and PhD candidacy had been confirmed (19 February 2014), I attended the kindergarten's Annual General Meeting on 26 February 2014 and presented to the small group of parents present about my proposed research.

Recruiting participants

Once official management approval for the research to proceed was received on 7 April 2014 (Appendix C), I formally invited the teachers from Beech Kindergarten, and their Senior Teacher, to be involved and sent them an information sheet about the project (Appendix D). An initial meeting was held at the kindergarten, where informed consent (Appendix E) and background information were sought from the participating teachers and their Senior Teacher.

Consent and assent are fundamental to research, especially research involving young children (Cullen, 2007, 2016; Peters & Kelly, 2011; MacNaughton, 2001). During Term One, the kindergarten administrator and the teachers distributed information sheets and informed consent forms to parents and whānau (Appendix F & Appendix G). Parents consented to their children's involvement in the project by signing and returning the Consent Forms to the kindergarten. Next assent was sought from children at the kindergarten using a child-friendly Assent Form with images on it (Appendix H). Teachers worked alongside children individually and in groups and explained the images on the assent form to children as they filled out the boxes and wrote their names. Ongoing assent was sought from children throughout the project (Dockett & Perry, 2011; Flewitt, 2005). If children chose not to be video or audio-taped, or reviewed images or footage of themselves, and did not want them to be included/ kept by me, then recording would not proceed, or the recordings would be deleted at their request. This occurred on several occasions when a child reviewed a photograph, and said they didn't like it, or when they indicated that they did not want to be videoed, or photographed by avoiding eye contact, and other non-verbal cues i.e. putting their hand up or running away from where I was located (Bissenden & Gunn, 2017; Dalli & Te One, 2012; Flewitt, 2005; Peters & Kelly, 2015). However, the children were used to being photographed as part of the teachers' assessment documentation, so this withdrawal of assent did not occur often.

The kindergarten administrator took responsibility for the distribution of information sheets, and the collection of consent forms (Appendix F & Appendix G) on an ongoing basis as new families enrolled at the kindergarten. Meanwhile, teachers took responsibility for gaining initial assent from children new to the

kindergarten once the research was underway. Data from any child whose parent did not agree to their child's participation in the project was not included in analysis. Only two families withheld consent for their child's involvement.

Research phases

To capture the voices of various participants, field texts were constructed using a variety of methods in each of the three phases of the research: Reconnaissance, Intervention, and Integration/Evaluation (Cardno, 2010). Table 5 shows the research timeframe including phases of the research.

Table 5: Research phases at Beech Kindergarten and timeframes

Reconnaissance	May – June 2014
Intervention	July – September 2014
Integration/ Evaluation	October – November 2014

The Reconnaissance phase began in earnest in Term Two 2014 (May-June) once the paperwork was finalised. The research began with sharing information and gaining consent from participants. On those early visits, I reacquainted myself with the setting, and had informal discussions with teachers about children and their working theories in relation to aspects of diversity. I undertook observations of teaching and learning during kindergarten sessions. At the initial recorded discussion with teachers, a 'problem' or area of focus was identified, and possible interventions and methods of data generation were discussed.

In Term Three during the Intervention phase (July-September), all families (42 in total on that roll at that time) received a questionnaire (Appendix I) and either chose to participate by returning a completed questionnaire, or did not respond. During the Integration/ Evaluation phase (September-November) in Term Four, a final and fourth recorded discussion with teachers, and a Parent Focus Group concluded the research. Participants at the Parent Focus Group filled out background information about themselves (Appendix J), and had previously signed a consent form that included agreeing to take part in Focus Groups (Appendix G). The Parent Focus Group Outline and the vignettes are also included as appendices (Appendix K &

Appendix L) along with the Teachers' recorded discussion agendas and starter questions (Appendix Q & Appendix R).

The Mosaic Approach

Various methods were used to construct field texts (explained in next section) to answer the research questions. As there were three distinct and different groups of participants, the methods used were tailored for each group as shown in Table 6. The methods make up a mosaic akin to the 'Mosaic Approach' coined by Clark and Moss (2001) to describe a range of methods used to gain children's perspectives in their research.

Table 6: A mosaic of methods related to participant groups

Participants	Field texts constructed from:
Children/ Focus children	Photographs
	Video recordings (transcribed)
	Audio recordings (transcribed)
	Narrative Assessments / Learning Stories (written by teachers, and me)
	Participant Observations
	Research Journal - diary and field notes
	Reflections about individual focus children (written by teachers)
	Critical incidents/ telling examples file
	Visual Diary
Parents/ whānau	Questionnaire Responses
	Parent Focus Group (transcribed)
	Parent Whānau Profiles (Focus Group attendees only)
	Research Journal - diary and field notes
Teachers	Teacher Reflections
	Recorded Discussions (x4 - transcribed)
	Research Journal - diary and field notes

Constructing the field texts

Researchers make conscious and unconscious decisions about what to include and leave out as they collect/ generate data, as well as a range of subjective decisions during analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In order to recognise these actions, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) coined the terms 'field texts' and 'research texts'. Consistent with lisahunter et al., (2013), I have deliberately chosen to use these

terms to, “draw explicit attention to shaping of information into ‘data’, and the deliberate manipulation of this data in ‘analyses” (p. 9). By describing the processes of ‘constructing field texts’ and ‘using field texts to compose research texts’ to be read in particular ways to present discussion and conclusions, I am reminded that I view knowledge as subjective, situated and constructed by participants (the teachers, children, families and me) in the setting. The theories that underpin the research dictated how research texts were created to be read and re-read critically and discursively. These processes led to the final ‘research text’ that is this thesis.

Field Texts

Participant Observations

Participant observation was one of the specific methods used to compose field texts. This qualitative research technique takes place in community settings with relevance to the research questions. This field technique allows the researcher to gain multiple perspectives as well as insights into the contexts, relationships, and behaviours in the research setting. The researcher tries to understand what life is like as an ‘insider’ albeit while they are an outsider (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).To find out how children express their working theories about diversity and fairness in the social world, and how teachers provoke and respond to children’s working theories (Research Questions 1 and 3), I resolved to spend time immersed in the daily life of the kindergarten community - “a naturalistic setting [that] involves objects and activities in everyday life” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 515).

The first of ten research site visits where I acted as a ‘participant observer’ (during kindergarten sessions with children present) was on 14 May 2014. These specific visits continued for five months until 23 September 2014 for the purposes of constructing field texts. Whilst directly observing children and teachers (Rolfe & Emmett, 2010), I often participated in whatever was going on, eating kai[38] at morning tea and lunch times, reading children a picturebook on request, or responding to children’s questions about my presence, or requests for assistance of some kind.

[38] A Māori word meaning ‘food’ commonly used in ECE settings

These visits did not always take place on consecutive weeks as scheduled; term breaks, staff absences, and my work commitments sometimes meant that there were longer gaps than anticipated in my visiting schedule. Looking back, these gaps or pauses in the Action Research were noteworthy as they often signalled the end of a cycle, as well as time for the teachers and me to reflect.

Child-related field texts

In addition to participant observations, field texts relating to children were constructed from relevant photographs, (transcribed) video and audio recordings, assessment documentation including narrative assessments sometimes in the form of Learning Stories written by me or the teachers, participant observations, diary notes and field notes from my Research Journal (Ortlipp, 2008), reflections about individual focus children written by teachers on templates I provided (See Appendices M & N), critical incidents/telling examples file, excerpts from the transcripts of recorded discussions with teachers, and the Parent Focus Group. These sources will now be described in detail under a range of overlapping categories.

Photographs and Video/Audio recordings

On each of my ten kindergarten visits (See Appendix M for dates), I audio and video recorded children/ children and teachers and took approximately 20-30 photographs (Clark, 2005a) each visit using an iPad or iPod. Several 'critical incidents' (Tripp, 1993; 1996) or 'telling examples' (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1983, 1984) were recorded as they were unfolding or retrospectively as video/audio files or photographs, for example 'Friends don't do that' (Chapter 5), 'What's he doing that for? He's a boy' (Chapter 6), and 'No-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party' (Chapter 7). The section entitled 'Focus children' provides an explanation of how specific children became our focus. I was prompted frequently to photograph and record when I noticed one or more of the focus children involved in a play episode or conversation. Often I had recognised joint attention, or sustained shared thinking, or tension or conflict where I anticipated children's social and moral reasoning or problem-solving abilities would be called for. On occasion, teachers also prompted me to record i.e. the lunchtime conversation 'No-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party' (14 August 2014) and 'Marriage, kissing and babies' (21 May 2014).

Narrative Assessments/ Learning Stories

Teachers were engaged in ongoing assessment and documentation of children's learning in various formats including 'Learning Stories' a form of narrative assessment (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). Teachers copied documentation that they had written for me, if it was relevant to the research focus. Alternatively, reviewing the Portfolios[39] belonging to focus children was a way for me to locate documentation by teachers that added to children's learning trajectories about the research topics. I also wrote Learning Stories, about children's learning in the areas of fairness and diversity, because I had time available to construct field texts for the purposes of this research.

Reflections on Focus children

During our discussions, the teachers and I identified several children whom we called 'focus children'. Jack, Dylan, Felix, Ruby, Layla, and Caitlyn (pseudonyms) were initially nominated as focus children. In the real-life context of the kindergarten, these children became mini 'case studies' (Yin, 2003). Our empirical inquiry concerned the phenomenon of them theorising about diversity and fairness. Detailed descriptions and rich accounts of their meaning making including their working theories (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003) were recorded as the stories throughout this thesis illustrate.

Based on their presence in multiple field texts, Alfie and Rylee (pseudonyms) were later additions to this group (Details of all 8 focus children appear in Table 7). Early in the research, the initial group of children were those children most often mentioned in our (mine and teachers) informal and formal recorded discussions. They appeared often in field texts that were being constructed at that time. In the words of Jasmine, these children 'rose to the surface a bit'; they had strong personalities and were seen by us to be the children most visibly/audibly engaged

[39] Teachers are required to assess and document children's learning and progress. Learning Stories developed in Aotearoa New Zealand for this purpose (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). Typically these records are stored in a folder or a portfolio and often include photographs, examples of children's work, etcetera (Carr, 2001). Whilst hard-copy versions are traditional in this country, in recent years these have been supplemented, or replaced, by electronic platforms such as StoryPark or Educa.

in ‘identity work’ - making sense of themselves, and themselves in relation to others in their social worlds, in this place at the time.

These focus children’s interactions with their peers (as observed and documented by teachers and me), and their parents’ contributions to the Questionnaire and Parent Focus Group serve to highlight key ideas around working theories around diversity, fairness, and inclusion that are central to the inquiry in this thesis. In hindsight, whilst this group of eight children represents a balance in terms of ethnicity, biological sex, and age, I note that, with one exception, the focus children all have English as their first language. The exception, Ruby was regarded as a dual language learner, or ‘successive bilingual’ (Patterson, 2002) given that she spent most of her time outside of kindergarten with her Filipino mother and grandmother. According to the teachers, these family members were often heard conversing in their home language. Ruby’s father and maternal grandmother were English and made up the family unit. Besides these eight focus children, other children feature in the discussion chapters (Chapters 5-8) due to their involvement in ‘critical incidents’ or ‘telling examples’ alongside one or more of the focus children.

Table 7: Biological sex, birth month, and ethnicity of focus children (in birth order)

Pseudonym	Biological sex	Month/ Year of Birth	Ethnicity as identified on Enrolment form
Jack	Male	October 2009	NZ European
Rylee*	Female	November 2009	Māori - Also noted as Pākehā (Questionnaire)
Ruby	Female	December 2009	European/ Filipino
Alfie*#	Male	January 2010	Māori - Also noted as Pākehā (Questionnaire)
Dylan*#	Male	March 2010	NZ European
Felix*#	Male	April 2010	NZ European
Layla*	Female	June 2010	Māori / European
Caitlyn*#	Female	August 2010	European / Māori
KEY * denotes completed Parent/Whānau Questionnaire response received (Aug - Sept 2014) # denotes parent attendance at the Parent Focus Group, 26 November 2014			

Critical incidents and telling examples

Critical incidents are important sources of ‘data’ (Tripp, 1993, 1996). They can often involve ethical dilemmas for teachers (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2010). Early in

the research, I created a 'critical incidents/ telling examples file' as I was keen to keep track of incidents that occurred during my visits that appeared worthy of consideration as ways of progressing our thinking about the research topic and questions. Each visit I also made extensive field notes in my Research Journal. Once eight focus children were identified (Table 7), the construction of field texts was simplified as previously there were 44 children, whose parents had consented to their involvement [40] to observe, audio and/or video record, and collect documentation or document their learning. The decision to focus on 'critical incidents' or 'telling examples' also supported the construction of field texts and for the most part, these incidents involved at least one or more of the focus children. Carr et al., (2005) note that "teachers who pay careful attention to children's voices gain windows in their world views and assumptions" (p. 4).

By highlighting sections of my Research Journal where I had recorded diary and field notes, and pasting photographs and writing notes in a scrap book entitled 'critical incidents/telling examples file', I was able to build up a file based on my hunches that I could revisit individually and/or with the teachers. Often, the thought or incident occurred when I did not have much time or space to write/ think about it. However, I knew that these things - events, activities, behaviours, and thoughts had come to my attention because they disrupted the status quo, fractured the calm, and introduced tension and uncertainty. Recording my initial impressions and critical reflections in my Research Journal as soon as practicable was important (Tripp, 1993, 1996; Ortlipp, 2008). Since the point of entry/recording, I repeatedly revisited these 'incidents' especially during the composure of research texts and writing this thesis, from an exploratory or interpretive stance, trying to understand them from a range of theoretical perspectives, and from the various perspectives of individual participants.

In keeping with Gardner (2015) I sought to deliver a trustworthy image of children's theorising concerning fairness and diversity, and teachers' provocations and responses in these areas. Hence, a selection of 'poignant' conversations was chosen to illustrate the themes, using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998), across the time span of my research visits. The conversations were gathered

[40] Only two parents specifically requested that their children not be involved in the research

together to form ‘telling examples’ (see J. Clyde Mitchell, 1984, on a “telling case”, p. 239). The ‘telling examples’ “serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent” (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1984, p. 239). Therefore, the ‘telling examples’ are symbolic of the themes” (Gardiner, 2015, p. 5). The themes that I have gathered ‘telling examples’ in relation to, and expressed as ‘discussion of findings’, are: fairness and friendship (Chapter 5), gender, sex and sexuality (Chapter 6), ethnicity and skin colour (Chapter 7), and finally ‘the risky terrain’ (Chapter 8) where I focus explicitly on teachers and their pedagogy in relation to power and topic.

Several critical incidents have been turned into research texts in the form of vignettes. These vignettes which are presented throughout the ‘discussion of findings’ chapters (Chapters 5-8) serve to illustrate key ideas in relation to children’s working theories, teachers’ provocations and/or responses, parents’ perspectives; the three areas that the research questions focus on. These vignettes can be read and re-read critically and discursively from different standpoints (Bird & Drewery, 2000), and as such can be seen in multi-layered ways from multiple perspectives.

Field texts generated around focus children’s theorising about fairness, diversity and difference were cross referenced with their Parent Whānau Questionnaire responses (Appendix I). Questionnaire responses were received on behalf of six of the eight focus children (Table 7 see * Jack and Ruby’s families did not respond). Viewing their responses, I sought to expound on my own and teachers’ perspectives of children’s thinking with their parents’/whānau perspectives, thus supporting the validity of the field texts constructed from all sources/methods. Interview transcripts were also cross referenced from four formal and several informal discussions held with teachers, and with parents from the Parent Focus Group in relation to focus children. The transcripts were ‘word-searched’ looking for these specific children’s names and references to their thinking, acting, ‘performing’ and being. Any statements related to the focus children were highlighted and collated using line number and discussion name/ date references.

Teacher-related field texts

Field texts relating to teachers were constructed from a range of relevant sources: focus group and discussion transcripts, reflections on templates I provided, (See Appendices L, M & N), critical incidents/ telling examples file, photographs, video and audio recordings, participant observations, diary notes and field notes from my Research Journal. Some of these sources will now be discussed in detail.

Focus Groups and discussions with teachers

Focus Groups as a method provide a vehicle for communication to occur in a social context where group members become research participants rather than mere research subjects. Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that focus groups can be "experienced as empowering- with the sharing of views meaning that people can realise they're not so isolated in their experience or perspective (p. 111). Focus groups can be structured or semi-structured where "the researcher has a list of questions but there is scope for the participants to raise issues that the researcher has not anticipated" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 78). The nature and the purpose of the group are likely to determine whether the group is structured or semi-structured. They generally take place in a relaxed and comfortable setting where conversation can flow freely (Hinds, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000).

During the seven months of constructing field texts, the teaching team and I had four recorded discussions (Table 8). As expected I also had numerous informal (unrecorded) conversations with the whole team, with teachers in pairs, or one-on-one. Notes of these conversations were made in my Research Journal at the time or soon after. The four recorded discussions were transcribed, and the transcripts were later made available to teachers via our shared research folder in Google docs for comments or amendments No written feedback was received, nor were changes formally requested on these transcripts by teachers.

Many of the incidents that occurred in relation to the research topic during the Reconnaissance and Intervention phases were revisited in depth by the teachers and me in these formal and informal conversations. The early meetings, whilst not recorded, helped to orient me to the kindergarten and its inhabitants, and set the scene for the research and its phases. Teachers shared their multiple perspectives on individual children and their meaning-making, and each of us shared stories of

our childhoods particularly around issues related to fairness and social justice, a passion we shared. Several teachers confessed to childhood acts of retribution based on their deep sense of fairness and justice; Jasmine described her attack on her brother with a roasting fork for some perceived injustice, while Kelsey spoke of cutting off her friend's pigtail in a fit of pique about some perceived unfairness that she had been the victim of.

The four recorded discussions with teachers took place on 28 May, 19 June, 14 August and 27 November 2014 (Table 8). The first recorded discussion involved an extensive conversation about the focus of the research and the research process itself while the fourth and final recorded discussion was held to evaluate our progress, that is to see what we had learned, and whether the teachers had developed a stronger understanding and development of their practices, and what changes had occurred. The Head Teacher (Jasmine) and two out of three of the permanent teachers (Grace and Kelsey) attended all four recorded discussions while one teacher (Davina) was absent from three of the recorded discussions due to family and other commitments. The Senior Teacher (Margaret) was only present at one of the recorded discussions, and unavailable for the rest.

Table 8: Recorded and transcribed discussions with teachers

Date 2014	Phase / Event	Teacher Participants	Agenda Items
28 May	Reconnaissance First recorded discussion	Jasmine, Grace, Kelsey, Davina	Appendix Q Problem/ Research Focus
19 June	Reconnaissance Second recorded discussion	Jasmine, Grace, Kelsey, Margaret	Appendix Q Including 'All of us were against Layla'
14 August	Intervention Third recorded discussion	Jasmine, Grace, Kelsey	Appendix Q Including 'No-one with brown faces'
27 November	Evaluation/Integration Fourth recorded discussion	Jasmine, Grace, Kelsey	Appendix R Evaluation

Teacher reflections about themselves and children

"The most important step in working with a diverse classroom is for the teacher to first examine his or her own attitudes about differences" (Walker Tilestone, 2010, p. 14). Early in the research, in keeping with this proposition, I asked teachers to

write an initial reflection about themselves, what fairness meant to them, how they came to this place, and why they wanted to be involved in the research (Individual Teacher Reflection One - Appendix N). The teachers also wrote reflections on several other occasions, at my request, on templates that I provided in relation to a critical incident involving Dylan - 'No-one with brown faces' (Individual Teacher Reflection Two - Appendix O), and after reviewing field texts related to individual focus children (Teacher Reflection - Appendix P). Following on from teachers' individual reflections about Dylan, conversations about focus children resulted in brief written summaries (reflections) that teachers completed in groups (when time and their work commitments permitted) with my involvement near the end of the research.

These reflections by teachers were consistent with one of the features of Participatory Action Research described earlier - namely that it is critical and recursive, and that participants are encouraged to be reflexive and dialectical in their thinking and their practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). In addition to being reflexive, as part of their teaching practice and ongoing registration as teachers (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, n.d.), teachers are expected to engage in ongoing reflection about their work. O'Connor and Diggins (2002) describe reflection identifying that, "reflection in action represents educators' immediate reflections in the teaching context" (p. 37). The teacher participants in this project were often seen reflecting-in-action, that is constantly 'thinking on their feet' throughout each kindergarten session in response to children's / parents/ and each other's immediate needs and interests. Our Action Research also saw us formally and informally reflecting-on-action before or after an event, and reflecting-for-action as we sought to plan, and act as part of the research cycles based on our looking and thinking (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002).

Parent whānau related field texts

Field texts relating to parents and whānau were constructed from various relevant sources: Parent/Whānau Questionnaire responses, Parent Focus Group transcript, participant observations, diary notes and field notes from my Research Journal, and excerpts from transcripts of recorded discussions with teachers where children's parents were discussed. Some of these sources will now be discussed in detail.

Parent Whānau Questionnaire

Children's parents and families' views were sought as part the research design based on the premise that children's values and subjectivities, their 'funds of knowledge' and 'virtual school bags', their dispositions and their working theories are formed mainly in the home - their primary microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parents and whānau became the third group of participants next to children and teachers in the interests of ecological validity – that is that the methods, materials and setting of the study approximate the real world that is being examined.

To answer Research Question 2 about children's explorations of fairness and difference, from the perspective of their families, a questionnaire was distributed. A sample questionnaire was piloted with several Year Three University of Waikato students who were parents of young children. They shared about their children's understandings about diversity and difference in relation to gender, ethnicity, skin colour and cultural difference. The student teachers' responses to the pilot questionnaire reinforced the value of two significant open-ended questions (Q.5 and Q.6):

> Q.5. What is the most surprising or unexpected thing your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family?
>
> Q.6. What is the most heart-warming thing your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family?

The sample questionnaire was amended slightly based on student feedback to make it clearer, and 'fairness' was added alongside 'difference' to the existing questions in keeping with the teachers' chosen focus for the Action Research.

On 19 August, I handed out thirty questionnaires (Appendix I) to parents, requesting that they fill them out, and return them to a large box prominently placed in the kindergarten foyer, within a three-week timeframe. The remaining thirteen questionnaires were handed out over the next week by the kindergarten administrator who also followed up with reminders to parents to return their completed questionnaires. The questionnaires were numbered 1-43 based on a list prepared by the kindergarten administrator, who included children's names, birth dates, and ticks to signify parental consent for children to participate in the research, accompanied by an envelope with the child's name on it. Note: One questionnaire

was not handed out as the child had left, hence there is still a response numbered 43 but there were only 42 questionnaires in the sample.

Parents were verbally offered the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire at home or fill it in with assistance from a teacher who would be available (with pen or tape recorder) for several days at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions specifically for this purpose. This formal offer of assistance was in response to teacher reports that several parents were known to be dyslexic or unable to read or write, despite being great verbal communicators. However, no-one took up this offer.

Over the following month 21 out of 42 questionnaires were returned. This response rate of (N= 21 - 50%) was pleasing and higher than anticipated. Unfortunately, no families, for whom English was an additional language, responded to the questionnaire. In hindsight, I could have been more proactive about getting questionnaires translated into relevant languages i.e. Tuvaluan and Punjabi for families. Questionnaires were returned by 6 out of the 8 focus children's families.

Parent Focus Group

A Parent Focus Group was held at the kindergarten on 26 November 2014. Jasmine, the Head Teacher and principal teacher-researcher, and I shared a concern that if an open invitation was proffered to all parents, we may end up with numerous participants, and lessen the effectiveness of this forum, as some focus groups can be too large to be effective (Cresswell, 2009). Therefore, we resolved to invite only the parents of the eight focus children (Table 7). To this effect, I left hand-written personalised invitations in the children's kindergarten notice pockets one week in advance of the proposed Parent Focus Group. I also wanted these parents to have the opportunity to make specific contributions about their own children given that the teachers and I had been having lengthy discussions about them over the past six months. Four parents (all women/ mothers) attended, three parents sent apologies for the meeting and one family did not respond.

The Parent Focus Group took place in a small back room at the kindergarten during the morning session, and involved six participants including Jasmine, the Head Teacher, and me. At the outset, participants were asked to supply details about themselves and their families on the Profile form (Appendix J). They also received

the proposed Outline for the Focus Group (Appendix K). To act as prompts and guide the discussion, I provided a series of vignettes (Appendix L), along with responses to questions 3 and 4 from the Parent Whānau Questionnaire that had been summarised, collated under themes, and anonymised. The relatively unstructured discussion flowed easily with interpersonal exchanges between me and Jasmine, acting as co-facilitators, and the children's mothers (participants). I audio-recorded and then transcribed the discussion that took place.

Introducing the analytical tools

Research texts were composed from field texts using an iterative process of analyses based mainly on an analytical tool (Table 9), and a supplementary tool (Table 10). I employed analytic coding, which implies an interpretative stance, with themes stemming from both literature and the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Specific concepts from feminist poststructural, and sociocultural theories were chosen to frame my analyses, alongside the construct of 'working theories' from *Te Whāriki*, the ECE curriculum (MoE, 1996, 2017). These 'concepts for analyses' and the body of literature related to working theories in the context of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand have been previously discussed (see Chapters 2 & 3).

My intention to see children's working theories about diversities such as gender and ethnicity through lenses focused on power/knowledge and dominant discourses led me to utilise these and several other concepts including performativity and subjectivities, derived from feminist poststructural theory, in addition to 'working theories' themselves. Key concepts discussed previously as part of the Theoretical Framework (Chapter 2) are set out in Table 9. These concepts from feminist poststructural and sociocultural theories are accompanied by guiding questions and categories which were used to support analyses. Complementary key concepts, that related specifically to teachers and working theories to provide an analytical framework to answer Research Question 3, are set out in Table 10 (on the following page).

Table 9: Analytical tool - concepts, guiding questions, and categories.

Concepts for analysis	Power	Dominant discourse(s)	Performativity Subjectivities	Working theories
	Foucault Power is everywhere	Gee (1996) Big 'D',	Butler (1990, 1999).	MoE (1996, 2017)
Guiding question	How/where can power be seen to be operating, operationalised or evident in this 'critical incident'/ 'telling example'?	What [meta-] discourses can be seen to be operating or evident in this 'critical incident'/ 'telling example'?	What ways of being, saying, doing, and performing are evident in this 'critical incident'/ 'telling example'?	What/ whose working theories are evident in this 'critical incident'/ 'telling example'?
Categories	Knowledge, narratives and counter - narratives	Relevant Discourse e.g. empowerment deficit normativity stereotypes whiteness superiority otherness	Ways of being e.g. gender i.e. femininity, masculinity, gender 'diverse' identities	Working theories about the fairness, friendship, gender/sex/sexuality, race, ethnicity, skin colour

Table 10: Supplementary Analytical tool - concepts, guiding questions, and categories

Themes for analysis	Teaching Strategies	Voicing	Risk
Guiding question	How do teachers handle children's working theories?	How do teachers value and give voice to children's working theories?	What is possibly at risk if the teacher was to 'unpack' children's working theories?
Categories	Not supply direct answers, respond to, extend, complicate (Hedges 2011) disrupt, provide spaces for uncertainty (Peters and Davis 2011)	Refute, validate, appreciate (Alasuutari 2014) reify, make public (Wenger 1998)	For example: relationships, kindergarten rules, the teacher's role, 'correct' understandings of issues in the natural/social world)

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Field texts

The field texts constructed in relation to children's working theories revealed various themes, many of them overlapping and interrelated. Being a friend and its links to acts of kindness, and being empathetic relate to inclusion, whereas telling tales and not being fair are related to exclusion and rejection. Other themes included being a boy, being a girl, being nearly five, and resisting adults. There is a strong association between these themes and the discourses that children are 'caught up in' about 'identity' such as a learner, being a boy/ a girl, and one of the big kids (i.e. an all-day kindergartener/a near five-year-old) (Carr, 1997; Stephenson, 2009b).

Answering the research questions in a systematic way, meant that I reviewed the field texts (entire data-set) generated over the research period May-November 2014. First, I organised relevant information from my Research Journal, video and audio recording transcripts, photographs, Learning Stories, 'critical incidents', and teacher reflections about individual 'focus' children into a chart where the children's names were on the horizontal axis at the top, and a brief description of the field texts appeared in blocks in the column relevant to each child. An example of how field texts were organised follows (Table 11).

Table 11: Example of Field text organisation

Child's Name: **Ruby**	
Mixing pronouns/ policing Felix's behaviour	Transcript of first recorded discussion with teachers, 28 May 2014
Friends don't do that	Learning Story (JK) 29 July 2014
Photographs - numbers and dates corresponding to her	
Teacher Reflection - 26 November 2014	

Second, I tried to roughly code the field texts using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative research method "for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79; Boyatzis, 1998). These authors describe thematic analysis stages and coding in their latest text (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

> 1. Transcription 2. Reading and familiarisation; taking note of items of particular interest 3. Coding - complete; across entire data-set
> 4. Searching for themes 5. Reviewing themes (Producing a map of provisional themes and subthemes and relationships between them - aka the 'thematic map' 6. Defining and naming 7. Writing - finalising analysis (pp. 202-203).

I considered what I had referred to in each of the blocks in the column under each focus child's name and organised these entries into various categories. On a new chart, I noted common themes and labelled these (see example in Table 12).

Table 12: Common themes

Thematic analysis - common themes
rejection/exclusion; being a boy/girl; being a friend; being empathetic/ acts of kindness; not being fair/being mean or unkind; and resisting adults.

As a precursor to processes of analyses being discussed, Table 13 outlines the volume of field texts constructed over seven months (May to November 2014). The mosaic of methods used to construct field texts was described in Table 5 under separate headings for each group of participants – child-related field texts, teacher-related field texts, and parent whānau-related field texts. Therefore, the purpose of Table 13 table is to show the magnitude of the material generated by the teachers and me, and provide an audit trail (Thomson, 14 August 2014). Appendix M identifies key field texts that were generated on each of the ten visits, and Table 7 sets out when recorded and transcribed discussions with teachers.

Table 13: Field texts - Entire 'data-set' [41]
Research Diary (220 pages - 2014)
Critical incidents / Telling examples file (14 entries)
21 Questionnaires
22 Learning Stories, learning notes, snippets - Assessment documentation
150 Photographs organised into a Research Visual Diary
Children - Video/audio recordings (12) - and several transcripts
Teachers - Recorded transcribed discussions (4)
Parents - Focus Group (1) - transcript
Individual Teacher Reflection One and Two (7)
Teacher Reflections on Focus children (6)
All about Me - Parent documentation about focus children (5)
Wall displays images (x 5 sets)

[41] Numbers are approximate, and not all field texts have been discussed in this thesis due to the sheer volume of them, and the decisions to identify 'focus children' and highlight 'critical incidents', 'telling examples' and vignettes that generally relate to these focus children, and best illustrate the various themes that emerged.

During my time at the kindergarten, the teachers and I discussed the most significant incidents that occurred especially those that ended up being labelled ‘critical incidents’ or ‘telling examples’. Whilst the teachers’ time to engage directly with the research was limited, they were able to shed light on many situations and participants, based on their deep knowledge of children and the children’s families. In many cases, some, if not all, of the teachers had previously taught siblings of children currently enrolled at Beech Kindergarten.

Composing and reading the research texts

The field texts generated between May and November 2014 by me (the principal researcher) and the teachers were analysed using inductive and recursive processes,

- several analytical tools (Table 9 & Table 10) comprised of concepts, guiding questions, and categories
- field texts turned into research texts to be read multiple times and from multiple perspectives and subject positions within discourses (Bird & Drewery, 2000; Claiborne & Drewery, 2010; 2014)
- thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of field texts that included critical incidents/telling examples related to eight ‘focus children’
- frequency analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) to identify and categorise responses to specific questions from Parent Whānau Questionnaire
- the 4 research questions themselves.

Learning Stories were organised into categories, some of which fitted into more than one category, for example in ‘A place for everyone’ - Learning story dated 19 August 2014 (Appendix U), Jack experienced rejection/exclusion from his peers when the hut was full, he expressed his hurt, then he immediately helped Felix onto the swing - an act of kindness. Hence this episode appeared under both categories - ‘exclusion/rejection’ and ‘being empathetic/acts of kindness’. Whereas other episodes like the transcript entitled ‘Marriage, babies and kissing’ had no obvious match in terms of existing themes as it was more sophisticated than ‘being a boy/girl’ or ‘being a friend’. Rather, this conversation transcript fitted under the category of gender/sex/sexuality and is discussed in Chapter 7 - What’s he doing that for? He’s a boy.

Ethical considerations

This research involved the participation of human subjects. Any research involving humans needs to be ethically sound. This protects the participants from harm and adds validity and robustness to the project. Hence, prior to this research being undertaken, ethical approval was sought (EDU 108/13) and received The University of Waikato, Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee on 19 December 2013.

Access to participants

Teachers are leaders within the community where the research took place, therefore, this Participatory Action Research project was seen as an extension of their everyday teaching activity. They had ready access to participants, and together we invited children, parents and whānau from their kindergarten community to participate in the project. This made it even more important that teachers were aware of their rights, and the rights of other participants to withdraw, decline, or dissent from participating without reprisal or risk. As such, teachers were briefed in ethical procedures and their relationship to the university at the initial meeting on 14 May 2014. I was also aware of the potential for coercion in methods where groups are videoed as part of the kindergarten curriculum (for example group times or staff meetings) and reiterated the concepts of 'consent', 'assent' and 'right of withdrawal' throughout the project, and included discussion of these concepts in the initial briefing. Strategies for dealing with participants who wished to withdraw from the research were carefully explained in the information sheets and consent forms (see Appendices E, and F), with an assurance that there would be no negative repercussions for them, their child, or their kindergarten experience.

Informed consent

Informed consent (assent in the case of children) was sought from all participants for their engagement with the project (see Appendices C, E, G & H). Teachers distributed the information sheet (Appendix F) and the consent and assent forms (Appendix G & Appendix H) on The University of Waikato letterhead to families/community members and/or children. Teachers took responsibility for the collection of consent/ assent forms at the outset of the project and on an ongoing basis as new families/children enrolled at the kindergarten.

Teachers were fully briefed on all aspects of the recruitment and consent process by the researcher at the initial meeting on 14 May 2014. Special attention was given to issues of assent and dissent where children's participation was invited.

Confidentiality

All participants had the opportunity to view and review any field texts that involved them. As such participants had the right to withdraw any material they did not wish to be included in the project. At no time did anyone correct or amend their transcripts. Hence, no field texts were deleted from the record. Due to the nature of visual 'data' being employed, neither confidentiality nor anonymity was possible unless specifically requested. One such request related to a child whose parents specifically requested that he not be involved in the research hence visual material concerning the child was deleted when he was accidentally appeared in several photographs. Teachers, parents and whānau who were present in video footage were made aware that their contributions could be neither confidential nor anonymous. Consent forms and information sheets made this explicit for all participants (see Appendices B, C, D, and E).

Teachers, parents and children were all offered the opportunity to choose pseudonyms for themselves, or their child. As most participants did not take up this offer, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to everyone involved in the project. It is possible that the kindergarten will be identifiable to the early childhood professional community because of the knowledge within and beyond the project. This was made clear in information sheets where it also stated that every effort will be made to report the project and findings anonymously.

Potential harm to participants

The aim of the research was to identify practices which contributed to inclusive responses to diversity, and effective pedagogy (teaching and learning) around diversity and difference. There was also a goal of promoting greater reflexivity and positive actions among children and teachers to redress unfairness and injustice. Hence, participants stood to benefit during the research, and in the future from the research. However, there was the possibility of revealing or encountering issues that could be harmful to the participants because of the intense nature of involvement of the researcher in the research site over an extended period, and the reflexive and reflective journaling that teachers engaged in.

It was important to have the trust of the participants so that when field texts were being constructed, they would feel comfortable and at ease. This issue was revisited in detail at the fourth and final recorded discussion with teachers on 27 November 2014. The risk of exposure and embarrassment to the participants is potentially high especially when their values, beliefs and/ or teaching were under scrutiny by themselves and their peers. To ensure participants are not exposed to undue risk the reporting of the research has been anonymised, and reporting will continue in a manner that preserves participants' confidentiality rights in the public domain. While ECE is a small community and the kindergarten may possibly be identified, pseudonyms are being used for individual participants within this thesis. Every care has been, and will continue to be, taken to ensure that participants are shown in a positive light using 'appreciative inquiry' (Chapman & Giles, 2009), and 'credit based assessment' in the case of children and the documentation of their learning (Carr, 2001).

All efforts were made to minimise disruption to participants' time. Interviews and opportunities for on-going dialogue took place outside of session times and/ or at times and places that suited the participants concerned. I taught in the place of one teacher each afternoon during my research visits in Term Three to help mitigate the teachers' loss of time for non-contact duties.

Participants' right to decline to participate and right to withdraw

Parents, teachers, and children from the kindergarten were invited to participate (Appendices B & E). There was no pressure to be involved and no coercion took place. The design of this project meant that it was possible for some children at Beech Kindergarten not to be involved. All participants had the right to withdraw from the project up until they had checked and approved transcripts of the group interviews, and assessment documentation written by the researcher, by advising the researcher - either verbally or in writing. Children, parents and whānau had the right to decline the use of any documentation in relation to their (child's) learning.

Transparency/ reflexivity

Transcripts of interviews used in the project were returned to the teacher participants for 'member checking' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp. 282-283) sometimes belatedly. Emails to Beech Kindergarten setting throughout the project kept the participants informed, and the teachers kept the wider community informed

through their regular newsletter. Dissemination to the wider community began taking place through presentations at various conferences and journal articles (Appendix B & Appendix W). I sent the two draft articles, and final versions to the teachers before and after publication, only receiving feedback from one teacher. I was careful in the article Kelly-Ware (2016) to clarify that the analysis presented, based on feminist poststructural perspectives (Appendix W), was my own and not the teachers, and she concurred. These were perspectives that I knew she did not wholly support.

Any possible conflicts of interest were discussed with participants by the researcher before the on-site research began. A disputes procedure was outlined where in the first instance potential disputes could be resolved through discussions with me, and if unresolved at this stage then disputes could be referred to my PhD supervisors. This procedure was outlined in the Information sheets (Appendices B & E).

Knowledge, truth, and credibility as an alternative to reliability and validity

Contrary to traditional positivist research approaches, research founded on poststructural and feminist theories does not lead to certainty, or universal outcomes, nor can the outcomes be reproduced in other settings. The reasons behind these claims centre on 'truth' and 'knowledge' claims.

> Making knowledge claims is a social and political process that is dependent on its conditions of production. There can never be one enduring truth about the nature of social reality that is independent of how the knowledge of it is produced so feminists need other ways of thinking (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004, p. 57).

These key ontological ideas are relevant to this Participatory Action Research project since it is informed by feminist and poststructural theory. According to Louise Taylor (2013) definitive answers are unlikely to be found, as findings will likely highlight "the multiple, contradictory, and obscure, rather than provide definitive answers" (p. 12). Taylor (2013) also describes how poststructural theories that underpin this form of Action Research lead to particular ways of thinking about knowledge that is produced. "Knowledge is presented as partial and contingent and therefore validity of truth statements becomes problematic; the emphasis instead becomes rigour and trustworthiness (p. 12).

Denzin (1997) describes how postmodern critique questions the possibility of capturing the 'truth' in the interpretation, recognising that the 'reality' presented can only ever be "a construction, one of many possible slices or images of reality" (p. 42). Therefore, I have deliberately tried to avoid over-using the term 'findings' as I am mindful that someone other than me, another researcher or even one of the teachers, could read the field texts created by me and/or the teachers in different ways based on the theoretical perspectives and individual subjectivities that they might bring to the project, leading to different conclusions.

In feminist and poststructural, qualitative, interpretivist research, a number of traditional research expectations have different understandings associated with them, and are viewed differently from positivist research. For example, validity has different criteria associated with it. What is valid depends on the question and who is asking it - their values, subjectivities and the lens that they bring. During analyses in this research study, field texts were turned into research texts and read multiple times, from multiple perspectives, and from various subject positions within discourses. In some cases multiple readings of the text are presented for the reader. The longer-term processes of analyses of field texts were also my prerogative as was the final thesis, and the teachers' co-researcher status was nominal in terms of the final written result. Hence, from a poststructural research perspective, issues of credibility along with rigour and trustworthiness become central in the place of 'validity'.

Mutch (2013) argues that "in qualitative design [research] you need to convince the reader that your study is trustworthy and credible" (p. 109). She describes credibility as "where qualitative research aims for rigour and believability as an alternative to validity and reliability" (p. 3) and later as,

> *credibility* means that you have used some way of ensuring that your findings resonate with those in, or who are familiar with, the case or setting. One common technique is *triangulation*, where you use more than one data source, data-gathering technique, or researcher to give other perspectives of the case or setting. Another technique is *member checking*, where you return your transcripts, field notes, data analyses, or findings to the participants to see if they fit within their understandings of the phenomena or situation (p. 110).

Paying attention to multiple perspectives, and avoiding meta-narratives (Davies, 1999), the challenge in writing up this thesis was to find ways to capture the ambiguity and complexity. Triangulation involved a range of participants - teachers, children and their families, using a 'mosaic' range of methods, referring to a range of sources about the same example or incident or child, and returning transcripts to participants for checking. These were ways of giving credibility (Pole & Morrison, 2003) to the data-set, and helping to convey some of the complexity.

In keeping with Mutch's (2013) description of *trustworthiness*, as the researcher I "clearly documented the research decisions, the research design, data-gathering and data-analysis techniques and demonstrated an ethical approach" (p. 109) as previously described in this chapter (Chapter 4).

Generalisability and transferability

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe that generalisability, that is whether a study can be generalised from one context to others, has been 'hotly debated'. I concur with Stephenson (2009b), who stated in her doctoral thesis that "the argument for generalisability or (more appropriately) transferability in this thesis derives from the intention to highlight common practices and assumptions, rather than details unique to the context" (p. 97). Like Stephenson, my extensive professional experience in the sector helped in making this distinction.

Mutch (2013) also argues, "…because of the nature of qualitative research, it is not possible for someone to replicate your study and achieve similar results. The point is that you want each of your cases or participants to represent themselves, and although you might see parallels with other cases, you are not setting out to generalize your findings to a broader population. Your readers still need to be sure, however, that they can trust your processes and believe your findings" (p. 109).

Mazzei and Jackson (2012) trouble or problematise 'voice' from a research perspective. Following their work, I see that the participants in this thesis are not representing themselves, they are being represented by me in keeping with the stories that are being told herein. Mazzei and Jackson (2012) suggest that when researchers select data from interviews, deciding what to highlight, and what to ignore, it is not appropriate to then present the findings uncritically or naively as 'letting the participants speak for themselves' (p. 746) or in my case as 'the voices

of the children/ teachers/parents'. Mazzei and Jackson (2009, 2012) argue that the researcher's worldviews shaped by multiple identities and subjectivities, determine why certain choices are made about what to include and what to leave out in relation to generating data, analyses and writing up the thesis' findings/discussion sections. Filtering likely occurs in terms of which voices were highlighted or given primacy, and which voices were downplayed or even left out, contingent on particular ways of seeing, knowing, and doing, and the story/stories being told.

Hence, while the research presented in this study will involve a series of findings, they will not be findings per se in a conventional sense as I am seeking to disrupt usual meanings and present different possible interpretations in keeping with the critical and poststructural theories that frame the study. Rather, this thesis contains a story line that is interpretive based on a selective and thematic collection of narratives from a kindergarten community that illustrate how fairness and diversity were being negotiated in the lives of children, families, and teachers from multiple perspectives.

Summary

This chapter described the research project, beginning with the methodology, proposed phases and timeframe. Teacher participants were introduced, and the timing of our recorded discussions noted. Ethnicities of children on the kindergarten roll at 1 May 2014 who participated in the research were represented, and the eight children identified as 'focus children' were introduced. The third group of participants was identified as parents and whānau of the children at Beech Kindergarten.

The mosaic of research methods used in the process of constructing field texts was noted in relation to each group of participants (Table 5)[42]. The process of composing research texts was explained, and the Analytical tool and Supplementary tool were introduced (Table 9 & Table 10). Common themes that emerged from reviewing field texts related to focus children were identified (Table 12) and the entire data-set was itemised in categories (Table 13). Finally, a range of ethical considerations were discussed specific to this action research project informed by feminist

[42] The visit schedule and field texts generated in relation to critical incidents and telling examples is recorded in Appendix K.

poststructural theory, including confidentiality, informed consent, participants' rights and trustworthiness and credibility.

Looking forward

Looking forward, the discussion chapters that follow (Chapters 5 - 8) focus on pedagogy related to specific aspects of diversity linked to fairness. A series of critical incidents or 'telling examples' related to focus and other children are discussed using concepts described in Chapter 2, and central to the Analysis Framework (Table 9) and Supplementary Analysis Framework (Table 10) described in Chapter 4. The discussion relates to key themes that emerged from reading the field texts and composing research texts.

Vignettes related to two issues - fairness and friendship - that children are keenly interested in have been selected for discussion in Chapter 5. Multiple perspectives of children, teachers, parents and whānau, and me as a participant observer are explored in an attempt to shed light on teaching and learning about fairness and friendship in children's social worlds - the kindergarten, and their homes and families.

CHAPTER 5:
‘IS THIS PLACE FAIR FOR US?’ FAIRNESS AND FRIENDSHIP

Introduction

This chapter presents a ‘discussion of findings’ related to fairness. This concept has been described as ‘one of the pillars of childhood’, and fundamental to four year olds (Paley, 1986). “Young children are very attuned to social justice and equity” (Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016, p. 196). The chapter responds to all four research questions and is structured in sections with each section focussing on a ‘critical incident’ (Tripp, 1993, 1996) or ‘telling example’ (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1983, 1984) epitomising this chapter’s focus. The focus on fairness and friendship is filtered through the perspectives of children (including ‘focus’ children - Layla, Ruby, and Jack) alongside teachers and families.

Teachers’ voices are interwoven with critical incidents or telling examples about children theorising about friendship and fairness. Teachers’ voices were evident in the few Learning Stories they wrote highlighting children’s learning in this socially valued area. Additionally, teachers’ voices emerge in excerpts from transcripts of recorded discussions where children’s understandings about friendship and fairness were discussed. Parent voices where relevant to this chapter’s topic are also included from Parent Whānau Questionnaire responses, and the Parent Focus Group transcript. Under each section, a commentary involves researcher reflections and reading/possible readings from sociocultural and feminist poststructural perspectives where relevant. Children’s theorising is related to relevant literature and this research project’s analytical tools i.e. constructs of power/knowledge, identities and subjectivities, and dominant discourses from the analysis framework (Table 9, Chapter 4). Supplementary concepts that relate specifically to working theories - voicing and teaching strategies (Table 10, Chapter 4) are sometimes evident in the analyses presented throughout the chapter.

The title of this chapter was adapted from a conceptual framework called the ‘child’s questions’ developed by Podmore, May & Carr (2001; Carr, May, Podmore, Cubey, Hatherly, & Macartney, 2002). Five questions make up this framework that encourages teachers to look, see, listen, and hear from a child’s

perspective. The child's questions are linked to the strands of *Te Whāriki*, (MoE, 1996, 2017). Each question that children might ask corresponds with a strand of the curriculum. 'Is this place fair for me/us?' is the Mana Tangata Contribution strand question, and I have used it as the title of this chapter because it specifically relates to fairness and friendship. Throughout the examples and incidents that follow, children's voices, and their attunement to concepts of fairness, justice, equity, and friendship are highly evident. Adult viewpoints add other perspectives to children's understandings of fairness, inclusion and exclusion in their peer relations.

Drawn from the field texts constructed during the research process, telling examples or critical incidents are now presented in sections. The first section introduces Layla, one of the focus children as the central character. The section title 'All of us were against Layla' comes from a comment one of the teachers made about her. In the second section, Ruby, another of the focus children, and Sachin, her friend and regular play partner, have a misunderstanding during their play. During the ensuing dialogue, Sachin expresses his working theory about friendship saying 'Friends don't do that' hence the title of this section. The third section involves a picturebook read aloud one mat-time by Grace, one of the teachers. Vignettes written about Gabriel, and then Jack (another focus child) take their titles from two Learning Stories where I described these children's individual responses to the story. "This house is for everyone" was a line of dialogue in a picturebook, and 'Does hair colour make a difference?' relates to Jack's attempt to seemingly distance himself from the red-haired boy in the same picturebook.

'All of us were against Layla!'

Fairness mattered to everyone at Beech Kindergarten. Early in the Reconnaissance phase of our research, Margaret, the Senior Teacher, precipitated this focus. Margaret visited the kindergarten in her professional capacity on a day that I was not present, and spent the morning observing. She identified a narrative based on perceived 'unfairness' by teachers and a few children towards Layla. Layla, who was only 3 years old at the time, was tall for her age, and a feisty, boisterous child. Allegedly, Layla's 'hair raising behaviour' was intense and unpredictable, involving rule-breaking, aggression and disruption (Brennan, 2007, 2016). She found sitting quietly, sharing, and following directions difficult. Layla often

snatched and hit to get what she wanted. Layla became one of the focus children as she appeared many times in the field texts constructed during the research. Margaret had directly observed teachers responding to Layla's behaviour that they found challenging. She identified that teachers often jumped to the conclusion that Layla was the instigator before checking to see if that was the case. They were seen to repeatedly call out her name from a distance when they wanted her to stop what she was doing or pay attention. Teachers sometimes had a tone in their voice when talking to or about Layla, and on occasion rolled their eyes at each other about her behaviour. Their unethical and inequitable treatment of Layla likely contributed to the reputation that Layla gained among her peers at that time, in their estimation. Possibly, it was a deficit discourse of 'naughty child' that caused teachers' actions, and was seen to negatively affect Layla, and other children (Russell Bishop, 2012).

Margaret's feedback about how the teachers were responding 'unethically' to Layla's behaviour illuminated the situation for them. The narrative became seen as a critical incident, putting fairness squarely on our research agenda. This professional feedback from Margaret, their highly respected Senior Teacher, made the teachers appreciate what they had been oblivious to, or taken for granted. Teaching practices were illuminated that were inconsistent with the dominant discourse of 'good teaching'. This feedback provoked teachers to reconsider their teaching strategies including body language, and being fair and equitable to children at all times.

During the second recorded discussion with teachers (19 June 2014) where Margaret was also present, Layla was a 'hot topic'; her name appears 45 times in the transcript. Jasmine, the Head Teacher, reported on the team's reflections about their responses to Layla. Their behaviour, and the flow-on effect created with children had been a revelation to them, and they responded quickly to address the issues Margaret had raised. Jasmine described the team recognising synergies between their expressed desire to improve their teaching practices individually and as a team, and broadening the Action Research focus from diversity and difference to include equity and fairness. Margaret's feedback was a catalyst for the teachers to think more deeply about equity and fairness as excerpts from the discussion transcript show. Such a focus accorded with the team's proposed revisioning of

their kindergarten philosophy alongside responding to their multi-ethnic and linguistically diverse kindergarten community.

Jasmine: As a team, we were thinking if we were looking at improving or changing practice[43] then the stuff around equity and fairness is probably pretty big on our agendas for all sorts of reasons. The social practices stuff…

Margaret: I think that sits really well with (reading Research Question 4, from Teachers Information Sheet - See Appendix D) "How might teachers promote an inclusive response to diversity?"

Grace: Yeah, then it says "…by supporting children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences?"

Jasmine: We were talking about diversity as the [Action Research] focus, thinking we have children with English as an additional language. But here we are talking about children's perceptions of others. So, if we talked about Layla for example, and how other children view her at the moment, that's really impacting on the way she behaves, and how we have been behaving. And, since we had Margaret here last week it has been bothering us eh?

Murmurs of agreement

Jasmine: Quite a few children perceive her [Layla] as 'the naughty child', and she gets blamed a lot. How might we change that? Margaret rightfully talked to us about how often she [Layla] is doing things that are 'hair-raising'. But what's our tone of voice? And what messages are the children getting from us? So, we are making this really concerted effort, just being conscious about how we are responding to her and approaching her differently. There has been quite a big turnaround already.

Grace: All of us were against Layla! The teachers, the children; everybody was down on Layla.

Murmurs of agreement

[43] This statement comes from a quote "Action Research seeks to change or improve social practice" (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009), that I had included on Notes for Meeting that I emailed to teachers.

Margaret: Everybody agreed that she was a pain (Laughter).

(Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014).

Much talk followed these comments about the kindergarten being a microcosm of society, and teachers wanting to be 'good teachers' - a dominant discourse (MacNaughton, 2000). Murmurs of agreement followed Grace's summary of the team position:

> In terms of improving our social practice, I think I can speak for everybody when I say we've all felt really challenged, humbled, and sombred (sic) by the whole Layla situation, and how much we have, may have, contributed towards that. Personally, I have been in to my Mary Poppins teaching toolkit bag and I fell short with how to support her. It has been really useful to talk about how we all felt as a team, how individual stories came together to form this collective picture
>
> (Grace, Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014).

Following this meeting, the teaching team had a renewed focus on challenging bias or unfairness within the kindergarten environment. They also had a fresh approach to interacting with Layla, a counter to the previous narrative where their actions had likely contributed to Layla's reputation as 'the naughty child'.

Addressing 'fairness and equity' became the specific focus in our Action Research within the broader topic of diversity and difference. During the recorded discussion, we discussed self-reflective spirals or cycles associated with Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, 2005). Whilst the teachers agreed that 'Look, Think, Plan and Act', or 'Preparing, Gathering, Making Sense and Deciding' (MoE, 2006) would be useful steps to apply to situations like the one involving Layla, they regarded systematic 'data-generation' per se as unrealistic from their perspectives. They argued that there was little time and space for additional work, as they had 45 children on the roll[44] and they were stretched to capacity already (Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014). They were keen to proceed but clear with me that they needed to prioritise their everyday commitments around teaching, and family and community involvement, over my doctoral research.

[44] The maximum roll number was 40. However, some children who only attended part-time, shared full-time places bringing the total to 45.

Teachers described how ‘reflecting-in-action’ (in the moment) was their ‘modus operandi’ rather than ‘reflecting-on-action’ (retrospectively) or ‘reflecting-for-action’ (future-focussed) (O’Connor & Diggins, 2002). Nonetheless, they were mindful that their ways of acting towards Layla, when they found her behaviour challenging, had resulted from fresh eyes alerting them to the situation. The team’s retrospective and future-focused thinking was leading to them acting differently with Layla. When other children [wrongfully] blamed Layla for various misdemeanours, the teachers responded differently. Their conscious and overt messaging to, and about, Layla had changed. Now they saw their role as helping Layla to develop her sense of belonging, and learn the rules at Beech Kindergarten (Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014).

This recent spotlight on Layla caused me to keep her in my sights during my visits to the kindergarten, from my vantage point as a participant-observer. Akin to Jeff, one of the case study children in another research study (Carr et al., 2009), Layla “never seemed to fail in gaining adult attention from the early childhood teachers; they were very responsive to [her] demands, even though they found [her] trying at times” (p. 115). The teachers’ repeated censuring of Layla’s behaviour that they found challenging, had caused her to develop a ‘reputation’ that often preceded her. Layla was often blamed by her peers for things she did not do, and this phenomenon sometimes occurred when Layla was absent from kindergarten. Layla’s behaviour which was challenging to teachers, and their negative reactions to it had likely exacerbated Layla’s reputation. Children observed teachers’ reactions and because it was a repeated pattern, the reactions were intensified (Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014). I wonder if Layla had been smaller, or a boy, or if these teachers had had more experience teaching toddlers[45], might some of her aggressive behaviour been more acceptable, or seen differently by the teachers and children at Beech Kindergarten.

The nine field texts involving Layla provided examples of her interests in dress-ups, creativity, and leadership, and her close ‘bossy’ friendships with Felix and

[45] Special characteristics of toddlers (MoE, 1996) include: “Toddlers are energetic and on the move…Toddlers’ feelings are intense and unpredictable…Toddlers are impulsive and can lack self-control…Toddlers learn with their whole body and learn by doing rather than being told (p.23).

Caitlyn (two other focus children). There is evidence of her ongoing working theories about friendship and fairness/ unfairness, resisting adults and breaking the rules. There are also examples where her 'reputation' is possibly behind the phenomenon of other children, especially Felix, telling tales on her, alongside her bossing Felix around and being unkind to him.

'Parent / Whānau Voice'

Following on from teachers' perspectives, I was interested in other perspectives. For example, how did Layla's parents' perceive her ways of being, and theorising about the social world? Teachers directed me to her Profile book where the opening page contained a 'Parent/Whānau Voice' template[46] called "All about Layla". Headings prompt families to record specific information about their child. Early on in their relationship with Layla, the teaching team had access to a range of information about her, from her parents/ whānau, as Layla's form recorded:

- Your child's talents, gifts, and strengths – 'dress-ups and role play, writing, drawing, and painting, kapa haka and singing';
- Families' dream for your child while they are at kindergarten – 'to be a happy, confident, and independent little girl. Have fun playing and learning about herself and the world around her through play'; and
- Fears or concerns for your child – 'I know that Layla is very assertive and headstrong. We would like Layla to know boundaries and respect them. She responds well to strong adult modelling'

(Source: Photograph - Research File, 22 July 2014).

Layla's responses to diversity and fairness can be seen in their responses to the Parent Whānau Questionnaire. In response to Question 5 - What is the most heart-warming thing your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family? Layla's family responded, 'Really cuddle and embrace someone when that person has influenced her in a positive way.' In answer to Question 6 - What is the most surprising or unexpected thing your child has ever

[46] At Beech Kindergarten, and in other ECE settings, teachers actively seek parent perspectives on children around the time of their enrolment. Each child's Profile book included a template on which families had shared about their child, giving teachers valuable insights into beginning a relationship with the child.

said or done about someone who is different from you and your family? they described how she 'pointed and laughed at a man with a full facial moko[47]. The man laughed and pointed back at her'. (Response 27 - Layla). These responses relate to Research Question 2 which asked how families describe, encourage, and respond to children's explorations of diversity and fairness?

More about Layla

Much happened following the teacher conversation when Layla was the prime topic of conversation (19 June 2014). At that time, Layla was not yet four years old. Over the next five months of the research, Layla's social competencies developed in keeping with her increasing maturity, and chronological age. The teachers worked intentionally "with Layla to find her place in the kindergarten, for example coming to her defence and finding interests to engage her" (Teachers' staff meeting notes, Research Diary, 19 June 2014). Layla's sense of belonging developed and she gradually learnt "the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour" at Beech Kindergarten (MoE, 1996, p. 15). This teaching and learning was consistent with her parents' aspirations expressed around the time of her enrolment. Often, Layla was seen adhering to the agreed group norms i.e. 'be safe and kindly', 'have gentle hands', 'use kind words' as described in the Kindergarten Treaty (Figure 1). Two photographs taken in August and September 2014 show her 'being kindly' by writing other children's names on the board for a turn on the swings, and sharing her umbrella with Gina and Dylan (another focus child). Over time, Layla could also be seen developing the skills, attitudes and knowledge related to the *Te Whāriki* Learning Outcomes under the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2, Chapter 1).

Alfie's dinosaur and the master helper - Learning Story

Surprisingly, from the nine field texts composed about Layla during the research, teachers had only documented one of them in Layla's Profile book. Kelsey wrote a Learning Story entitled 'Alfie's dinosaur and the master helper' where she described Layla helping Alfie to make a large dinosaur using paper mâché. Layla's great concentration and absorption in the creative project were reified and

[47] Moko - tattoo

celebrated, along with her perseverance, and her leadership skills. The final affirmation reads, "Layla, you have grown in so many areas that we are all proud of you. Even Mum says that you have become an amazing helper. Tino pai[48] babe" (Learning Story by Kelsey, November 2014). This Learning Story (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012) was a noteworthy addition to Layla's Profile book for several reasons including her progress and dispositional learning. This credit-based assessment documentation supported Layla's developing learner identity in terms of her skills, attitudes and dispositions; highlighting what learning was valued in this place (Appendix A).

Commentary

'All of us were against Layla!' was a critical incident that occurred during the Reconnaissance phase of the research. Layla's appearances in the field texts were read as Layla having working theories about the social world, and expressing them through her ways of being (Research Question 1). This expression was evident in her peer relationships - including and excluding others; friendship; fairness and unfairness; with the Kindergarten Treaty, the agreed code of conduct (Figure 1); and with 'the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour' (MoE, 1996, p. 15) at Beech Kindergarten.

Following the teachers' realisation that 'all of us were against Layla', they looked for ways to promote an inclusive response to diversity among children by supporting them to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences (Research Question 4). From my perspective, Layla's 'perceived differences' included that she was of Māori / European ethnicity, and despite being the second youngest of the focus children, Layla was tall for her age. I suspect that she was likely mistaken for older than she was, leading to higher expectations of her behaviour. Like the other three- and four-year-old children at Beech Kindergarten, Layla was engaged in identity work. Her multiple identities and subjectivities, her biological sex, and her gender performances were identified in the various descriptions of her: an 'assertive and headstrong' girl ('Parent Whānau

[48] Tino pai – Well done / Good one!

Voice'); 'the naughty child' (Jasmine describing Layla's labelling by her peers); and 'a pain' with 'hair-raising' behaviour (Margaret, their Senior Teacher).

The teachers provoked and responded to Layla's working theories [and their own] about the social world (Research Question 3) in relation to the various strands of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). For example, in relation to Mana Whenua Belonging - 'working with Layla to find her place in the kindergarten'; Mana Tangata Contribution especially fairness - 'coming to her defence' questioning 'how much we have, may have contributed to her reputation' and taking ownership 'I fell short with how to support her'; and Mana Aotūroa Exploration when they discussed 'finding interests to engage her' (Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014).

Fairness and justice

Fairness and justice mattered to the children at Beech Kindergarten. These everyday topics featured in children's interactions during their play, as they did for children involved in the 'learning in the making' research project (Carr et al., 2009). Jeff, a young boy with a keen sense of social justice, was one of the case study children in their study. Jeff's interactions with his peers are described in ways that are consistent with children's learning at Beech Kindergarten, where children "came to accept the norms of the group about fairness and justice (such as that it was important to share and to take into account the views of others)" (Carr et al., 2009, p. 113). Children's perceptions of fairness, as well as inclusion and exclusion, were often discussed by teachers during our research, for example in our first discussion, Jasmine said,

> We were wondering about that conversation we had about what's fair - it started with the sandpit stuff, but it happens every day. We have these conversations with children about what they perceive as fairness: Whose turn is it? Who's ok and who's not ok? Who can be there and who can't?
>
> (Transcript of first recorded discussion, 28 May 2014).

Next, I discuss several vignettes, drawn from the field texts from a range of perspectives. These telling examples or critical incidents were documented in the form of Learning Stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012) by the researcher to address the research questions particularly Research Question One. This assessment

documentation also provided a visual and written record, making visible "knowledge, learning processes, ideas, relationships and expressions" for children and their families (Sparrman & Lindgren, 2010, p. 249).

In the vignettes that follow, children's theorising about fairness and friendship is exemplified. The first vignette in this section of Chapter 5 'Friends don't do that' and one of the two vignettes about a picturebook 'This house is our house', have featured previously in a journal article (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016). Together, my Swedish colleague and I sought to explore power relations involved in pedagogy around children's working theories. Our focus in the article was primarily on power in terms of teachers' control over what and whose working theories get unpacked and extended.

The close relationship between Ruby, one of the focus children, a girl from an English-Filipino background, and Sachin, a boy identified as Indian (Figure 3) interested me. These two children seemed unlikely play-partners in a setting where relationships, equipment, and areas of play were often 'gender marked'. I knew that Ruby rarely played with other girls, preferring male company. Conversely, Sachin often played on the periphery of the 'Speedway Gang' the sandpit boys' group and/or with children who shared his first language[49]. From my perspective, their 'otherness' or minority status as non-Pākehā or non-Māori may have contributed to Sachin and Ruby's friendship. During our final research discussion, Jasmine supported this notion, describing that children with English as a second or additional language related well to each other (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014).

One afternoon Sachin and Ruby were building an elaborate 'ice-cream shop' in the block area. Both children were crouching as they added blocks to the structure. Suddenly Ruby jumped up, and in the process she stood on Sachin's fingers. Angrily, Sachin yanked a box causing the building to collapse, and said, 'I'm taking my car away'. He fled outside leaving Ruby looking confused and upset. In my

[49] Sachin was identified as Indian on the roll and his home language was Punjabi. He often played with two girls also identified as Indian, and they were sometimes heard conversing in their home language - Punjabi.

'teacher' role, I approached Ruby; she took my hand and together we followed Sachin outside. As we sat down near him, he held up his hurt fingers.

> Researcher: I can see you are upset Sachin. Ruby is upset too. She didn't mean to hurt your fingers. She didn't mean to hurt you, Ruby is your friend (The children listened silently.)
>
> Sachin: Friends don't do that!
>
> Researcher: No, friends don't hurt each other Sachin, but this was an accident. What do you want her to do or say? Ruby is upset and wants to play with you because you are her friend.
>
> Sachin: Say please! (Pause) Say sorry![50]
>
> Ruby: Sorry!

The two children returned inside to rebuild their shop. Later that afternoon I questioned Sachin and Ruby about the incident and video-recorded their responses. Ruby told me in piecemeal fashion. 'Knocked it down with the car... I stamped on her [his] fingers…wanted her [him] to come back'

(Incident occurred on 29 July around 1.15pm - Research Diary notes).

Socially valued goals reified

In this 'telling example', children's working theories about friendship and fairness and teachers' responses are evident (Research Question 1). Key sociocultural notions from the Vygotskian framework that underpins *Te Whāriki* (Anne Smith, 2011) are also highlighted including learning being socially and culturally mediated (MoE, 1996). As the teachers, I can be seen "adopt[ing] socially valued goals" (Anne Smith, 2011, p. 153), and children are developing social competence through shared feelings, and exchanging ideas to build their friendships (Barbour, Barbour & Scully, 2011).

I wrote a Learning Story called 'Friends don't do that' (Appendix S) documenting what I saw as the children's significant learning. I wanted to reify this learning as it related to these children's developing understandings about social competence (Bateman, 2012a, 2012b; MoE, 1998). My narrative assessment was informed by

[50] Near the end of the incident, when Sachin (learning English as an additional language) replied, "Say please (pause), and say sorry!" it was as if he had been grappling for the right word in English pragmatics to use in this context. He could also be seen to be referencing the Kindergarten Treaty (Figure 1).

sociocultural theory based on the key idea that children learn through their relationships with people, places, and things. I had also incorporated learning outcomes from the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2, Chapter 1) in *Te Whāriki*.

In the section entitled, 'What learning is happening here?' I wrote,

> These children, and their peers, are learning about relationships/friendships in the social world. Teachers and other adults can support them as they gain the confidence to stand up for themselves in situations that they see as unfair. Through interactions with others, children learn to take another's point of view, to ask for help, to see themselves as help for others, and to discuss or explain their ideas to adults or to other children. These are valuable skills, dispositions and working theories for relating to others in the diverse social world (Learning Story dated 29 July 2014 - Appendix S).

This documentation was made available to the teachers, and with their support I put copies in both children's portfolios. Davina, one of the teachers commented in writing:

> Your story is very thorough and precise. Sachin so misunderstood Ruby and I love his comment 'friends don't do that'. I think it is interesting how they have both misunderstood each other in this way. After reading your story it seems that Ruby was oblivious to hurting him. He thought it was on purpose and Ruby is mortified once she realises. I wonder does culture, language (verbal and body) play a part? Anyway, awesome story, great learning here and yes, I think it could be put in both of their books
>
> ('Teacher Voice' on Learning Story dated 29 July 2014 - Appendix S)

The complexity of children's meaning making in the social world was highlighted in the 'Friends don't do that' Learning Story focused on 'noticing, recognising, and responding' to children's learning (Carr, 2001). The associated feedback from one of the teachers who knew the children well confirmed my observations and analysis. The children's developing social competence; their understandings/ working theories about being friends; and their affective responses - anger, retribution, withdrawal, anxiety can all be seen in my description (Davies, 2014), and Davina's feedback on this 'telling example' from a sociocultural perspective (Smidt, 2009).

An alternative reading

Using constructs associated with feminist poststructural theory i.e. power/knowledge, dominant discourses, performativity, and subjectivities (Table 9), additional meaning making or a different reading highlighting hidden complexities is possible. Whilst the discourse of 'good teacher' supports teachers facilitating resolutions to peer disputes, and empowering the children to problem solve (Treweek, 2016), in retrospect I took Sachin's side in this peer dispute, perceiving and positioning him as the aggrieved party. Sachin's subjectivities - male, hurt, loud and angry attracted my initial attention, and subsequent intervention and I was complicit in the way things unfolded (Brown & Jones, 2001).

Gender and cultural politics are also seen to be at work here. Following Davina's point about considering culture, the complex relationship between these children's gender identities and their racial / ethnic identities known as 'intersectionality' is noted (Davis, Brunn-Bevel & Olive, 2015; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Anne Smith, 2013). Sachin is male and Indian, and Ruby is female and English/Filipino. Hence, the cultural backgrounds of the children, and their possible learning about gender roles within their cultures (Rogoff, 2003) may have impacted on the subject positions that they adopted in this vignette[51]. Walby (1992, cited in MacNaughton, 1999a) argues that "gender identity and 'racial'/ethnic identity are dynamic and mutually constitutive. Each identity is constantly in the process of forming; each identity informs and forms the other" (pp. 6-7). These notions add depth and complexities to the 'Friends don't do that' 'telling example' in this research.

In terms of Butler's (1990, 1999) theory of performativity, children's gender identities around masculinity and femininity are developing throughout childhood, based on repeated performances of certain ways of behaving. In this peer dispute, Sachin and Ruby could be seen trying out ways of being and doing. The discourses available to these children at home, and in the kindergarten setting, will have affected their performances. In terms of social justice issues related to gender and

[51] Generalisations or stereotypical constructions of children based on their ethnic and gender identities [for example Indian males as dominant, and Filipino females as passive] are troubling for a number of reasons (see Santoro, 2009 for full discussion). There are also "tensions between acknowledging and explicitly naming difference and seeing students as 'the same'" (Santoro, 2009, p.38).

fairness and equitable gender relations, some of these discourses may be offering solutions, while others perpetuate the status quo (Russell Bishop, 2012).

More about Ruby

Ruby's use of the 'her' pronoun in relation to Sachin in her retelling of the event was a reminder of a previous conversation with teachers who identified that Ruby always mixed her gender pronouns. Frustrated by this 'personal pronoun confusion', they described how they were constantly correcting her to no avail. The teachers were especially concerned because Ruby's ongoing confusion distressed other children, who by this age were very clear whether they were a girl or a boy - a 'she' or a 'he' (Transcript of third recorded discussion, 14 August 2014).

This ongoing gender pronoun confusion remained puzzling, until a postgraduate student approached me after hearing me present this vignette at a research symposium. The student, who identified himself as Filipino, shared that there are no gender pronouns in his and Ruby's other language. He suspected that Ruby spoke Filipino as her first language at home, hence her halting English with mixed pronouns at age 4 ½ years (Personal communication, Luke Santorini, 14 May 2016). This possible explanation shed light on the phenomena retrospectively, helping me to make sense of it. The teachers at Beech Kindergarten did not appear to have access to this information during the research. This discussion points to how family and community knowledge, if sought, can inform teachers' cultural competence.

Despite Ruby's physical prowess and advanced drawing skills, her greatest challenge was to develop increased social competence in the kindergarten setting according to the teachers (Appendix P - Teacher Reflection). 'Developing social competence' was the title of another incident involving Ruby that I had observed and constructed as a field text.

> Ruby is an only child and both her grandmothers (Filipino and English) came to the kindergarten with her parents to enrol her. They told teachers that Ruby had had very little socialisation with other children to date. On 14 August in the morning, I noticed Ruby inside the little hut by the swings under the veranda. When I asked her what the matter was, she replied, "I had it first! They took it". Just then, the timer rang. I

realised that Ruby was talking about the egg timer and sensed that her upset withdrawn pose/ facial expression/ tears related to her lack of agency to keep the timer and get others to be share/be fair

(Research Diary, 14 August 2014).

Commentary

'Friends don't do that' shows that children have working theories about fairness and friendship, and that they are expressed through their play, including their developing conflict resolution skills in keeping with Research Question 1 that asked what working theories do children have? And how are they expressed? As I reflected on the incident, trying to make sense of it from multiple perspectives – the children's, the teachers, and their absent families, I welcomed Davina's perspective ('Teacher Voice' referred to earlier) based on her deep knowledge of these two children built up over time.

My focus was primarily on Sachin as the principal character - the protagonist. Later, I wondered what had been going on for Ruby. I contemplated whether she was performing her gender in culturally specific ways. She appeared lost - standing helplessly wondering what to do. It was evident that Sachin was not pleased with her; he had abandoned her and their shared building project. When I appeared at her elbow, Ruby seemed to be appealing to me non-verbally to help resolve this dispute. Hence, I was responding to her possible working theory about conflict in keeping with Research Question 3 that asks how do teachers provoke and respond to children's working theories about the social world. My actions could have been referencing the Kindergarten Treaty where it states, 'teachers help keep you safe' and 'have gentle hands, be safe and kindly, make friends, and use kind words' (Figure 1). Such a reading possibly fits with her parents' statement that 'Ruby is very eager to please' (Parents' Voice - 'All about Ruby'). Once she realised an apology would placate Sachin, Ruby readily said 'Sorry'.

I was left wondering what can be learned from this 'telling example', and considering my provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and fairness in the social world. Had I responded differently, I may have 'disrupted' the development of Ruby's working theories in the complex arena of social relations. Through her co-operation with an adult (Anne Smith, 2011), Ruby could have been empowered, rather than being positioned as the 'wrong-doer' who

needed to apologise. The Kindergarten Treaty constructed by children and teachers at the start of the year referred to pro-social behaviour (Bateman, 2012a) i.e. 'have gentle hands, be safe and kindly, make friends, and use kind words, use manners - say please and thank you and listen to your friends talking' (Figure 1). Hence, I am uncertain why I did not censure Sachin for wrecking their building and breaking the rules (Brennan, 2007, 2016), as other teachers may have done. Sachin's request for an apology [albeit confusing it with other pragmatic language like 'sorry'] likely related to his working theories about the social world (MoE, 1996). Finally, there are cultural differences inherent in politeness (Ogier, 2009). I wonder if I might have documented this telling example differently if the children's families were part of the dominant cultural group at Beech Kindergarten - that is New Zealand European/ Pākehā (Figure 3).

Throughout the research, the teachers and I considered Ruby's passivity in various situations such as 'Friends don't do that' and other incidents including 'Developing social competence' as a feminine trait, or shyness, or her lack of agency. This passivity was in direct contrast to her 'gender boundary-crossing' behaviours (MacNaughton, 1999) i.e. tree climbing, sandpit playing, and dinosaur drawing, that we had discussed previously (Transcript of first recorded discussion, 28 May 2014).

In the process of composing research texts, I came to see that Ruby's gender performances could change at a moment's notice given the circumstances, the context and the players (Gunn & MacNaughton, 2007). The power of what was acceptable, desirable and rewarded likely fashioned Ruby's gender performances (Blaise & Taylor, 2012). Ruby did gender in a myriad of ways, reminding me that gender identities are multiple, partial, and performed (Kelly-Ware, 2016; Simpson-Dal Santo, 2014) and never entirely settled.

NOTE: In the process of writing this thesis, I was challenged by a 'critical friend' to consider that what teachers and I had perceived as a lack of agency on Ruby's part could have been the result of her lacking the pragmatic skills to make things happen in English, and that Ruby's performances were not necessarily gender performances. Rather they were examples of a child doing what they felt like.

‘This house belongs to everyone’

Two vignettes about children’s responses to a picturebook about inclusion feature in this section on fairness and justice. Picturebooks can play a part in helping children to theorise about fairness and develop empathy (Mallan, 2013), also known as ‘theory of mind’. “This understanding enables children to predict and explain actions by ascribing mental states, such as beliefs, desires and intentions, to themselves and to other people” (Astington, 1993, p. 158). Various authorities identify picturebooks as valuable teaching resources in this arena (Blakeney-Williams & Daly, 2013) because they can act as ‘mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors’ into children’s lives (Bishop, 1990).

One picturebook *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996)[52] stood out in the field texts constructed for this project. Grace chose to read this book for ‘shared reading’ at the end of session ‘mat-time’ on 28 May 2014. In the picturebook, George is playing in a cardboard box house and other children want to join him. He responds to each request with exclusions based on the children’s subjectivities, for example they are girls, or small people, or twins, or like tunnelling, and they are not allowed in. Then George vacates the ‘house’ as he needs to go to the toilet. The other children crowd in and exclude him on his return.

I suspect that the concern that I expressed informally over morning tea likely precipitated Grace’s choice of this picturebook. I had seen Jack excluding Felix from the outside hut earlier that morning (Research Diary, 28 May 2014). My suspicion was that this exclusion related to Felix wearing a dress, and the hut being ‘a boys’ zone’ where hegemonic masculinity ruled (Connell, 2005). However, when I questioned Jack about this exclusion, he said it was because Felix was being a ‘big monster’ and ‘he was being wild’. I was full of disbelief at this version of events involving two focus children. Jack, the undisputed leader of the ‘Speedway gang’ was positioning Felix, a boy with ‘gender diverse’ behaviours[53] as frightening.

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[52] Note: A 7.09 minute reading of this picturebook is available at http://vimeo.com/58214461 should the reader wish to familiarise themselves with the story in preparation for the discussion that follows.
[53] I have chosen the term ‘gender diverse’ to apply to Felix’s gender performance based on my reading and many conversations and observations of him. It was not a term that the teachers used.

Several teachers readily accepted my identification of exclusionary behaviour. They considered my analysis plausible recalling Jack's storytelling abilities, his propensity to 'bend the truth', and his desire to be seen on the side of 'right' (Conversation transcript, 28 May 2014). As Grace read the picturebook *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996) parents were arriving and Jack and another boy Gabriel both told stories about themselves in response to the storyline. First, I tell Gabriel's story then Jack's story, then these two stories are followed by a commentary.

This house is not for people with glasses

Gabriel, a new boy at the kindergarten appeared to recognise himself in one of the characters in the story. When Grace read the line "This house is not for children with glasses" (Rosen, 1996, p. 14), Gabriel called out loudly 'Ohhhh, that's me, that's me'. He seemed to realise that if he were playing the game in the picturebook, George, the boy with the red hair would exclude him from the cardboard house. Gabriel touched his glasses, and was visibly upset, noticeably on the verge of tears. Then he looked at his mother standing near the edge of the mat, and she had glasses on too. He seemed to be silently saying 'Would they do that to me? That's not fair!" His mum gave him a reassuring look, and then his demeanour changed as he said "I'm gonna (sic) get angry at that boy". At that point, Grace, the teacher stopped reading the story. Whilst there are no specific details of Grace talking to Gabriel[54], Grace later said that she was trying to help Gabriel work through his complex, and seemingly contradictory, emotions. Grace was using 'dialogic reading' techniques i.e. asking him questions and affirming his emotions (Shor & Freire, 1987; White, 2016).

The teachers shared their perspectives retelling the incident, during our recorded conversation on 28 May 2014.

Jasmine: I thought Gabriel was going to cry about the glasses

Grace: Yeah, he went "that's me". And I just looked at his little face and thought he's going to cry. I couldn't just leave it…I wasn't actually going to go into it, I was going to let them ponder a bit about 'that's me" and then I

[54] Whilst the teachers and I discussed the incident during our recorded discussion later that day, and I made notes in my Research Diary the following day, there was no audiotape and no one took notes at the time of this critical incident.

saw his face. He cracked…And that's when I started trying to talk with him about what he was feeling.

Jasmine: And then his mum, or he looked at his mum and she had glasses on, and it was a bit like [he was asking her] "Would they do that to me?

Kelsey: They'd locked everyone else out. It was a story that he identified with…

Grace: And then he piped up and said "I'm gonna get angry with that boy!"

(Transcript of first recorded, 28 May 2014).

The picturebook seemed to have influenced Gabriel's sense of self and discursive agency (Davies & Harré, 1990). His working theory was visible as he identified with the child wearing glasses who was being excluded from the cardboard house by George. Seemingly, Gabriel had put himself in that child's shoes, feeling empathy for the child in the picturebook (Mallan, 2013) and himself. Then his feelings turned to anger at the injustice of this exclusion. At this critical time in Gabriel's theorising about injustice and fairness (aged $4^{1/2}$ years), the responsiveness of his teacher and his mother reinforced the importance of adults facilitating children's learning in this complex arena of social relations. There are also links between Gabriel's learning in this scenario and Goal One Learning Outcomes in the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2, Chapter 1) in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, p. 66).

Children's knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which combine to form their working theories, and their dispositions are all visible throughout the picturebook text and images. Exclusion, standing up for one's self and each other, and responding appropriately in the face of discriminatory behaviour all feature in *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996). Gabriel's theory of mind may have still been in the development phase as it was unclear initially whether he was able to distinguish between pretence and reality (Dau, 2001).

Learning Story

Soon after this telling example of Gabriel responding to perceived exclusion, I wrote a Learning Story about the example called 'This house belongs to everyone' (See Appendix T). Gabriel and his family were newcomers to the kindergarten so I wanted to reify Gabriel's learning in order to involve his family. I was also keen to provide him with an opportunity to revisit this valuable ongoing learning in the area

of Mana Tangata Contribution, and social competence over time. Unfortunately, I did not hear back from the child or his family but the Learning Story was added to his portfolio. In the section entitled 'Analysis of learning', I commented:

> You have an understanding of some early concepts of the value of appreciating diversity and fairness. You also have an ability to take another's point of view and to empathise with others - the child in the story who wore glasses. Gabriel, at Beech Kindergarten and at home too, I expect that you will learn more about standing up for yourself and others. You will get to practise responding appropriately if you are being excluded in play, or if someone is hurting you, or hurting your feelings. The teachers, other adults, and other children can help
>
> (Appendix T, Learning Story 28 May 2014).

During our recorded conversation later that day (28 May 2014), teachers made several other noteworthy comments. One teacher described seeing Kahu take his glasses out of his pocket and put them on at the time that Gabriel was challenging the exclusion of children wearing glasses from the cardboard house in the picturebook. We all agreed that this was an empathetic act. Teachers also discussed that children's working theories were always about them trying to make sense of things. Grace remarked on what a privilege it was to sit up the front reading stories and watching the children's expressions as they followed and made sense of the storylines in picturebooks about social justice selected by teachers as part of their teaching (Transcript of first recorded discussion, 28 May 2014).

Does hair colour make a difference?

Meanwhile, Jack, one of the focus children, who had earlier been observed excluding Felix from the hut, was sitting on his father's knee on the mat. He was also listening intently to Grace reading *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996). In the story, a boy with the red hair, called George, excluded many children from his cardboard house based on their various subjectivities, for example because they were twins, or small people, or girls, or wore glasses, or liked burrowing. When all the children in the story crowded into the cardboard house and announced, "Boys with red hair can't come in to this house" George had a tantrum - he shouted, and cried, and stamped his feet, and kicked the walls. The story finished with all the children,

including George, shouting, "this house is for everyone" as they played together in the house. At that point, Jack abruptly stood up and turned to the audience of parents waiting to pick up their children. He emphatically announced, “That’s ok. My hair is orange, not red”. The audience greeted Jack’s statement with much laughter. Seemingly, Jack wanted to distance himself from the protagonist in the storybook who had similar coloured hair to him.

In the recorded discussion with teachers later that day, Kelsey noted that she thought it was interesting that Jack changed his hair colour. “He just looked at the parents and went ‘well mine’s orange!’ as if to say [gesture - the fingers] to you”

(Transcript of first recorded discussion, 28 May 2014).

Learning Story

In ‘Does hair colour make a difference?’ a Learning Story that I documented for Jack, I tried to unpack what had happened for him and his family. The title was a question that I was posing for him to consider. Again, I heard nothing back from the child or his family as I did not return to the kindergarten for several weeks after the incident. Under the section entitled, ‘What learning is happening here?’ I wrote:

> Jack, you are clearly developing ongoing working theories about the social world. You confidently expressed to a large audience that your hair is orange, and not red. It seems like you were trying to differentiate yourself from George, the boy in the book. You did not want to be seen as him, unlike Gabriel who clearly identified with the child in the story who wore glasses like him. I am wondering about how you were making sense of what was going on and how it related to/ or did not relate to you. Maybe you are conscious that your hair colour sets you apart from other children at the kindergarten; that it makes you different because you are the only child with ‘orange’ hair (Learning Story - “Does hair colour make a difference” 28 May 2014).

Commentary

“Children’s growing capacities for empathy are fostered by reading or telling stories about other people” (MoE, 1996, p. 71). The two stories told here relate to the same picturebook. This commentary involves reflections and readings/possible readings from sociocultural and feminist poststructural perspectives where relevant. First Gabriel’s and then Jack’s responses to the picturebook are explored.

Seemingly as part of Gabriel's working theory, he saw himself in the picturebook in the place of the child wearing glasses who was being excluded from the cardboard house. Whilst Gabriel was initially upset, he received moral support from his mother who also wore glasses; she gave him a reassuring look from her position near the mat. When Gabriel got angry, Grace (the teacher leading mat-time) stopped reading, and talked directly to him about his feelings. Another child put his glasses on during this incident, and we interpreted this act as solidarity with Gabriel or a demonstration of empathy. Subsequently, the teachers suggested that children were always trying to make sense of the world, and that adults had a role to play helping them do this.

This example relates to Research Question 1 whereby Gabriel is expressing his working theories about his feelings and his actions in response to a fictional story about inclusion and exclusion during shared reading time. Grace can also be seen provoking and responding to Gabriel's and other children's working theories (Research Question 3). Gabriel's mother's voice was not audible in this incident, but her actions spoke volumes. We all saw her responding to Gabriel's exploration of diversity and fairness from her nearby vantage point, by maintaining eye contact with him and touching her glasses (Research Question 2).

It is likely that Grace chose the picturebook for its messages about exclusion and inclusion. The book's social justice content could be related to Research Question 4. Grace's reading of it was promoting an inclusive response to diversity by children. This picturebook and Grace's dialogic reading technique (Shor & Freire, 1987; White, 2016) are seen as valuable ways to promote an inclusive response to diversity by provoking children's working theories.

These 'cherry-picked' research texts show the power of one picturebook. They serve to illustrate a much-quoted statement by Rudine Sims Bishop (1990):

> Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers only have to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror (p. ix).

Gabriel possibly imagined that he entered the picturebook *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996) through glass sliding doors, and there he experienced exclusion on the basis that he wore glasses. Meanwhile, maybe Jack had seen himself in the mirror of the picturebook, where his exclusionary behaviour that morning towards the boy in a dress was visible because "the lighting conditions [were] just right" as Bishop (1990) suggests.

These two examples are indicative of situations where teachers and parents respond quickly to extroverted emotional reactions; that is that such reactions attracted immediate adult attention. Gabriel nearly cried, and then announced that he was going to get angry, whereas Jack spoke to a large captive adult audience. Teachers are tasked with learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki* related to children developing empathy, and 'theory of mind' which is seen here in the actions of these children. Gabriel, Kahu and Jack are seen predicting and explaining actions by attributing desires, intentions and beliefs to other people as well as to themselves (Astington, 1993).

The children seemed relieved each time Grace read about George (the boy in the book) and his 'exclusions' that did not apply to them (Transcript of first recorded discussion, 28 May 2014). Yet, other possibilities exist if we think about constructs of power, performativity and working theories informing these field texts. One of George's 'exclusion' categories was "being a girl". Yet girls were silent, despite accounting for more than 50% of the child-audience. The girls' silences could be read as reactions (Silin, 1995, 1999, 2005), or lack of reaction, rather than them being unmoved by the story as it appeared at first glance. There is a possibility that these reactions went unnoticed because the girls were quiet and passive. Maybe the 'lighting conditions' (Bishop, 1990) were not right for teachers to see the girls' reactions. My retrospective attunement to the girls' reactions, or lack of reactions, occurred during the process of composing research texts from the field texts using concepts from the analyses frameworks (Table 9 & Table 10).

Gabriel's blatant reaction to perceiving that he would be excluded because he wore glasses, like the children in the picturebook, caused the teacher to unpack his thoughts/feelings. Ostrov and Keating (2004) in their research with 48 preschool children found that boys were more physically aggressive than girls, children

received more verbal and physical aggression from boys, and boys typically used physical aggression to solve their problems. Meanwhile Grindheim (2014) and Davies (2014) discuss young children's expressions of anger in ECE settings. Two examples from this incident support this assertion; Gabriel suggested that he was going to get angry with that boy (referring to George, the protagonist in the picturebook), and that boy George (in the picturebook) had a tantrum - an overt reaction when the tables were turned, and he was being excluded by the other children. This assertion is also borne out in 'Friends don't do that' discussed earlier in this chapter where Sachin's physical aggression involved him pulling down the shop, before he removed himself to solve his problem in contrast with Ruby's passive stance. She was upset and did not move towards him to resolve the misunderstanding without support. Conversely, Layla, who featured in the previous section as the child with the behaviour that was a 'problem' to her teachers and peers, was an exception to this rule. As suggested previously, Layla's aggressive behaviour may have been more acceptable, or been seen differently, by all if she had been a boy.

This telling example illustrates a teacher responding to boys and their verbal reactions, and possibly giving primacy to them and their verbal reactions over girls and their non-verbal or 'silent' reactions. Brown and Graceigan (1992, as cited in Silin, 2005) identify that "research continues to confirm that girls are still rewarded for remaining silent and well behaved in the classroom, while boys are rewarded for speaking up and speaking out" (p. 92). This may be the case. Meanwhile, other explanations are also possible.

During the dialogic reading of this critical incident, there was no mention of 'being kindly' or 'using gentle hands' - statements from the Kindergarten Treaty (Figure 1). Nevertheless, the treaty was an underlying influence on the teachers' and the children's behaviour, albeit Gabriel was new to the kindergarten community and still being enculturated into this place (Brennan, 2005). Age, or maturity, is another possible explanation for the forthrightness of the male protagonists in these narratives. Gabriel and Jack were among the older children at kindergarten. These two children were both aged 4 ¾ years at the time of these incidents, and Jack particularly was beginning to assume the mantle of 'one of the big kids' in this place (Grace's Learning Story about Jack, February-August 2014). Jack's cheeky retort

caused amusement to us all and possibly served to deflect adult attention from his exclusionary behaviour earlier that day.

‘Making it fair’

One further example documented in this project also sheds light on the phenomena of friendship and/or fairness from the perspectives of children. In Sandeep’s Learning Story ‘Making it fair’ (Visual Diary, May 2014), Grace describes how she introduced a kitchen timer and a whiteboard to support children’s understandings about equality and fairness. When the new mini-trampoline arrived it quickly became popular due to its novelty status. Teachers were keen to encourage children’s turn taking, and support equal time spent bouncing on ‘the tramp’. They encouraged each child to write their own name on the whiteboard, and set the timer at five minutes. Then the children had their turn in list order and vacated the trampoline when the timer rang. At the top of the Learning Story, a photograph shows Sandeep writing her name on the list of children as she waited for her turn. Grace describes how “these two things worked well in making it fair for everyone” (Learning Story). She also identifies children’s learning that resulted from this experience, quoting an excerpt from the *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2 in this assessment documentation for Sandeep and her family:

> Children are developing the capacity to discuss and negotiate rules, rights, and fairness; Children are empowered by discussing and problem-solving solutions to ensure fairness and equity for all; Children are developing an understanding of the passage of time in a meaningful way; Children are developing an understanding that text conveys meaning and can help us to organise in an authentic way (Learning Story for Sandeep - May 2014 written by Grace).

Parent whānau perspectives in relation to fairness and friendship, the themes of this chapter (Chapter 5) have only briefly been reported thus far. Therefore, in keeping with the ‘child’s question’ - ‘Is this place fair for us?’ (Carr et al., 2009) that included others besides themselves, the perspectives of parents and whānau are now discussed to address Research Question 2 - How do families describe, encourage, and respond to children’s explorations of diversity and fairness?

Parent/whānau perspectives on fairness at the kindergarten

The Parent/Whānau Questionnaire (Appendix I) asked a specific question related to children's learning about fairness at the kindergarten. In the 21 questionnaires that were returned to the kindergarten (out of a possible 42), everyone responded affirmatively to Question 4. This question asked 'Do you see the teachers at the kindergarten teaching children about what is fair and what is not fair? Please give one or more examples'. Responses provided interesting feedback about parents' perceptions of teaching and learning about fairness at the kindergarten. Parents overwhelmingly agreed that children should learn positive messages about fairness at the kindergarten. Many respondents also recognised fairness and unfairness as explicit curriculum topics. Several parent responses described teachers getting children to think critically about peer disputes, and social relationships:

> I love the way when children have some kind of conflict or disagreement, any one of the teachers will ask questions in a way that it makes the child/children think about their words/actions and how it affects others from the tone/body language or words! (Response 12 - Rylee).

'The teachers explain things to the kids. Also, when they read books about bullying or unkind behaviour they ask the kids questions about how they would feel and what they think about the situation' (Response 37).

This reference to books about bullying or unkind behaviour may have been referring to the picturebook *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996) introduced in the previous section. This parent had recognised teachers using dialogic reading techniques with picturebooks to support children in terms of their theorising and learning about the social world. Other examples ranged from parents identifying teachers encouraging turn taking on equipment such as the swings and the use of a timer, to comments about democratising, for example, 'The teachers always give children time to speak and contribute to discussions at mat time' (Response 27). Responses also included, supporting children to develop social skills: 'Children are encouraged to be respectful' and 'fair' to their peers and adults when they are talking by not interrupting/talking over them" (Response 24), and recognition of children's agency, and self-esteem (Various Questionnaire Responses).

These responses were affirming for teachers although Grace noted her surprise that the timer was mentioned so often given that it had stopped working long before

September when questionnaires were returned. Nevertheless, children and their families considered that the timer worked as the following responses illustrate: ‘They decided as a group to have a timer, so everyone got a turn and it was fair’ (Response 34); ‘I’ve seen a timer used to encourage equal turns and opportunities’ (Response 3 - Alfie); ‘They have a timer on the fabric swings as they are so popular’ (Response 5).

Other questionnaire responses included reference to children being encouraged to be reflective and empathetic in keeping with learning outcomes of Te Whāriki under the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2). These included comments such as: ‘Teachers ask children how someone else feels or if something is fair’ (Response 15 - Caitlyn); ‘Teachers talk to the children about sharing of the swing and how it's not good to push people off’ (Response 34); ‘Teachers explain things to children’ (Response 37); ‘Teachers do not tolerate nasty talk’ (Response 21). An overall comment that seemed to sum up the viewpoints came from a parent who responded, ‘I am confident that the teachers at Beech Kindergarten will be teaching the difference between fairness and unfairness via explanation and examples’ (Response 43).

These questionnaire responses showed how parents saw the curriculum operating in terms of children learning about concepts such as fairness and sharing. The responses also offered insights into parents’ observations of teaching and learning at Beech Kindergarten, and provide evidence that families are watching and hearing teachers as they go about their work fostering children’s moral and social development (Wainman et al., 2012; Danby & Theobold, 2012) including their social competence (MoE, 1998, 2015) in a group setting outside of the home.

Concluding remarks

The six examples explored in this chapter - ‘All of us were against Layla’, ‘Friends don’t do that’, ‘Developing social competence’, ‘This house is not for people who wear glasses’, ‘Does hair colour make a difference?’ and ‘Making it fair’ can be seen as ‘telling examples’ (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1983, 1984). They are ‘telling’ to the central narrative of this thesis focused on diversity and fairness. The examples are also telling in terms of the research questions that asked about children’s working theories, how these are expressed, and about teachers’ provocations and responses

to children's working theories about diversity and fairness. The telling examples show several focus children, namely Layla, Ruby, and Jack, alongside central characters, Sachin, Gabriel, Sandeep, engaging in peer relations.

Children's relationships with peers provide a forum for them to explore concepts of friendship as in 'Friends don't do that', and fairness as in the teachers' realisation of their unfairness towards Layla, alongside the two narratives related to the children's picturebook *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996), and Grace's descriptions in 'Making it fair'. Children expressed working theories about fairness and friendship related to diversity and difference through their play by making choices about play partners, including some peers and adults, and excluding others. Children's working theories were also audible in children's verbal interactions with peers and adults, and through their responses to picturebooks i.e. *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996). Children's theorising about fairness was seen in relation to technology such as a mini-trampoline or swings to be shared, a timer which supported equal turns, and a whiteboard chart where children wrote their own names in turn-taking order as they waited for a turn. In several of the telling examples explored in this chapter, it was noted that girls were silent and teachers did not readily appear to read these silences as non-verbal communication.

Meanwhile, parents and whānau perspectives about fairness as taught at the kindergarten are evident in their questionnaire responses (Research Question 2). Families see and recognise teachers at Beech Kindergarten teaching children about what is fair and what is unfair as the questionnaire responses show. There is an acknowledgement of teachers using 'democratising' as a teaching strategy - that is "giving power to the people involved to decide what happens" (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009, p. 285), and group times or hui to work through issues that affect everyone such as fairness around turn taking on the new mini-trampoline. Some parents and whānau also recognised children learning about "the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour" (MoE, 1996, p. 66) at Beech Kindergarten.

The professional learning from this investigation offers suggestions for how teacher are currently promoting an inclusive response to diversity, or how they might do so in the future (Research Question 4). Teachers promoted an inclusive response to diversity through recognising children's agency, and 'democratising', by paying

careful attention to children's voices, and supporting them to speak up about fairness and justice. Teachers purposefully selected and read picturebooks as provocations and/or responses to children's theorising about exclusion and inclusion (Harrist & Bradley, 2003). In this case, specifically boys identified with fictional characters in one picturebook. Teachers also supported children to express their feelings, including a child possibly using humour to deflect the spotlight off him and his exclusionary behaviour.

In the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2, Chapter 1) of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996), learning outcomes include considering the rights and feelings of others, and encouraging respect and empathy. Children's learning about these socially valued goals was fostered in this study through sensitive teacher interventions, group discussions, and dialogic reading at mat time for example. Learning that was valued in this place was sometimes reified in assessment documentation such as Learning Stories. The documentation offered an opportunity for children to revisit their learning, and enabled families to share in children's developing understandings. Teachers focused on ways to "build children's ability to have positive relationships with others, help them to stand up for themselves and others when treated unfairly, and feel good about themselves" (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009, p. 316). But teachers did not necessarily always get it 'right' as evidenced in the opening vignette about Layla. Children's reputations, like the reputation that Layla developed among her peers, in part based on teachers responses to her behaviour that they found challenging, often precede them, and affect them negatively and unfairly.

These discussions about fairness have highlighted issues that arose as part of this Participatory Action Research project. Teachers agreed to engage in research aimed at improving or changing their social practice (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009) and this agreement illustrated their openness and willingness to improve and change. After their experiences with Layla were critiqued by Margaret, their Senior Teacher, changes were seen as necessary; changes in the way they interacted (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012), in the interests of fairness and equity, integral to the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996), and the dominant discourse of being a 'good teacher'.

Teachers realised that a collective team response was required to Layla, rather than individual responses. They also acknowledged that their ongoing challenge was to treat children equitably. Hearing the girls, the children with English as an additional language, and the children whose behaviour they found challenging, all related to whole team or community/institutional responses (Rogoff, 1998) to diversity and difference. These reflections and realisation show they understood the need to think about institutional ways of doing things in order to be more socially just (Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013). These notions are in keeping with an empowerment or enhancement paradigm in terms of how diversity and difference are perceived and addressed (Alton-Lee, 2003; Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003; Gordon-Burns et al., 2012).

The teachers were keen to promote an inclusive response to diversity by children by supporting them to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences. However, in the initial stages of the research, teachers recognised that they needed to show leadership in this area. Because fairness is integral to the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* and 'one of the pillars of childhood', teachers need to pay careful attention to the voices of children, and lead by example for in the words of Silin (1995) "…to teach is to be watched, and watched closely " (p. 182).

Looking forward

The following chapter (Chapter 6) is the second of four chapters which present a 'discussion of findings'. Research texts related to gender identity and fairness are explored from the multiple perspectives of children, parents and whānau, teachers and me, the researcher**.**

CHAPTER 6:
‘WHAT’S HE DOING THAT FOR? HE’S A BOY!’ GENDER AND FAIRNESS

Introduction

This chapter presents a ‘discussion of findings’ related to gender identity and fairness at Beech Kindergarten. It is the second of four discussion chapters, each with distinct themes. The title of this chapter comes from a comment by Jack, the boy with the orange hair who featured in Chapter 5 in the section entitled ‘Does hair colour make a difference?’ Jack is the central character of this chapter, and his comment, “What’s he doing that for? He’s a boy!” was a reaction to seeing another child wearing a dress, and a teacher plaiting the blue wig the boy was wearing.

In this chapter, the research questions are restated followed by introductory comments about the context, and analytical concepts relevant to the chapter’s themes of gender, sex and sexuality. The content is then organised in sections with each section featuring a ‘critical incident’ (Tripp, 1993, 1996) or ‘telling example’ (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1983, 1984) drawn from the field texts constructed during the research process. These sections, focused on gender and fairness through the perspectives of children, are titled: ‘Jack and his working theories’; ‘That’s a girls’ song’; and ‘Kissing, marriage, and babies’. Adult voices supplement children’s theorising where they are relevant to the focus of each section.

Teachers’ voices are interwoven with critical incidents or telling examples about children’s theorising, drawn from field texts constructed from pedagogical documentation, mainly Learning Stories. Additionally, teachers’ voices emerge in excerpts from the recorded discussion transcripts where children’s understandings about gender and fairness were discussed and unpacked. Parent voices are also included where relevant to this chapter’s themes. Their responses come from ‘That’s a girls’ song’, the telling example shared at the Parent Focus Group, along with Parent/Whānau Questionnaire responses.

The critical incidents or telling examples that feature in this chapter symbolise this chapter’s focus on ‘gender fairness’. Derman-Spark and Olsen Edwards (2010) argue that “anti-bias education is an integral part of the ‘bricks and mortar’ of emotional well-being and social competence…A healthy sense of self requires that

children know and like who they are without feeling superior to others" (p. 17). Gender is an area where stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination exist, and early childhood is a critical time when children's identities and understandings are developing in this area. Hence ECE settings need to be gender-equitable environments, and young children need to be equipped to stand up to unfairness about their gender and other identities (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010).

Under each section in this chapter, there is a commentary, which involves researcher reflections and readings/possible readings from sociocultural and feminist poststructural perspectives where relevant. I relate children's theorising to relevant literature and this research project's analytical tools i.e. the constructs of performativity, power/knowledge, identities and subjectivities, and dominant discourses from the analysis framework (Table 9). Supplementary concepts that relate specifically to working theories - voicing and teaching strategies (Table 10) are sometimes evident in the analyses presented throughout the chapter.

This title of this chapter is also the title of an article (Kelly-Ware, 2016) written about Jack and his part in this research (Appendix W). Featuring prominently in the article and this chapter, Jack theorises about issues related to gender and biological sex throughout his play. Three telling examples gathered during the research illustrate Jack's working theories related to gender (masculinity/femininity) and biological sex (boy/girl) in his play. The trajectory of Jack's working theories over seven months offers an opportunity to explore how he and his peers made sense of these complex issues. His working theories became more sophisticated and complex as his knowledge and skills developed, and there was an attitudinal change (MoE, 1996, 2017). Jack's dispositions of courage and curiosity, taking an interest, expressing his ideas and feelings are also evident (Carr, 2001) and these relate to his working theories.

At the same time, Jack's peers were also theorising, or making sense of complex issues related to gender, sex, sexuality, and fairness. Two further critical incidents relate to children, namely Caitlyn (another of the focus children) and her peer Richie theorising about sex, gender, and sexuality in 'That's a girls' song', and several children theorising about sex and procreation in "Kissing, marriage, and babies' including Dylan (focus children) and his peers especially Gina and Petra. Children's

theorising, visible in the examples and incidents, is viewed from a range of perspectives in this chapter in keeping with the overarching research focus of negotiating fairness and diverse identities in a kindergarten community.

'Gender marked' territory and 'crossing gender boundaries'

Over the seven months of my regular research visits to Beech Kindergarten, I observed the complexities of many children, including Jack, typically doing gender and sexuality in ways prescribed by dominant discourses. Nonetheless, some children were seen crossing traditional gender boundaries in their play as discussed in 'Even pink tents have glass ceilings: Crossing the gender boundaries in pretend play' (MacNaughton, 1999), a book chapter I shared with teachers on my visit (21 May 2014). Occasionally, I observed children (mainly boys aged 4 years or younger) doing gender and sexuality differently at Beech Kindergarten. They were resisting hegemonic masculinity discourses that attempted to regulate and constrain their behaviour in normative and heteronormative ways. For example, Felix and Reggie wore dresses on various occasions (Research Photo album), while Colty engaged in solitary play caring for the dolls, including the brown skinned doll, and playing with the miniature 'dolls' house' day after day (Learning Story dated May - July 2014), and Tama was concerned about the 'naked' babies, and enlisted my support to help him dress them (Learning Story dated 14 May 2014).

Girls too could be seen resisting dominant discourses about hyper-femininity. For example, Ruby, the focus child who featured in Chapter Five in the section entitled 'Friends don't do that', climbed trees, and played in the sandpit with boys (Visual diary - various images). Additionally, Caitlyn quickly switched from dress-ups and nail polish to carrying around her beloved hens, collecting eggs, and playing with groups of boys involved in construction and other games including Lego and Marble Run. These girls' gender performances could be seen to change at a moment's notice based on the circumstances, context and the players (Gunn & MacNaughton, 2007). Kelsey reinforced this view, noting '…they are like tomboys, you know like Caitlyn. She can be a girly-girl and then she can be a rough-boy player' (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). Yet, Kelsey can also be seen to be drawing on normative discourses, binaries and 'little boxes' (Ervin, 2014).

Many specific examples can be found in the research field texts of children marking out places and spaces based on biological sex and gender, seemingly because gender stereotypes are "deeply embedded in children's understandings of gender" (Blaise, 2014, p. 116). Children 'gender-marked' phenomena such as face paint as unisex, and make-up as feminine (Conversation transcript, 28 May 2014); songs from popular culture being girls' songs or everyone's (Caitlyn & Richie vignette); and nail polish being a highly feminine preoccupation (Layla & friends - 29 July, video).

Even the dining tables where children ate their snacks and lunch were gender-marked by some children, mostly boys, who excluded or included peers based on them being the 'right' or wrong biological sex to sit there. Teachers could often be heard 'opening up' discussions about gender and challenging some of the children's ideas about what was, and was not, 'appropriate behaviour' for boys and girls in the interests of fairness, equity, and social inclusion. Some examples include: 'Who says this is a boys' table?' asked Kelsey one day (Conversation transcript, 28 May 2014) and Grace's question to Jack - 'Can I play?' and his response 'Nah Grace, girls aren't allowed' (Learning Story dated February - August 2014).

Supporting children's working theories in this complex domain of identities constructions and gender, sex, and sexuality can be problematic, especially if teachers, parents, and children themselves do not understand the contextual influences, and fluid possibilities of doing gender. The world at large including 'popular culture' sends powerful messages to young children (Giugni, 2006). Nonetheless, as previously noted, Gunn and MacNaughton (2007) identify that children do gender in a myriad of ways and that these performances can change at a moment's notice given the circumstances, context, or other players. Jack's performances reinforce this perspective as the following narratives show.

Setting the scene for Jack's working theories

The 'telling examples' that follow show that Jack's identity/identities were developing during the formative six months before he turned five and started

school[55]. This identity development is consistent with literature from feminist poststructural perspectives such as MacNaughton (2000) who describes that, "identity is formed and reformed in interaction with others" (p. 23). Butler's theory of performativity (1990, 1999) makes us think about the ways children (and adults) 'do' or 'perform' their multiple identities. Meanwhile, Blaise (2010) notes how "a gendered identity is produced only as it is enacted" (p. 2). In keeping with these ideas, the three vignettes that follow show Jack enacting his gendered identity in multiple ways. Jack's varied performances in the production of his gender identity are salient examples of performativity, and his ongoing working theories, as the following vignettes show.

Jack and his working theories

Jack's story was previously told in an article (Appendix W) from which this chapter takes its name - 'What's he doing that for? He's a boy' (Kelly-Ware, 2016). The three vignettes retold here are titled: Jack, leader of the Speedway gang and reinforcing gender binaries; Jack, masculinity enforcement officer and gender diversity in children; and Jack, the 'real' boy and the child he 'growed' (sic). These vignettes illustrate Jack's working theories as they are developing over time. They focus on Jack, at play with his peers, making sense of the world of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Jack, leader of the Speedway gang and reinforcing gender binaries

Jack was 4 years 3 months old when I met him. He had recently been on a 'boys-only' kindergarten trip to a large public venue with a car-racing track, hereinafter called 'Speedway'. Seeking to extend Jack's and his peers' interests, Kelsey had arranged for them to do a lap of the racing track in a 'monster truck'. This ride proved to be an exhilarating experience that stayed with these children long after the event. Jack had 'funds of knowledge' from home about the car racing (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992) as his Dad was a big fan, so at the Speedway, and back at the kindergarten, Jack's expert prior knowledge made him the undisputed leader of a group of children that came to be known as the 'Speedway Gang' who

[55] Starting school in Aōtearoa New Zealand is compulsory from age 6 but age 5 is the norm and children generally start school in the term when their 5th birthday falls, although cohort entry is an individual school decision.

hung out mostly in the sandpit. Several wall displays around the kindergarten included the Speedway interest, featuring children's transcribed comments and photographs of the track, the pits, flags, cones, and a driver's racing gear including suit and helmet (Visual Diary - various images).

Around this time, Jack was adamant that girls could not 'do Speedway' despite the fact that Kelsey, the female teacher who organised the Speedway trip, co-piloted a racing car. She had shown Jack and his peers her racing suit and other paraphernalia related to her hobby. Jack's resolute assertion that Speedway was 'not for girls' was possibly fuelled by two events; first, an earlier trip to the Speedway with his Dad and older brother, and second, the kindergarten trip with eight of his male peers. Mostly, the sandpit was a 'boys-only' space with the occasional girl(s) seen cleaning the shed, or engaged in solitary play on the periphery. Few girls ventured near the noisy, boisterous Speedway Gang. It is possible that Jack, individually in his leadership role, or collectively with male peers, policed or regulated who played there such as when Jack was observed excluding Felix from the hut on 14 May because Felix was allegedly being a 'scary monster' (Research Diary telling example - field text and research text).

Another teacher, Grace became a daily player in the sandpit following Jack's sexist and exclusionary comments about girls not being able to 'do Speedway'. Grace reports that she had not had a previous relationship with Jack, so she intentionally got alongside him in the sandpit/racetrack space. She did not directly challenge Jack's stereotype about Speedway being a 'boys' only game', wanting to see what else he might say in this regard. However, Grace's presence and involvement likely gave other girls the confidence/permission to join in, which they did. Over time, Jack came to revise his opinion. As he neared five years of age and became one of the 'big kids' at the kindergarten, Jack took down the 'No girls' sign and told everyone 'girls can play here'. Jack's shift in attitude was evident as his knowledge and attitudes developed; hence his working theory evolved. This shift that he exhibited from gender stereotyping and exclusion, to an inclusive stance that anyone could play Speedway, was celebrated by his teachers, and reified in his Profile book (Learning Story dated February - August 2014). This documentation made values such as leadership, children's voices and their learning visible in this place.

Under a section entitled - What did Jack say, Grace had recorded Jack saying 'I n'used (sic) to think that because I was only 3. Yip we did used to say that - me and Lucas. We took the 'No girls' sign away because girls could play there. They can race and watch if they want' [Grace's analysis followed].

> We were able to support you in realising for yourself that your initial working theory may have been unfounded and unfair. Mum tells me that you are a natural leader, and throughout this journey, I have had the privilege to watch your leadership flourish…also a leader in standing up for yourself and others in situations that you may see as unfair (Learning Story dated February - August 2014).

This final statement is a reference to one of the learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki* in the Mana Tangata Contribution strand where it states, "Children develop: the self-confidence to stand up for themselves and others against biased ideas and discriminatory behaviour" (MoE, 1996, p. 66).

Jack, masculinity enforcement officer and gender diversity in children

On another occasion, I witnessed Jack appearing to censor a child's performance of gender. Felix, one of the other focus children, aged four, was dressed in an elaborate, floor-length, flowing gown. He was standing very still while one of the teachers Davina plaited the electric blue coloured wig he was wearing. Jack, then aged four-and-a-half-years, entered the building and on seeing Felix, he stopped and loudly exclaimed, 'What's he doing that for? He's a boy!', hence the title of this chapter. From my observations, Jack was not the only child who appeared to be suggesting that Felix had gotten masculinity or being a boy 'wrong'. Sandeep, who was learning the subtleties of English as her second language, looked on one day as Felix was gazing at himself in the bathroom mirror. As she pointed first to Felix, then to herself, I heard her emphatically state 'This boy! This girl!' "Sandeep, appeared to be drawing on working theories about what masculinity or being a boy means, suggesting that there is a 'right' or 'correct' way to do gender and that Felix had got his boy performance 'wrong'" (Kelly-Ware, 2016, p. 151). Meanwhile, she held one of the butterfly wings he was wearing outstretched in her hand, and she appeared to be admiring it (Photographs & Research Diary notes 21 May 2014).

Surprisingly from my perspective, Jack's public criticism of Felix passed without comment from Felix himself, the teacher, or anyone else in the vicinity. The

following week, during the first recorded discussion with the teachers (28 May 2014), I relayed what I had seen and heard. Teachers identified that Felix had dressed similarly on previous days including wanting a plait 'on the side'. Someone suggested that Felix wanted to copy Elsa's hairstyle, the hero of *Frozen*, the contemporary children's movie popular with some of the children at the time. In response to me telling the team what I had witnessed and relaying Jack's comments, Grace replied that she had not heard children making negative or derogatory comments in relation to Felix's ways of being. Jasmine and Kelsey concurred 'Nobody says anything - no one stops in their tracks' said Jasmine. 'It is just Felix' said Kelsey. Meanwhile, Davina, the teacher who had been plaiting Felix's wig suggested that we 'keep listening' in response to my expressed concern about Jack's comment about Felix (Transcript of first recorded discussion, 28 May 2014). Felix continued to 'do boy' differently from the majority of his male peers, and was not seen in conflict with Jack again during my research visits.

Jack the 'real' boy co-parents the child he 'growed'

It was clear to me, in my participant-observer role that Jack had performed as a 'real' boy, despite the shift in his thinking about girls and racing cars. He played 'boy games', sat at what he and his peers identified as 'the boys' lunch table' and danced to popular music except when it was obviously a 'girls' song. Then Jack and his mates sat out that track. Jack had also been seen to wear face paint until someone called it 'make-up', and he avoided toe and finger nail painting sessions involving both girls and the occasional 'traditional gender-boundary crossing' boy (MacNaughton, 1999). From my observations, Jack's dramatic play roles related to animals, monsters, or being a spectator (Research photo album & Research Diary notes), typical roles that masculine boys choose or accept during dramatic play (Kelly-Ware, 2016).

One day (16 September 2014) I photographed Jack and his peer Lucas playing with a doll in the highchair. Both boys were visibly ministering to the pale-skinned doll with a cloth and a spoon. In my absence and at my request, Jasmine, one of the teachers later interviewed Jack about what they were doing in the photograph. Jack's narrative went something like this: He (Jack) was the two-year-old baby's dad and Lucas was its mother, but he (Jack) had 'growed' the baby named Jackson and had it at the hospital. He used the pronouns 'his' and 'him' so presumably the

baby was a boy. Jack identified that Lucas had dressed Jackson, but that he (Jack), changed his nappies[56], the 'poo ones'. He told Jasmine that he was feeding the baby and together they take him walking around the place. Jack identified that he and Lucas often played this game. Jack reiterated that even though he 'growed' (sic) the baby, Lucas was the 'mum'. In response to direct questioning Jack stated that he was always the dad and Lucas was always the mum (Conversation transcript, 22 September 2014).

Jack's rich description points to him being able to envisage a play scenario where he and Lucas, his male peer, have assumed roles, which extend beyond traditional gendered and normative ways of being (regimes of truth). Here was evidence in Jack's words (in the previous paragraph) of two boys 'doing sex differently' (Gunn, 2012). In the scenario he described, Jack had given birth, at the hospital to a child he was now co-parenting (in the father role) with one of his Speedway gang peers. Lucas was seemingly compliant in his role as mother, despite being a boy. A second reading highlighted the discourse of assumed heterosexuality reproduced in the play of the two boys. Jack was possibly being constrained by the discourse of heteronormativity as there was no hint of two dads and a baby being a possible family (Kelly, 2012, 2013; Terreni, Gunn, Kelly & Surtees, 2010). Instead we see the traditional, stereotypical family of mother, father, and child reproduced in their play, despite the biological sex of the actors, and Jack's comment that he 'growed' (sic) baby Jackson and 'had him at the hospital' (Kelly-Ware, 2016, pp. 150-153).

Commentary

Throughout the various scenarios of Jack's story (over more than seven months), the teachers and I saw him and his peers "actively involved in constructing, understanding, and negotiating power and identity" (Arthur et al., 2015, p. 81). Children's agency and power were visible alongside examples of boys 'doing boy' in a host of ways (Gunn, 2012). Jack's 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992) for example about car racing and child rearing are discernible. In Kelly-Ware (2016), I related Jack's working theory that girls could not 'do Speedway', describing how "Jack's initial perspective typifies how rooted

[56] Jack's dad stayed at home and was the boys' primary caregiver so his dad had changed Jack's nappies as Jack was now describing himself doing for baby Jackson.

stereotypes are in children's understandings of gender. He was likely drawing on discourses of dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity" (p. 150). Meanwhile, in the Learning Story she wrote, Grace described Jack as having 'an abundance of funds of knowledge [about car racing] from home' (Learning Story dated February - August 2014). Jack's assertion about growing the baby and having it at hospital points to him having some knowledge of pregnancy and childbirth. He assumed the roles of pregnant-father and nappy-changing-parent in his story. When viewed with a feminist poststructural lens, Jack's ongoing story illustrates that his gender identities are 'multiple, partial, and performed' (Kelly-Ware, 2016) rather than knowable, fixed and stable (Robinson & Davies, 2014; Blaise & Taylor, 2012). A further consideration is that Jack (aged 4.5 - 5 years) had matured over this time-period, and his thinking had become more inclusive in terms of sex and gender, and fairness as expressed through his ongoing working theories and his play.

The breadth of Jack's working theories is shown in the three vignettes related to girls and racing cars, his response to a boy wearing a dress, and birthing and co-parenting baby Jackson. Jack's interactions with his peers are primary sites where his working theories about the social world are developing and being expressed (Research Question 1). He was able to verbalise his working theories about aspects of the social world, namely gender- and sex-role stereotyping and sexuality. In Vignette 1, he was likely expressing his working theory based on a racetrack experience from his life beyond the kindergarten, and a related provocation - a second Speedway trip for him and his male peers instigated by Kelsey, his teacher.

Jack also showed an ability to adapt or modify his working theory based on responses from Grace, another teacher, who took up playing alongside him but deliberately did not challenge his sex-role stereotyping of car racing drivers. Jack's parents' voices are missing from these discussions. They neither commented on his Learning Story, nor responded to the Parent Whānau Questionnaire, and they sent their apologies for the Parent Focus Group. In response to Research Question 4 that enquires how teachers might promote an inclusive response to diversity, the teachers' actions were sometimes puzzling from my perspective. Teachers did not always support children to respect the equal worth of others. For example, teachers were seemingly silent in the face of events and attitudes related to a 'boys-only' trip to Speedway, no girls allowed in the sandpit, and the possible regulation of a child

‘doing gender’ differently by another child. Another ‘telling example’ follows that featured in the field texts.

That’s a girls’ song

‘That’s a girls’ song’ serves to illustrate how children were theorising /making sense of gender, sex, and sexuality at the kindergarten, and in their homes and communities. As Caitlyn and Richie sort out being dance partners, there is evidence of what Thomson (2002) describes as children’s own ‘configurations of knowledge, narratives, and interests’ (p. 8). Additionally, there is more evidence of ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992), and some understandings from each child’s “virtual schoolbag full of things they have already learned at home, with their friends and in and from the world in which they live” (Thomson, 2002, p. 1).

One day near the end of the kindergarten session (25 November 2014) two children were doing a dance routine, dipping, and twirling to the song ‘All about the bass’ by Meghan Trainor. Jasmine described a parent in the vicinity commenting, ‘I bet they saw the dance exhibition at the Christmas parade[57] in the weekend’ (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014). At the end of the duo’s exhibition dance routine, children were invited to pair with a friend to dance. Four-year-old Caitlyn, one of the focus children, asked ‘rising five-year-old’ Richie to dance with her. The next song playing was ‘Let it go’ by Idina Menzel from the *Frozen* soundtrack. ‘No, I’m not dancing with you’ said Richie, and Caitlyn took this rejection personally. Jasmine described that Caitlyn walked away with her head down, her shoulders slumped, and she started to cry. Later, Jasmine identified that Caitlyn was ‘quite smitten with Richie’ and that she had drawn a picture of him earlier that day. Now Caitlyn was deeply upset, seemingly because of Richie’s rejection. Jasmine reported that she intervened, saying, ‘Come here Caitlyn, let me help you. What’s the matter?’ Caitlyn replied, ‘Richie won’t dance with me’. By this time, Caitlyn was sobbing broken-heartedly, according to Jasmine.

[57] Christmas parades are common in suburban and metropolitan areas of Aōtearoa New Zealand. They typically involve a series of decorated floats (mostly on the rear deck/tray of large trucks), exhibitions and stalls and are staged in late November - early December.

Both children's parents arrived soon after and heard about the incident from Jasmine. Richie's mother brought him over to Caitlyn who was encouraged to tell Richie that he had upset her. She asked him why he wouldn't dance with her. 'Cos that *Frozen* song is a girls' song, that's what my dad said' replied Richie. At this point, Jasmine interceded. 'But would you dance with Caitlyn if it was a different song?' she asked. 'Yes!' replied Richie, enthusiastically. Hearing this, Caitlyn immediately stopped crying, perked up and looked straight at him. 'What song do you wanna (sic) dance to?' Jasmine asked Richie. And he replied "Ohh, [pause] Katy Perry!" (Conversation relayed by Jasmine recorded in Research Diary, 26 November 2014).

Parent responses

The following day, Caitlyn's mother along with several other mothers attended the Parent Focus Group to discuss their (focus) children's experiences of fairness and difference. Jasmine, who was also present, recounted the narrative 'that's a girls' song' to the women present. Caitlyn's mother identified that this was a novel event for her 4 ¼ year old daughter stating, 'that's the first time that she's actually been hurt by someone else's actions or opinions' (Transcript of Parent Focus Group, 26 November 2014). Arriving on the scene the previous day, Caitlyn's mother described seeing her daughter sobbing – 'she [Caitlyn] was broken'. She suggested that this event, along with recent happenings at home signalled the end of Caitlyn's 'egocentric phase' of development during which time Caitlyn had mostly been oblivious to people in the wider world and their response(s) to her.

The women laughed uproariously at Richie's suggestion that he would dance with Caitlyn to a Katy Perry song, especially given his earlier reason for not dancing to a song from the *Frozen* soundtrack. 'And that's not a girls' song?' they chorused in unison. 'Dad's obviously accepted that song' said another parent. This statement was met with loud agreement -'Yeah, yeah, yeah' (sic) by the female participants. 'Probably because she's hot!' proposed Caitlyn's mum. The group's uproarious laughter continued for an extended period following this statement (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Jasmine, the Head Teacher, continued her story, telling everyone about what happened next. When the children arrived at kindergarten the next day, music was

playing. Caitlyn and Richie danced together again, including at one point to a *Frozen* song. Caitlyn encouragingly said, 'Oh, come on Richie' and he accepted the invitation saying 'Oh, ok!', and he joined in. Again, the parents laughed collectively, and Jasmine concluded saying, 'Caitlyn's had her twirl, and life has returned to normal to her. It was such an interesting thing that played itself out'. Everyone agreed including Caitlyn's mother who stated 'Funny eh? But it's sooo (sic) complicated because even adults miscommunicate what's actually going on' (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Commentary

Unsurprisingly, the dance exhibition associated with the Christmas parade in a nearby urban centre featured dance partners of opposite sexes. Cultural events such as the parade alongside popular culture, including music, send powerful messages to children, and to their parents it seems. Richie's explanation of why he didn't want to dance with Caitlyn gives the impression that he was able to differentiate between what was desirable and acceptable for him, in the context of sex and gender relations and dance partners, before he was even five years old. His expressed rationale was that the music was problematic for him, not that he did not want to dance with Caitlyn. Seemingly, the soundtrack to *Frozen* was no match for Katy Perry, an American singer/songwriter. At least in the minds of the women gathered for the Parent Focus Group, Richie was voicing beliefs acquired from his father.

An Internet search reveals that Perry established herself as a pop superstar in 2008. Her beauty and desirability are legendary, and she appears on lists such as: 'Top 25 hottest chicks ever in Hollywood', 'Women I would love to date' and 'Beautiful women'[58]. Paradoxically, Perry's reported bi-sexuality is a twist to the dominant discourse of heteronormativity or compulsory heterosexuality. The five women gathered supported Caitlyn's mum's assertion that Richie's taste in dance music request derived from his Dad's preferences. There was conjecture among them about possible thinking that Katy Perry was hot, and *Frozen* was not!

[58] http://www.imdb.com/list/ls000557193?start=1&view=detail&sort=name:asc;
http://www.imdb.com/list/ls009893034?ref_=rls_3;
http://www.imdb.com/list/ls073226258?ref_=rls_4.
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-4329004/Katy-Perry-did-just-kiss-girl.html

Children's and parents' working theories are evident in the narrative of Caitlyn and Richie's experiences on the dance floor. The women were quick to conjecture from Richie's comments that if 'Let it go' was a girls' song according to his Dad, and one of Katy Perry's songs was acceptable, then Dad obviously perceived her as sexually desirable. Meanwhile, Caitlyn's mother's perspective added to the teachers' understanding about Caitlyn's uncharacteristic behaviour. Whereas, Jasmine's comment at the end of the 'dance-floor' discussion reveals her insights into children's developing thinking. She stated,

> I find that the most rewarding thing about kindergarten teaching is that ye (sic) know you observe children, and you can step them through things and see a shift where they do gain an understanding, and you can support them. But they have to understand it themselves to make the shift
>
> (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Jasmine appears to be referring to children's cognition and metacognition, potentially the expression of their working theories (Research Question 1), and the teacher's role in supporting them in this complex arena through provocations and/or responses (Research Question 3).

It is noteworthy that Caitlyn's voice was missing from the narrative of her own learning and development. Her developing working theories about herself and others were not documented for her to revisit. Finally, Richie's dad may never have known that his son repeated his view that the theme song from *Frozen* was 'a girls' song'. Instead, when offered a choice as to what song Richie would find acceptable to dance to, he chose the 'hyper-feminine' Katy Perry, for some undisclosed, but much speculated about, reason, finding her preferable or more desirable as an artist maybe.

A third 'telling example' follows where the transcript shows children engaged in a discussion with Kelsey, one of the teachers about kissing, marriage, and babies.

Kissing, marriage, and babies

The conversation was already underway over morning tea, and I began recording at one of the teacher's behest. The conversation featured Petra as the protagonist (she turned 5 and left kindergarten for school the following month) in discussion with Kelsey. Dylan, one of the focus children, Gina and an unidentified boy were also

participants in the conversation as it unfolded. Meanwhile, Jack who is the central character in this chapter (one of the focus children) was implicated in this discussion despite not being present.

Kelsey (Teacher): Why were you going to marry them?

Petra: ‘Cos we want real babies.

Kelsey (Teacher): ‘Cos you want real babies? You don't have to be married to have babies, do you? Who says the rules? Who says you have to be married to have babies?

Gina: ‘Cos…

Kelsey (Teacher): Because why? Who told you that? What do you think Petra? What do you think Dylan?

Petra: I'm marrying, I'm marrying Dylan

Dylan: Nooo!

Petra: I'm marrying actually Jack.

Kelsey (Teacher): So, you're actually gonna marry him? But don't you have to be asked?

Petra: Yes

Kelsey (Teacher): Who's gonna ask you?

Petra: We're just gonna make them marry us.

Kelsey (Teacher): How are you gonna...?

Gina: And then we're gonna kiss them for real.

Dylan: Nooo!

Kelsey (Teacher): How do you make them marry you?

Unidentified boy: My mummy maked (sic) babies

Petra: We just, we just, we just click our hands

Kelsey (Teacher): Just like that! (*Sound of clicking fingers*)

Petra: Yes

Kelsey (Teacher): And they just marry you like that?

Gina: Yes

Kelsey (Teacher): How do you think that? What do you reckon?

Unidentified boy: Umm, um, and my dad kissed my mum and they get married with me

Kelsey (Teacher): That's right. Your mum and dad had you before they got married, didn't they? Ohhh, interesting!

Dylan: I want to marry Jack (*his male friend whom Petra had already singled out to marry*)

Researcher: You want to marry Jack. Do you? Can two men get married, I wonder

Silence

Petra: You have to just have a boy and a girl

Researcher: You know what, my friends are two girls and they got married and had a baby.

Dylan: Nooo!

(Excerpt from conversation transcript, 21 May 2014).

Note: The conversation ended then as Kelsey and the children left after they had finished eating.

The transcript serves to dispel the myth of childhood innocence about issues related to sex and procreation, as we hear children theorising about marriage, babies, and kissing. Petra's ongoing interest in, and theorising about, babies and the connections with her home-life were documented in an undated Learning Story. 'Working theories in Petra's learning' featured in Petra's Profile book written by Grace, one of her teachers. The following excerpt shows Grace reifying Petra's learning:

> Since your interest, curiosity, and inquiry has emerged and developed around babies, I have been doing some more reading and research myself around children developing 'useful working theories for making sense of the world, for giving the child control over what happens, for problem solving, and for further learning' (*Te Whāriki*, MoE, 1996, p. 44). Through socio-dramatic play, Petra is investigating, and practising the responsibilities of adults as parents. She is also developing quite refined working theories about human development, most definitely supported by wide information and experience gained from her whānau [extended family] and supported here in kindergarten. Her understandings have reached a point where they transform into appropriate actions and responses during socio-dramatic play with the support of sensitive teachers (Hedges, 2008).
>
> (Research Photo album, 31 May 2014).

Commentary

Excerpts from Kelsey's conversation with a group of children, and Grace's Learning Story in Petra's Profile book, provide evidence that children have

"knowledge, skills and attitudes, which combine as dispositions and working theories" about kissing, marriage, and babies (MoE, 2017, p. 22). Visible dispositions include courage and curiosity - taking an interest, and confidence - to express a point of view or feeling (Carr, 2001). Prior knowledge was also evident, and supported children to refine their working theories as the discussion shows. These two field texts illustrate different teacher perspectives (Kelsey's and Grace's) about Petra's interest and understandings around sexual reproduction and babies. Both excerpts affirm "various [sanctioned] activities in the home corner, such as mothers and fathers, and young children's participation in kissing games and girlfriends/boyfriends" (Robinson, 2002, p. 420).

Petra, the eldest child present (rising five), and the unidentified boy appeared the most conversant with matters of marriage and sexual reproduction (Conversation transcript, 21 May 2014). This may be what Grace was alluding to when she referred to Petra's 'quite refined working theories' (Learning Story, undated). It is unclear what Grace was suggesting when she wrote 'Her [Petra's] understandings have reached a point where they transform into *appropriate actions and responses during socio-dramatic play* (my italics)' especially given that Petra had initiated the conversation and talked about kissing for real and making real babies.

Gina was following Petra's lead in the conversation, commenting only when it came to discussing kissing 'for real', a seemingly desirable activity (Blaise, 2009b, 2010). Dylan introduced the counter-discourse of same-sex marriage with his surprising suggestion that he wanted to marry his male peer Jack, yet quickly rejected an alternative family construction when I referred to a same-sex couple and their baby. It was the same vehement "No" that he used earlier in the conversation when he rejected Petra's suggestion that she was marrying him.

This conversation between Kelsey and this group of children can be viewed as evidence that heteronormativity is all pervasive in ECE settings (Robinson, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). Kelsey was challenging children to consider non-traditional ways of being, that is that they didn't have to get married, or have a wife, or be married to have a child as in the case of the unidentified boy. Yet, Kelsey was referencing and reinforcing the traditional discourse of feminine passivity by her questioning in

relation to girls getting married. “But don’t you have to be asked?” and “Whose gonna ask you?”

My reference to a same-sex headed family - a lesbian couple and their baby, could be described as the ‘proactive introduction of non-sanctioned, silenced aspects of sexuality’ (Surtees, 2005, p. 25). In addition to attempting to ‘disrupt’ or ‘hijack’ children working theories, (Davis & Peters 2011; Peters & Davis, 2011), I was troubling dominant and traditional discourses of heteronormativity, and compulsory heterosexuality. Promoting an alternative family construction by referring to a same-sex couple and their baby, I could be seen to be engaging in feminist deconstruction or ‘queer questioning’ to disrupt ‘the heteronormative status quo’ (Gunn, 2016, p. 21; Britzman, 1995). Contrastingly, Petra asserted a ‘heteronormative position’ (lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015) when she described an opposite-sex heterosexual union as the way babies are made.

Kelsey was the only teacher I heard engaging in discussions of a sexual nature during the research. There was no evidence on her part of any teacher resistance to, or silencing of, children’s talk about sex and sexuality in the ‘Kissing, marriage, and babies’ telling-example (Conversation transcript, 21 May 2014). Kelsey did not appear uncomfortable, or uncertain about what constituted appropriate ‘teacher talk about and around children’s sexuality’ (Surtees, 2005). From a pedagogical perspective, Kelsey was ‘opening up’ the topic for discussion. Her actions (and mine), in this telling-example, are in keeping with Blaise and Andrew (2005) who argue that,

> instead of shutting down games and play that might make us uncomfortable, we should push ourselves to discuss such taboo subjects as sex-play, same-sex relationships, religion, and death as they emerge in the classroom (p. 56).

The role and responsibility of teachers “opening up spaces in the curriculum for children’s gender and sexual knowledge to be heard, valued and considered” is also addressed by Blaise (2010, p. 1). Such actions relate to Research Question 4 about how teachers might promote an inclusive response to diversity.

Kelsey was using ‘democratising’, a specialist teaching technique (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009) asking various children what they thought, and why. Kelsey was

supporting this discussion topic where children were encouraged to express their working theories about the social world (Research Question 1) through this group conversation. Through Kelsey's numerous questions, she appears to be attempting to provoke children's thinking, and elicit responses from them. The transcript of this recorded conversation shows Kelsey provoking and responding to several children's working theories about sex, reproduction, and marriage (Research Question 3). In the interests of extending their working theories about marriage and babies, I stepped forward to provide a counter-discourse to the heteronormativity I was hearing by asking the children a question about same-sex marriage. Petra rejected my question outright as did Dylan while Kelsey and the children remained silent following my question.

Dominant discourses are evident in the participants' thinking, especially in the children's working theories. The transcript shows that teaching strategies included: not supplying direct answers, responding to, extending, complicating (Hedges 2011), disrupting, and provide spaces for uncertainty (Peters & Davis 2011) in terms of children's working theories, as well as an attempt by me (the researcher) to disrupt the dominant discourse of heteronormativity by introducing a counter-discourse of same-sex headed families. I was modelling, and promoting, an inclusive response to diversity by affirming same-sex marriage[59] and families in keeping with current legislation in Aotearoa New Zealand (Research Question 4).

More adult voices

In the dialogue of some of the teachers, gender/sex binaries (Ervin, 2014) were evident. This phenomenon was also obvious in my observations of Jack and his peers where two distinct, opposite, and disconnected categories of boy and girl or masculinity and femininity existed. For example, in response to me proposing that society is more open and accepting of diversity nowadays (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014), Kelsey responded 'It's unfair though! A girl can be a tomboy, and that's fine. But a boy can't be a boy-girl'. When questioned about this statement Kelsey was unable to answer, 'why not?' merely repeating that it was unfair by society standards. In response to my challenge to

[59] In Aōtearoa New Zealand, civil unions providing legal recognition for homosexual, as well as heterosexual, couples was legislated for in 2008, followed by marriage equality in 2013

Kelsey about her 'universalising', Jasmine proffered an activist stance stating that by repeatedly pushing back, people can be aided to see another point of view. Jasmine added that stereotypes, like racism, could be tackled by people being prepared to speak out (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). A lack of consensus between teachers, and two competing discourses - universalising and activism - were evident in this exchange of views, and these differing perspectives are likely to affect the pedagogy of these teachers.

Meanwhile, during specific discussion about issues related to gender identity and fairness at the Parent Focus Group, parents were subscribing to dominant discourses, which shape their perceptions of truth and power/knowledge around gender and sexuality. "Discourses create reality through language as people interact in social settings" (Warren, 2013, p. 17). Four parents attended the Parent Focus Group on 26 November 2014 along with Jasmine, the Head Teacher and I. There was much discussion about gender related issues. All the participants were women and everyone, except me, was the biological parent of children. One parent had two female children, while the rest were mothers of boys including Jasmine who has adult sons.

Early in the discussion, the notion of 'children's theorising' emerged. Jasmine described how children's thinking is 'developing and changing, and they can modify it depending on who they are talking to or what context they are in'. My comments included that 'trying to work out what is going on for them [the children in this ECE setting] is really fascinating' and that I had noticed, 'the strong influence of popular culture on children's play' (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

The discussion turned to the local Christmas Parade (mentioned earlier in relation to the dance floor incident), and the float that the kindergarten community had entered into the parade. Jasmine expressed surprise that a person dressed as Elsa, the hero of the contemporary Disney movie *Frozen,* outshone Santa in the eyes and minds of most of the kindergarten children present at this community event. She described that:

> Elsa was far more attractive to most of the children on the float than Santa. Most of our children, that's what they were more happy (sic) to see…

> I thought that was incredible! You know Santa was there in his red suit as the finale, and actually it was Elsa they all wanted to be part of
>
> (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

I questioned Jasmine as to whether the children's responses were specific to their biological sex or gender. 'Noo! Oh noo (sic) not at all, not at all! A lot of our boys wanted to be Elsa as well, and turn things frozen and build the castle' she replied (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Later in the discussion, Jasmine gave us an insight about children's thinking that stimulated the parents and me to think about children's interests and their prior knowledge. She described children returning to conversations seemingly to help them to continue making sense of the world,

> Sometimes on the mat, children make reference to things that have happened at home, childbirth or something… If they haven't had the conversation [previously] then it just washes over them. So, I have stopped worrying about that now because generally, the children who respond are the children who have an understanding. So, you'll have a conversation with these children who'll bring it back to you, and other children just move on
>
> (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Two women chipped in with insightful comments; 'Nothing to link it to' and 'Need something to hang it on'. This discussion highlights the complexities of children's thinking, and brings to mind metaphors of 'coat hangers' or 'hooks' in relation to children's learning power (Claxton, 2002), and their meaning making.

Commentary

The material covered in this section on parent and teacher perspectives supports the notion that issues of fairness and difference are context-specific, and that children's thinking is complex, and not always readily understood by adults. The question of whether children's male and female parents have different perspectives is left unanswered. Men's voices are largely absent from this specific discussion and the research project, except possibly where men filled out the Parent/Whānau Questionnaire on behalf of the family. Unfortunately, the biological sex of the person completing the questionnaires was not 'captured'. The sole exception is Richie's father 'gender-marking', mediated by his son, of the hit song from *Frozen*

as a ‘girls’ song’. The absence of men’s voices is a reflection of, and reinforces, the dominant discourse that raising and teaching children is ‘women’s work’.

Concluding remarks

Several vignettes relating to a boy called Jack, one of the focus children, were the central feature of the chapter. How Jack and his peers made sense of various issues related to gender and biological sex had previously been discussed in terms of childhood being policed or regulated (Kelly-Ware, 2016), (Appendix W). Jack’s theorising was explored alongside his teachers’ provocations and responses in keeping with the questions that this research project sought to address. Biological sex and sexuality featured alongside related dominant discourses in the wide range of topics covered in this chapter. The topics included dressing up, parenting, heterosexual and homosexual couples, making babies, dance partners, ‘who is hot and who is not’ in terms of popular music, and popularity stakes between Elsa and Santa at the local Christmas parade.

Children are theorising in their play, through their interactions, and in their conversations as the ‘discussion of findings’ presented in this chapter shows. Jack and his peers - Lucas, Felix, Petra, Rylee, Gina, Dylan, Caitlyn, Richie, and others are social actors and their interactions with their peers, teachers and family members are primary sites where their working theories about the social world are developing and being expressed (Research Question 1). Their working theories about aspects of diversity covered here relate to concepts drawn from literature such as ‘dominant discourses’ and ‘regimes of truth’ or ‘normal’ ways of being (Larremore, 2016; MacNaughton, 2003).

Children can be seen trying out various identities through “…specific bodily practices, gestures, actions, and declarations” (Blaise, 2010, p. 2) in their play as they engage in relationships with their people, places and things (MoE, 1996), and their working theories can be observed. In the vignettes presented, some children were responding in non-inclusive ways by including some peers and excluding others. They were likely drawing from dominant discourses around hierarchies of difference including sex and sexualities. Felix’s hairstyle (Elsa’s look-alike wig) and butterfly wings could be seen to provoke reactions from peers possibly seeking to regulate his performances of gender, whereas Jack’s assertion that ‘Speedway is

not for girls' provoked a teacher to play alongside him and document his learning, reifying a shift from exclusionary thinking to a more inclusive stance, over time. Meanwhile, Richie preferred a Katy Perry song to the theme song from *Frozen* seemingly based on his father's music tastes, and possibly his preferences for female attractiveness, as interpreted by a group of women parents. Finally, Elsa's popularity over Santa's at the Christmas parade was not gender-specific according to Jasmine who declared Elsa 'far more attractive' to boys as well as girls, citing her special abilities to build a castle and turn things frozen as reasons for her appeal.

Meanwhile, Jasmine, the Head Teacher and most experienced teacher at Beech Kindergarten, shared pedagogical insights, describing how children's thinking is context-specific, developing and changing over time. She stated, 'they can modify it depending on who they are talking to or what context they are in' (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014). Jasmine also alluded to the teacher's role when she described stepping children 'through things and see[ing] a shift where they do gain an understanding, and you can support them. But they have to understand it themselves to make the shift' (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Looking back, all four teachers featured in this chapter (albeit Davina's part is very brief). Grace, Jasmine, and Kelsey are all seen provoking and responding to children's thinking in various ways, possibly in keeping with their teaching philosophies, relationships with children, and the discourses that they subscribe to, sometimes without even realising it themselves. When children initiated topics related to gender, sex and sexuality, they were taken notice of. In answer to Research Question 4, teachers were sometimes seen promoting inclusive responses to diversity by supporting children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences. For example, Grace played alongside Jack who eventually relented and took the signs down that read "No girls allowed' and Kelsey opened-up rather than shut-down discussions about sex and sexuality.

At Beech Kindergarten, teachers sometimes appeared to be subscribing to dominant discourses that perpetuate the status quo, rather than offering solutions to discriminatory or exclusionary practices in society (Russell Bishop, 2012). The goal of young children realising their potential in ECE settings and beyond will be

impeded if dominant discourses such as ‘male dominance or superiority’ go unchallenged, for example when Kelsey was silent in the face of Jack’s statement that Speedway was not for girls despite her co-ownership of a racing car. ‘Heteronormativity’, another dominant discourse, is heard in Jasmine’s description of Caitlyn as “quite smitten with Richie at the minute” (sic), or Kelsey not refuting the statement that opposite-sex marriage is the only possibility. Whereas Grace’s obscure comment about Petra’s “quite refined working theories about human development” seemed to be her minimising, or not being explicit about Petra’s ‘mature’ understandings evident in the conversation about kissing, marriage, and babies.

Children’s interest and theorising about babies and reproduction were evident in their comments about marrying ‘cos we want real babies’, and talk about ‘kissing for real’ and ‘making babies’. This evidence contradicts the widely held view that young children are ignorant about such matters. Whilst Kelsey appeared to readily engage in, and open up conversation about these ‘touchy subjects’ through her provocations and responses, she appeared to be suggesting a submissive or passive role when she implied that girls need to be wait to be invited to wed with her questions ‘but don’t you have to be asked?’ and ‘who’s going to ask you?’. This role was in direct contrast to Petra and Gina’s assertive stance expressed in comments ‘we’re just gonna make them marry us’ and ‘we just, we just, we just (sic) click our hands’ (Conversation transcript, 22 September 2014).

Suggesting that girls need to wait to be asked to marry, and not challenging the notion that only a man and a woman can get married are propositions that are contrary to a fair and just world, where gender equity and same-sex marriage are officially sanctioned. They also serve to perpetuate the status quo rather than offer solutions to the problem of gender inequities, the hegemonies of ‘childhood innocence’ and heteronormativity (Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016; Robinson, 2013), and an inclusive society where social justice and equality of the sexes is achieved, and diversity is celebrated.

Looking forward

The following chapter, (Chapter 7) focuses on ethnicity and fairness, following a similar pattern to this chapter. Several focus children who were introduced in this

chapter feature again as they are making sense of the world through their relationships observed during play, mealtime conversations, and in their explorations of ethnicity, diversity, and fairness mediated by their parents' responses to the Parent/Whānau Questionnaire.

CHAPTER 7:
‘NO-ONE WITH BROWN FACES IS COMING TO MY PARTY’: ETHNICITY AND SKIN COLOUR

> Examples are best seen and used as provocations. They should surprise us, make us think, ask critical questions, appreciate the peculiarity of what we have taken for granted, illuminate implicit understandings and values, make narratives stutter, open us up to new possibilities (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 148)

Introduction

Ethnic diversity linked to fairness was another key theme that emerged from this Action Research project. The chapter takes its name from a comment made by Dylan, one of the focus children, during a lunchtime conversation at Beech Kindergarten. Several teachers were overseeing children eating lunch, when Dylan suddenly stated, ‘no-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party’. The ensuing conversation came to be regarded as a significant ‘critical incident’ in the research. It was noteworthy and it fitted the criteria suggested by Moss and Petrie (2002), in terms of an example that was used as a provocation.

In this chapter, children’s ongoing theorising about skin colour and ethnicity is explored, using the lens of ‘working theories’ (MoE, 1996, 2017). Teachers’ provocations and responses to children’s theorising in the area of ethnic diversity and fairness are also explored. There is clear guidance around this significant area of children’s learning covered under Goal One of the Mana Tangata Contribution strand (Table 2) in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017).

This chapter responds to all four research questions, and is structured in sections with each section focussed on a ‘critical incident’ (Tripp, 1993, 1996) or ‘telling example’ (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1983, 1984) drawn from the field texts constructed during the research process. Each section is followed by a commentary which involves researcher reflections where children’s theorising is related to relevant literature, and this research project’s analytical tools - identities and subjectivities, constructs of power/ knowledge, and dominant discourses from the analysis framework (Table 9, Chapter 4). Supplementary concepts that relate specifically to working theories - voicing and teaching strategies (Table 10, Chapter 4) are sometimes evident in the analyses presented throughout the chapter. The first

section relates to a 'telling example' that set the scene for this research theme of skin colour and fairness.

'He's a bit too brown for me. I like white'

Ethnicity and skin colour were important pedagogical issues, and the basis of children's working theories, at Beech Kindergarten. A precursor of what lay ahead occurred around the time that the kindergarten's involvement in this research was confirmed. On an early Reconnaissance visit, Grace related a story to me about children being 'exclusive' about which new dolls they played with. She agreed that I could share this narrative at Beech Kindergarten's Annual General Meeting in February 2014. As the guest speaker sharing about my proposed research, I relayed Grace's story to the audience of kindergarten children's parents.

Grace and other teachers had watched with interest after they introduced two new dolls to complement the existing selection of 'white' dolls in the 'family corner/ dramatic play area'. One of the new dolls had Asian features and female genitalia, whilst the other had Afro-American features and male genitalia. Several weeks after the dolls were introduced, Grace courageously began this conversation:

> 'I'm wondering why this black baby is always left in the bottom of the container or on the floor, and he never has any clothes on? I've noticed that no-one ever chooses this one to play with' Grace commented.
>
> 'That's because he is a bit too brown for me. I like white' replied one of the girls.
>
> 'Yeah! Too dark! We like these babies' said another girl pointing to the white dolls that they had dressed
>
> (Kelly-Ware, AGM presentation PowerPoint, 26 February 2014).

This conversation had shocked and surprised the teachers. I suspect that their shock related to how the conversation made the kindergarten's culturally inclusive 'narrative stutter' (Moss & Petrie, 2002). The conversation had been the catalyst for an 'inquiry-based learning' project about skin colour. Teachers documented and presented children's art-work and their 'voices' as a wall display, which I sighted at the kindergarten when the research commenced. Hence, when a child-initiated conversation about skin colour occurred six months later, during the Intervention phase of the research, it took us all by surprise. The conversation reinforced that

ethnicity and skin colour were still important pedagogical issues, and possible working theories, for children in this place, at this time.

‘No-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party’

On 14 August 2014, 20 ‘big children’ were gathered together eating lunch when suddenly Dylan emphatically stated, ‘no-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party’. This apparently random and startling remark by Dylan was overhead by teachers who signalled to me to listen in. The conversation lasted throughout the mealtime, and I video and audio-recorded it. A transcript of the lunchtime conversation is appended to this thesis (Appendix V).

Dylan was nearly four ½ years old at the time of the ‘lunchtime conversation. His heterosexual parented family identified as New Zealand European, and he had two older siblings - brothers aged 6 and 8 years (Parent Questionnaire Response & Parent Focus Group Profile). Whilst his fifth birthday was some months away, seemingly Dylan was already considering which peers to invite to his party when he stated that - ‘No-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party!’ At the time, and later, we struggled to make sense of Dylan's remark and the possible working theory associated with the statement.

Throughout this lunchtime conversation, I was intrigued to hear a range of children theorising about ethnicity and skin colour, as well as teachers' provocations and responses. This conversation, a significant ‘critical incident’ in the research, caused us all to reflect deeply on children’s working theories/theorising about ethnicity, fairness and friendship, and teachers’ consequential responses. Here was a statement and ensuing conversation that surprised us. In keeping with quote that opened this chapter by Moss and Petrie (2002), it made us think, “ask critical questions, [and] appreciate the peculiarity of what we have taken for granted”. It also caused us to wonder about what “implicit understandings and values” it illuminated (p. 148). This critical incident also made the kindergarten’s culturally inclusive narrative stutter, and opened up new understandings and possibilities for us all.

In the sections that follow, this critical incident is unpacked from a range of perspectives: mine, each of the three teachers', some children's, and a parent's perspective.

Dylan was not the only child possibly expressing a working theory. From the outset, Alfie, one of Dylan's peers from the 'Speedway gang', was clear that he had a brown face. He quickly realised that he was being excluded from Dylan's birthday party, and he appeared angry and hurt. Alfie called Dylan 'a loser', possibly in retribution for his hurt, as the following excerpt from the transcript (Appendix V) shows:

> Kelsey (teacher): Alfie, what did you call him before? You said something to him. You said 'you're a ...
>
> Jasmine (teacher): Did you feel a bit cross about what Dylan was saying?
>
> Kelsey (teacher): Cos you didn't like what Dylan said, did you? And what did you call him? Can you remember the word? It was the 'L' word. You're a l...
>
> Other children: Loo-ser (sic)
>
> Kelsey (Teacher): You called him something cos how did that make you feel when he said, 'you've got a brown face'?
>
> Louie: He said "Loser'
>
> Kelsey (teacher): Yeah! He did say he was a loser, didn't he?
>
> (Excerpt from transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014).

Several minutes later, Alfie stood up for himself and asked Dylan directly if he was invited. Alfie, who was also one of the focus children, exhibited "the self-confidence to stand up for [himself] … against biased ideas and discriminatory behaviour" (MoE, 1996, p. 66). Whilst Dylan did not respond immediately, the transcript shows that later he made a concession and agreed that 'if they have one brown face, they can come'. Dylan was considering who to choose, and after Jack's prompting he explicitly named Alfie. Meanwhile, in response to Alfie seeking an invitation, Kelsey was supporting him to explore his feelings and his skin colour.

> Alfie: And what about me?
>
> Kelsey (Teacher): What colour's your face Alf!
>
> Alfie: Brown

Kelsey (Teacher): How did that make you feel when he said if you've got a brown face, you can't come? How did that make you feel?

Alfie: Sad

Kelsey (Teacher): Sad! Why?

Alfie: 'Cos

Rylee: 'Cos he has a [brown] face, then you're not allowed to come

Jasmine (Teacher): Listen to Rylee's thinking, she knows!

(Excerpt from transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014).

Whilst the topic was new to me in this place, I was familiar with this type of group discussion or hui[60], having previously witnessed several impromptu 'hui' when there were issues of collective concern. These hui were instigated by either teachers or children, for example 'the sandpit hui' about cleaning up the shed adjacent to the sandpit (28 May 2014). Later in the research period, when he was older, and had taken on the mantle of 'one of the big kids', Dylan instigated a hui about hitting (Jasmine - Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014).

Most children in this session were also familiar with the process of group hui. They were the older children who had been attending extended sessions at the kindergarten from 8.30-2.30 four days a week. Only half of the original sample of kindergarten children (whose ethnicities were identified in Figure 3) was represented in this lunchtime group of children. The majority of children present had been identified as New Zealand European, by their parents on enrolment. A lesser number were identified as Māori (or part-Māori), and there were several children identified as Indian, or from various Pasifika ethnicities.

Careful analysis of the transcript of the lunchtime conversation on 14 August 2014 (Appendix V) shows that initially Dylan did not realise that Alfie, and Jamal and Kahu (from his close peer group) were Māori. That meant that these peers would be excluded from his party if he were to uphold his original position about excluding all children with 'brown faces' or if he only invited 'one brown face'.

[60] hui - social gathering or meeting

Kahu: And me?

Jamal: And me?

Researcher: What about Kahu?

Dylan: And Kahu…and Jamal. That's all.

Luther: And me?

Dylan: Ah yeah

Unknown: And me?

Dylan: Ok

(Excerpt from transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014).

Being Māori

Later in the conversation, the boys from Dylan's close peer group, along with several girls and teachers (Kelsey and Naomi the relieving teacher) identified that they were Māori and grouped in front of the 'Waka Project' wall display pointing to their names in their respective waka. They all appeared to celebrate their Māori ethnicity, and hold "positive judgments on their own ethnic group" (MoE, 1996, p. 66). Dylan and others could possibly be excused for not realising that some of them were Māori from their appearances as many of the children and teachers who claimed Māori ethnicity were 'fair skinned'.

This 'not knowing' is unsurprising given that at Beech Kindergarten at this time, of the 13 children identified as Māori by their parent, 5 were identified only as Māori, 1 was identified as Māori along with two stated Pasifika ethnicities, while the other 7 were identified as New Zealand European/Māori or Māori/New Zealand European (Figure 3). Jasmine sought to explain this distinction for the children, identifying that some people were Māori despite their skin colour being a lighter shade; she used the term 'paler'.

Jasmine (Teacher): Sometimes people are a bit paler, their skin is a bit paler, but they are still on the waka.

Kelsey (Teacher): Yip, I'm on the waka and Naomi (the relieving teacher) is on the waka. That means because we're Māori, when our grandparents or maybe your great - great grandparents, they might have been full Māori that means they would have had, what colour skin?

Children: Brown, brown

Kelsey (Teacher): Brown, really, really brown skin. So, all these people here, we've got brown skin. That means we can't go to Dylan's party.

Come over here guys! Who else? Dylan, are any of these people your friends? Ohh guess what? We've all got brown skin. You may not be able to see it, but we've got brown blood in our body. We can't come to your party. Well you said people with brown skin couldn't come!

(Excerpt from transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014).

This identification by teachers and children as Māori making links to various waka (depicted in the wall display), reminded me of a conversation I'd had with Kahu several months earlier. I was a stranger to the kindergarten, and he approached me with his Profile book open at his Pepeha[61] page. Kahu proudly told me, 'I'm Māori and my waka is Kurahaupō'[62]. Then Kahu pointed to himself in the waka labelled Kurahaupo on the wall display. Later I documented a Learning Story (dated 14 May 2014) about his pride and confidence (Visual Diary). "My father is Māori, my sister is Māori, I am Māori, but not my mother" Kahu told me. It took me a moment to realise that he was referring to his mixed ethnicity as Māori/European as only his father was Māori, hence his fair skin. Kahu could be seen "expressing a positive judgment on [his] own ethnic group…, and confidence that his family background is viewed positively" (MoE, 1996, p. 66). His pride and confidence were in keeping with the obligation teachers have to ensure that "Māori children develop a strong sense of self-worth" (MoE, 1996, p. 40).

Like Kahu engaging in identity work related to his ethnicity/cultural heritage, Rylee (age 4 ¾ years) was also working out what being Māori was all about. Initially Rylee's experiences were negative, according to her parent. In her response offered in the Parent Whānau Questionnaire to Question 6 - What is the most surprising or unexpected thing your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family? Rylee's parent wrote:

[61] Pepeha - An introductory speech based on genealogy or 'whakapapa' which literally means to 'place in layers' or 'create a base'

[62] Kurahaupō is the name of one of the seven waka which according to 'Canoe traditions' sailed to Aōtearoa New Zealand in a fleet. This event is sometimes known as the 'Great Migration' and the boats came from Hawaiiki (Canoe traditions, n.d.).

> Rylee is coming to terms with being part Māori but having European features! She does not believe she is Māori and with the way people talk often she has come to some conclusion that it is a bad thing which hurt my feelings which led to big discussions on how we can be different on the outside but the same on the inside! Rylee saw divides within our own family! With many talks, she now loves being part Māori (Rylee - Response 12).

Unlike Kahu, Rylee did not initially express a positive judgment on her own ethnic group and other ethnic groups (MoE, 1996, p. 66). Yet, both children have working theories about their ethnicity, and are expressing them in conversation with adults (Research Question 1). This reference to Rylee's sense-making about her Māori ethnicity shows her parent taking an explicit role in her ongoing theorising, returning to the conversation many times. The parent appears to be describing how they hijacked (Peters & Davis, 2011) or interrupted the child's dual theories - a) that she was not Māori, and b) that being Māori was a bad thing. Rylee's parent's questionnaire response relates to Research Question 2 as the parent describes how families encourage, and respond to children's explorations of ethnicity and fairness.

Butler's (1990, 1999) performativity lens enables us to see children's ethnic identities as partial and performed. Performativity also exposes, "how children's identities are shaped through the power and desirability of being understood in particular ways" (Simpson Dal Santo, 2014, p. 3). These two contrasting examples from the data-set involving Kahu and Rylee occurred pre-and post the 'brown faces' discussion where skin colour and ethnicity were the key focus of children's theorising and teachers' provocations and responses.

Teachers' provocations and responses

My analysis of the transcript of the lunchtime conversation (Appendix V) revealed the three teachers taking distinctly different roles throughout the conversation. I categorised their roles in the conversation as 1) Kelsey, the protagonist - 2) Grace, the champion of children with brown faces - 3) Jasmine, the democratic community builder. The following excerpts illustrate the teachers' respective roles alongside the contributions of Dylan and his peers.

1. Kelsey, the protagonist

Kelsey (Teacher): What if I had a big party on a kindergarten day and invited (then she named nearly all the children at the lunch tables). Have I missed somebody?

Dylan: Mee (sic)

Kelsey (Teacher): Ohh I don't want to invite you though. How would that make you feel? If I had a biiggg (sic) party at kindergarten, and I went 'Oh come in guys' and then when you come to the door and I'll shut the door and I'll go 'No, you can't come'. How would that make you feel?

Dylan: What if I …

Other children: Sad…

Kelsey: Why would it make him feel sad?

Dylan: Maybe I can smash the roof …and I'm in

(Kelsey - Excerpt from transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014).

Kelsey appeared to be trying to get Dylan to connect with his feelings of rejection by not inviting him to her hypothetical party at the kindergarten.

2. Grace, the champion of children with brown faces

Grace (Teacher): What about my beautiful friend Sachin here? Can he come to your party?

Dylan: If they have a brown face, they can't come

Grace (Teacher): So, what about Sachin?

Dylan: Err, if they have one brown face they can come

Grace (Teacher): So, can he come to your party?

Dylan: Err, I can choose (indiscernible) err, I choose

Jack: Alfie

Dylan: Al - fie!

Grace (Teacher): So, you are only choosing one person with a brown face, is that what you're saying?

Dylan: Yeah!

(Grace - Excerpt from transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014).

By describing Sachin as beautiful, and as her friend, Grace was championing Sachin. She could be seen to be expressing a positive judgement about his ethnicity (MoE, 1996). Grace repeated her question several times as if willing Dylan not to exclude Sachin, the child with the brownest face of all.

3. Jasmine, the democratic community builder

> Jasmine (Teacher): What does everyone else think? Like [you] Kahu, have you got any rules about who comes to your party?

(Jasmine - Excerpt from transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014).

There is much to be learnt from children's interactions, and gathering multiple viewpoints from children was Jasmine's aim it seems.

Several months later at the Parent Focus Group, Jasmine described how teachers responded during this incident. Without sharing Dylan's exclusionary statement that began the discussion or disclosing any details of the children involved, Jasmine described the teachers' roles, saying:

> And I retreated and was making sure that all of the other children were able to be heard, and Grace was defending the child who was in the minority group, and Kelsey was being really feisty because actually it triggered something in her, you know. So yeah, we've reflected about that and all of a sudden we could all hear ourselves…"
>
> (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Jasmine's analysis of the teacher roles during this 'critical incident' is consistent with my analysis described earlier. She identified herself as upholding everyone's right to speak, noted Grace's role defending the child with brownest face, and suggested that Kelsey was emotionally triggered by something.

Throughout the conversation when Dylan was professing to exclude others, Kelsey, the protagonist, repeatedly questioned him about how he would feel about being excluded in the way. She repeated the question "How would that make you feel?" to Dylan in various formats twelve times during the conversation (highlighted in green in Appendix V). Kelsey's actions do not appear to fit with pedagogical advice that suggests that 'the challenge for practitioners is to use such insights [about sensitivity and community-building] to blend rather than bulldoze new ways of

thinking" (Waite et al., 2005, p. 273). Kelsey's repeated questioning of Dylan could be viewed as her trying to bulldoze Dylan to think in new, respectful, inclusive ways. Seemingly, she wanted to encourage Dylan (and the other children present) to 'take a walk in someone else's shoes' and show some empathy (MoE, 1996).

However, at this juncture, her questioning could be judged unsuccessful, and her strategy of 'turning the tables' on Dylan seemed to 'inflame' him. Kelsey singled Dylan out to exclude him from her hypothetical birthday party to be held at the kindergarten - 'I'll shut the door and I'll go 'No, you can't come', and this scenario merely succeeded in getting Dylan's back up. Dylan's suggestion that he could resort to violence contravened Beech Kindergarten's Treaty (Figure 1) where it read 'be safe and kind' and 'use gentle hands'. Kelsey's response could also be seen as inconsistent with the Treaty statement that 'teachers help keep you safe' in relation to Dylan's mana, and his wellbeing.

> Dylan: Maybe I can smash the roof …and I'm in
> Kelsey (Teacher): No. I'd say No! I'd ring your dad and say, 'No Dylan can't come'. How would that make you feel Dylan?
> Dylan: Well, what if…
> Kelsey (Teacher): But think about your feelings. If I said to you, 'You can't come, and everybody else can come', how would that make you feel?
> Dylan: Well uhh (sic) I'd jump over the school fence
> Kelsey (Teacher): Would it make you feel sad though?
> Dylan: Noo!

Dylan repeatedly refused to admit that he would be hurt by Kelsey excluding him from her 'hypothetical' birthday party. Whilst Kelsey could be viewed as the protagonist in this conversation, she was also focused on children's feelings because of Dylan's exclusionary statement. The common themes of friendship and fairness, and supporting children's theorising in these areas are visible. Despite repeated questions, Dylan was unwillingly to admit that he would be upset or sad if he was excluded. However, Alfie (as identified earlier), Ruby, Rylee (focus children) and several unidentified children expressed how they would feel if they were not invited to, or excluded from Kelsey's hypothetical birthday party because they had brown faces (as seen in the following excerpt).

Kelsey (Teacher): If I didn't give you an invitation, how would that make, how would that make your heart feel?

Children: Sad, saaaad (sic), sad, sad, sad

Kelsey (Teacher): That's not nice, cos that's, that's, that's… yeah. Oh, what happened Rylee? If I invited everybody and say not you, but I would, how would that make you feel? How would that make you feel Rylee?

Ruby: Sad (loudly)

Grace (Teacher): Can you say what you just said?

Rylee: Umm, break my feelings.

Grace (Teacher): (Repeating it louder for all to hear) Break your feelings?

Kelsey (Teacher): 'Cos that's not very fair, is it? Is it fair to invite some people and not [invite] other people, because they've got different coloured skin? Is that fair?

Rylee: No!

Kelsey (Teacher): Are we all friends?

Rylee: Yes!

Rylee's comment about her feelings had synergies with her parent's statement from their Parent Whānau Questionnaire response described previously. Presumably, Rylee's parent shared their own 'hurt feelings' when Rylee thought that 'being Māori' was a bad thing. This led to discussions between parent and child which resulted in Rylee modifying her working theory, based on an attitudinal shift about her Māori ethnicity.

Dylan was not the only one to have singled out children during the conversation. Teachers had also been naming individual children, suggesting them to Dylan as prospective guests, and questioning him as to whether they would be invited or not. For example, Jasmine asked about Nikuru and Grace asked about Mereana. Reflecting on this tactic, they realised that they had spotlighted specific children by turning the focus on to them such as when Grace mentioned Sachin by name, asking if he could come to Dylan's party. The teachers were likely unaware of an assertion by Bentley and Souto-Manning (2016) that "the eye of the curriculum should never look down on a child as if to say, 'This story is about yoU. Tell us how yoU feel, so that We can understand.'" (p. 204) [Authors capitals]. Later, the teachers

described how they were attempting to challenge Dylan's statement as well as better understand where his thinking was coming from, when they spotlighted Sachin, and his peers from ethnic minorities, individually (Transcript of third recorded discussion, 14 August 2014).

The conversation post-mortem - teachers reflecting in a group

Later that afternoon, there was much talk about the lunchtime conversation, including issues of fairness and justice (Third recorded discussion with teachers, 14 August 2014). Teachers' initial reactions soon after the event provided insights into their provocations and responses to children's contributions to the discussion. , Several teachers also recognised where their own adult working theories about fairness and difference were emanating from. Realising the impact that the discussion had on us all, I developed a Reflection template and invited the teachers to fill it out at a later date in keeping with the Action Research processes - Look, Think, Plan, and Act. I was interested in their reflections once they had had time to consider their reactions, and what they might have learned for future use in relation to Research Question 4 that enquired how might teachers provide an inclusive response to diversity. Some discussion and analysis of their individual, reflective responses appears in the next chapter (Chapter 8). Meanwhile, their initial group responses are shared in the section that follows.

Key ideas related to the 'No-one with brown faces' conversation are now discussed, and illustrated through a focus on teachers' voices as heard throughout the recorded discussion (Transcript of the third recorded discussion with teachers, 14 August 2014). Excerpts from the transcript illustrate teachers' varying theoretical understandings about working theories, and how teachers handle them. A spotlight on working theories and associated teaching strategies follows and this is linked to the concepts of 'living curriculum' and 'interrupting with social justice intent' (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008). Finally, the teachers discuss that affirmative action was needed as a result of them unpacking the conversation. They came to see that Dylan's bias likely related to children who were minoritised due to other characteristics of diversity in conjunction with their skin colour, rather than children identified as Māori such as his close peers.

The ‘no-one with brown faces’ conversation took place on my sixth visit to the kindergarten, three months after the generation of field texts began. It was the first time that I had heard Kelsey claiming her Māori ethnicity in an outright manner. In her Individual Teacher Reflection One (Appendix N) Kelsey had described growing up in a multi-ethnic community stating that ‘Colour wasn’t an issue. And you had the best Aunties who made Island donuts. It was an honour to be invited to the Samoan houses’. She mentions socioeconomic status, values, cultural ways of communicating, and cheekiness. Whilst noting that diversity and differences can be about different cultures and different upbringings, she does not identify herself as Māori. Kelsey’s response to Dylan’s statement was better understood with knowledge of her Māori identity, and knowing that his exclusionary comments were at odds with her upbringing around respecting others (Kelsey - Individual Teacher Reflection One).

During the conversation, in the face of Dylan’s exclusionary statement, Kelsey had boldly declared, ‘I'm on the waka and Naomi (the relieving teacher) is on the waka. That means because we're Māori…’ (Transcript of lunchtime conversation, 14 August 2014). During the recorded conversation later that afternoon, Kelsey identified the issue as a ‘race thing’, linking it to fairness and justice, the focus for the Action Research. In the following quote, Kelsey can be seen defending her response to Dylan’s repeated statement. She appears to have constructed Dylan’s repeated statement as being ‘racist’. It is likely that she was referencing learning outcomes related to children under the Mana Tangata Contribution strand that relate to, “the ability to recognise discriminatory practises and behaviour and to respond appropriately; the self-confidence to stand up … against biased ideas and discriminatory behaviour” (MoE, 1996, p. 66), albeit implicitly.

> Even though everyone is different - everyone should be valued as one…Today, there was no way I could sit there and not go there about it. ‘Cos if that’s a race thing, that’s just not fair, and that’s not justice
>
> (Kelsey, Transcript of third recorded discussion, 14 August 2014).

During the recorded discussion, Kelsey speculated about Dylan’s family background, suggesting that his positioning in terms of his values and beliefs came from his microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). From her teacher perspective, she described not being able to change Dylan, but being able influence how he feels

about things. In this example, Kelsey had been unable to positively influence how Dylan's stance about who he was inviting to his birthday. Instead she could be viewed as "bulldozing rather than blending new ways of thinking" (Waite et al., 2005). Kelsey spoke for other teachers when she noted, "we are pretty quick about jumping on things that don't sit right for us, depending on the situation" (Kelsey, Transcript of third recorded discussion, 14 August 2014).

Kelsey's thinking may have been in keeping with Waite, Rogers and Evans (2013) who assert that, "cultural attitudes from beyond the school, left unmediated, can potentially reinforce negative stereotypical attitudes" (p.272). Kelsey seemed to be trying to support Dylan to be empathetic. Supposedly, she wanted him to admit that he would be hurt if he were excluded from her hypothetical birthday party. Later she recognised that her repeated questioning (highlighted in green in Appendix V) had a contrary outcome (Transcript of third recorded discussion, 14 August 2014).

Kelsey may have been referring to children's 'working theories' when she talked about teachers 'being able to influence' Dylan's stance. She may also have been using a teaching technique known as 'disrupting' (Peters & Davis, 2011) when she identified that teachers 'are pretty quick about jumping on things'. Kelsey was not explicit about this learning outcome or teaching technique. Conversely, Grace explicitly named the children's statements, including Dylan's, as 'working theories' (MoE, 1996, p. 90). At variance with Kelsey, Grace was more hesitant, and less 'black and white' about her role in relation to children's working theories as this quote shows:

> What more could we do for this group? The thing that I struggle with around working theories, the thing that grabs you like - 'Actually, it's not ok to say that that kid can't come to my party cos his skin's brown', or 'no Māori kids can play here' was another example eh? But that's the child's working theory. If the child says to me 'the leaves fall off the tree because the wind blows too hard', I'm not sure when to come in, not hijack it, but if you don't do something…Do you let them continue on that journey of their thinking? Or do you just stop it there?
>
> (Grace, Transcript of third recorded discussion, 14 August 2014).

Grace's thinking around working theories and the teacher's role was being challenged by this research focus on children's theorising concerning diversity and fairness in the social world. In this quote, she can be viewed as comparing children's working theories about the social world vis-a-vis children's working theories about the natural world. Grace questions whether she should treat these working theories in the same way or differently, a surprising stance from my perspective. As mentioned previously, Gordon-Burns et al., (2012) argue that "central to effecting change is that negative attitudes towards difference and diversity are countered with new understandings and knowledge" (p. 7). This notion did not appear to feature in these teachers' thinking, at this time.

Grace's explicit reference to 'not hijacking' as a potential teaching strategy, or response to children's working theories relates to the teachers and I borrowing the term from the TLRI study (Peters & Davis, 2011). These researchers found adults consciously and unconsciously using various teaching strategies in relation to children's working theories. Other possibilities available to teachers included 'disrupt' and 'provide spaces for uncertainty' (Peters & Davis, 2011). Or they may have made choices to 'not supply direct answers', 'respond to', 'extend' and 'complicate' children's working theories about the natural and social worlds (Hedges, 2011). These strategies from a teacher's repertoire, possible responses to children's working theories, informed the analysis framework first used in Areljung and Kelly-Ware (2016)[63], the same framework used herein with the added strategy of 'unpack[ing]' (Table 9).

The teachers in the present study each expressed an explicit commitment to social justice in their teaching in their Individual Teacher Reflection One (Appendix N). One might therefore expect that they would intervene and take action if children's working theories were in conflict with the intent or learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996). Whakamana Empowerment and children's mana are fundamental premises of the curriculum. Genishi and Goodwin (2008) discuss an appropriate action termed 'interrupting with social justice intent' when they argue that, "the

[63] NOTE: A fuller discussion about the teacher's role in relation to children's working theories can be found in the Chapter 4 *Literature Review* and in Areljung and Kelly-Ware (2016 - Appendix B), one of the two published articles that explores field texts/ research texts from this research project (See also Kelly-Ware, 2016 - Appendix W).

living curriculum cannot be purchased and requires continual listening and participation - a willingness to speak social justice into existence by literally interrupting those whose language demeans child learners and their families" (p.277). The teachers at Beech Kindergarten were seen doing this to varying degrees during the 'no-one with brown faces' critical incident.

Teachers speculated about the children's knowledge and understandings about race, ethnicity, and skin colour during our recorded discussion. Jasmine identified the lunchtime conversation as, 'a bit of a gem happening right there in front of you'[64]. Here was the living curriculum being enacted as we were all listening and participating in the conversation as it unfolded over the lunch table. Jasmine went on to describe the 'kai table' as a great place to sit and have some interesting conversations (Jasmine, Transcript of third recorded discussion, 14 August 2014).

Teachers agreed that collectively they needed to do more in terms of 'affirmative action' to champion 'minoritised' children, that is children not from the 'dominant group', in similar ways to what they had done in the past. In hindsight, they also considered the possibility that Dylan's working theory was not about Māori ethnicity per se. Despite the group identification as Māori, what transpired during the conversation signalled that Dylan's likely focus related to skin colour and language differences, rather than Māori with 'brown skin'. With deep concern, they identified that out several children had been singled out, and these children were not invited to Dylan's birthday party. These children, Sachin, Mereana and Nikuru for example, had darker skin, and English as an additional language, which distinguished them from the majority of children at Beech Kindergarten who were either New Zealand European (Pākehā) or Māori[65] or both.

Another telling example, which followed the lunchtime conversation, is now described and analysed.

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[64] I suspect Jasmine was referring to me and my doctoral thesis. This critical incident has been a 'gem' in terms of the field text and research texts created as a result of the lunchtime conversation.
[65] The issue of the bicultural framing of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017), and importance of bicultural development (Broadley & Jenkin, 2012) and their relationship to the multi-ethnic nature of society in contemporary Aōtearoa - New Zealand is not covered to any extent in this thesis due to the word limit. Meanwhile, Rau & Ritchie (2005, 2011), Ritchie (2013), Ritchie & Rau (2008), Williams, Broadley & Lawson Te-Aho, (2009) and others have covered this issue well elsewhere.

‘We’re having an all-Māori Party’

Several days later, some of the boys led by Kahu, ‘one of the big kids’ told Dylan that they were ‘having an all-Māori party’ and that he was not invited. This statement, possibly related to these children’s working theories, was reported to me by teachers following on from the conversation about ‘birthdays and brown faces’ (14 August 2014). The all-Māori party may have related to Kahu’s working theory about his Māori identity (See earlier discussion in this chapter about Kahu’s pride in his Māori identity - Learning Story dated 14 May 2014). Another relevant factor in this discussion relates to Dylan’s close peer group. Dylan’s original position of excluding anyone with brown faces from his birthday party had upset Alfie who called him a loser. Along with Kahu and Jamal, Alfie had seemingly recognised Dylan’s “biased ideas and (proposed) discriminatory behaviour” (MoE, 1996, p.66) towards them, despite them being his close male peers.

These three boys were also part of the contingent of teachers and children who claimed their Māori ethnicity during the ‘no-one with brown faces’ conversation. As they grouped together in front of the 'Waka Project' wall display pointing to their names in their respective waka, they could be seen to have developed “positive judgments on their own ethnic group” (MoE, 1996, p.66).

Commentary

In this section, researcher reflections, connections with relevant literature, the research questions, and some constructs from the analytical frameworks are explored. The topics that arose throughout this chapter are now revisited in a reverse fashion. The following discussion focuses on the last topic mentioned first, beginning with the proposed all-Māori party, traversing the ‘no-one with brown faces’ conversation, and ending with the children playing with dolls responding to Grace’s provocative questions.

It is likely that Dylan was not invited to the ‘all-Māori party’ because he was not Māori. It is also possible that Dylan’s peers especially Kahu, who was nearly five years of age, and proud of his Māori heritage, was proposing to exclude Dylan in retribution for his ‘exclusive’ birthday party guest list. There is a remote possibility that the proposed party, to which Dylan was not invited, fitted with a child’s (children’s) working theories connected to the political party of the same name -

the Māori Party founded on kaupapa Māori[66] (Māori Party, n.d.). Around this time, political parties were in the news in the lead-up to the General Election in Aotearoa New Zealand, scheduled for 20 September 2014 (approximately one month later).

Given that "working theories are the evolving ideas and understandings that children develop as they use their existing knowledge to try to make sense of new experiences" (MoE, 2017, p. 23), perhaps some of the children knew of the existence of the Māori Party. They may have connected this knowledge with their exclusion from Dylan's birthday party as they tried to make sense of their close peer's rejection of them. Then they proposed their own party confident in the fact that many peers shared the same ethnic identity; they were Māori, and proud of it. Their ethnicity had been affirmed and celebrated during the lunchtime conversation when they all stood together with two of their teachers, and pointed to their respective waka that they had descended from, that were part of the wall display.

This narrative sounds plausible and could be seen to fit with developing thinking around working theories, and the notion that many of their theories retain a creative quality (MoE, 1996, p.44). Additionally, these children who identified as Māori potentially had 'funds of knowledge' from their homes and communities (Lovatt, Cooper & Hedges, 2017) about the General Election, the Māori Party and the Māori Electoral Roll[67] (Electoral Commission, n.d.).

There are strong connections between the themes of children's working theories and the discourses that children were 'caught up in' discussed in this chapter thus far. During the lunchtime conversation, Dylan could be seen to be subscribing to the discourse of 'whiteness' or 'white dominance' as he discussed the guest list for his birthday party with his starting position that 'no-one with brown faces' would be coming. Birthdays can be seen to be related to children's identity-work including 'being nearly five'. Expectations of the older children by adults, teachers and

[66] Kaupapa Māori - a Māori approach that assumes the normalcy of being Māori - language, customs, knowledge, principles, ideology, agenda

[67] Every 5 years, Māori who are eligible voters choose to be on the Māori electoral roll or the General electoral roll. Voters on the Māori roll vote for a candidate in their Māori electorate when they vote in the next two General Elections (3 yearly). There are 7 designated Māori electorates that translate into seats in Parliament out of 120 seats. People who identify as Māori make up 18% of the population of Aōtearoa New Zealand.

children themselves have all been found to be highly significant in research with young children (Carr, 1997; Stephenson, 2009b), with children typically acting up to these expectations.

MacNaughton (2005) also described birthday parties in research related to young children's understandings around 'race'[68]. Showing children a range of 'persona dolls'[69] with distinct racial features, researchers asked children to consider "which doll looked most like they did, which doll that they liked most and which doll they would like to come to their birthday party?" (p. 217), and the rationale behind their choices. Meanwhile, in *Bad guys don't have birthdays: Fantasy play at four*, Paley (1991) describes her ongoing narrative work with children around fairness, fantasy, and friendship, referring to the cultural capital that 'birthday parties' have for children.

Children's fifth birthdays are generally celebrated in ECE settings with much ritual, and shared food including birthday cakes (Albon, 2015). This significant birthday has traditionally been associated with starting school, an important transition from being one of the 'big kids' to heading off to primary school. This 'rite of passage' and milestone birthday is significant in Aotearoa New Zealand. Anecdotally, birthday party 'invitations' have much cultural capital in ECE settings, as children hand out invitations to chosen peers to join the celebrations in their homes or public venues.

Despite 'brown faces' being a difficult conversation topic, teachers did not shy away from the discussion. Teachers were seen to be inviting this difficult conversation, despite race talk always being difficult (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Pollock, 2004; Vittrup, 2016a, 2016b). In their various ways, Kelsey, Jasmine and Grace could be seen to be 'opening up' the conversation. They apparently wanted the conversation to continue, and supported and encouraged children to participate.

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[68] The Preschool Equity and Social Diversity Project (PESD) funded by the University of Melbourne and the Australian Research Council involved persona dolls and 111 preschool children, and features in a number of MacNaughton's works (2003, 2005).

[69] Introducing difficult and controversial issues to young children in ECE settings has been supported through the use of persona dolls (Brown, 2001; Derman-Sparks & the ABC Taskforce, 1989). Often used to raise awareness of discriminatory behaviours amongst children, these life size (three- to four-year-old child) dolls have their own personalities, developed by their user. The adult acts as a voice and an interpreter with a persona doll (Brown, 2001).

There was no suggestion of teachers trying to 'shut down' Dylan or the conversation.

The teachers responded individually to Dylan's provocative statements, and it could be argued that there was not a group response from them. What also appears absent from the conversation is any reference to the Kindergarten Treaty. During this critical incident, there was no mention of 'being kindly' or 'making friends' - statements from the Kindergarten Treaty (Figure 1) that set out 'ways of being' i.e. respecting and caring for people that they were all trying to follow in this place (Figure 2 - Treaty Explanation).

In the conversation post-mortem, the teachers appeared cognisant that an official reprimand might drive some views underground (Waite et al., 2013). Despite Kelsey's emotive response occurring because she was triggered (Jasmine - Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014; Kelsey - Individual Reflection Two), these teachers generally engaged in 'sensitive pedagogical interventions' designed to help children develop social skills (Waite et al., 2013). Robinson (2005a) argues that "learning that disrupts and challenges the individual's discursive locations within discourses relating to difference" needs to be supported (p. 176). There was some evidence of teachers disrupting Dylan's exclusionary position based on skin colour - his and others.

Prior to this research beginning, Grace reported to me that several girls playing with the dolls could be seen to be alluding to the dominant discourse of 'whiteness' (Davis, MacNaughton & Smith, 2009) and 'white superiority' (Austin & Hickey, 2007). Comments 'a bit too brown', 'too dark', and 'I like white' in response to Grace's provocative questions illustrated that these girls had not yet developed "positive judgements about other ethnic groups" (Kelly-Ware, AGM presentation PowerPoint, 26 February 2014; MoE, 1996, p.66). Despite girls' voices being heard at the opening of this chapter, they have not been prominent throughout the discussions. The lunchtime conversation was dominated by Dylan and his male peers. Again girls' relative silences, and lack of audible responses are noted.

The teachers' provocations and responses (Research Question 3) described herein were mostly consistent with 'key curriculum requirements' for young children outlined in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996). These requirements identify that children need

“adults who can encourage sustained conversations, queries, and complex thinking, including concepts of fairness, difference, and similarity” (p.26). Teachers also respond to children’s working theories, and promote an inclusive response to diversity by supporting them to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences (Research Question 4), and by involving their parents and families in their meaning making as we have seen in the previous chapters.

Involving parents – rich triangulation or a missed opportunity

Sharing documentation such as Learning Stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012) or having informal conversations with families about children's developing understandings supports them to engage in children's thinking and meaning-making processes, alongside teachers, and the child them-self.

Involving parents provides rich triangulation and adds to teachers’ understandings about children’s theorising. Conversely, teachers’ knowledge of the child will be limited if parents are not included in children’s learning for reasons such as language barriers (as was the likely reason for the ‘nil response rate’ to the Parent Whānau Questionnaire from families whose home language was not English), or because teachers miss opportunities, or are selective about who they tell what to.

Several focus children’s mothers, including Dylan’s, were present at the Parent Focus Group. From my perspective, Dylan’s mother did not appear to have any prior knowledge of the ‘critical incident’, from which this chapter takes its name. Nor did Dylan’s mother appear to connect the incident with her son Dylan when Jasmine alluded to the ‘lunchtime conversation’ as discussed earlier. This is unsurprising given that Jasmine did not identify the controversial statement or the child protagonist during the Parent Focus Group. The context of Jasmine’s sharing about the teachers’ respective roles in the ‘no-one with brown faces’ conversation was her sharing how analysing ‘data’ from this research, such as reviewing audio and video recordings, ‘had caused all of us to stop and think’ and was ‘really revealing’ (Jasmine - Transcript of Parent Focus Group, 26 November 2014).

At the Parent Focus Group, a second example arose when Jasmine described how teachers try not to make judgements about what is different between home and the kindergarten, and how they preface things for children by saying ‘At kindergarten...’. She described the protocols around lunches and suggested that,

‘some children need a bit of coaching if it’s a little bit different to how it is at home’. Adding my perspective that young children are able to differentiate between when swearing is and is not appropriate in different contexts in their lives, I recited the line ‘I spy with my little eye something beginning with ‘F’’ with no thought for the statement’s origins. Dylan’s mother immediately responded “Oh really! Wasn’t my son, was it?” “Mmm, yip. He didn’t say the word. He just said the ‘F’ word’” responded Jasmine (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014). This comment was followed by raucous laughter. Nevertheless, it was another example of Dylan’s parent hearing second hand about something that Dylan had said, following teachers having shared the comment with me, and me thoughtlessly repeating it.

Teachers acknowledged that not involving Dylan’s family in his meaning-making around skin colour and ethnicity was a missed opportunity (4th and final recorded discussion with teachers, 27 November 2014). At the time, we were discussing critical incidents and telling examples from the research, and thinking about what had been learned that could be used to change or improve their social practice (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009).

> Jasmine: We talked about the ‘brown faces’ [incident], how we acknowledge that we think that we probably missed an opportunity there to make some connections with home. And that we’ve reflected on that eh?
>
> Grace: Yeah
>
> Jasmine: We were in it before we knew it, and then moved on and didn’t probably clarify some of what might have happened there with [Dylan’s] mum and dad about whether there was a context that fitted with that at home, that could have made sense from another perspective
>
> Grace: Yeah, that’s right
>
> Jasmine: Made sense, made sense of it you know and, so we were aware of that eh?
>
> (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014).

Jasmine identified that this omission was unfortunate as Dylan’s parents could have added another perspective to help everyone understand his thinking – ‘where he was coming from’. This realisation was significant given the rhetoric about ECE being about partnership with families.

Later, Jasmine noted that whilst 'some topics may not be written about in a child's portfolio, it will have meant that you have had a conversation with the parent' (Jasmine, Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). This suggestion was shown not to be the case in two separate incidents with Dylan's family - 'no-one with brown faces' and 'the 'F' word'.

As we talked about building community at Beech Kindergarten, Jasmine identified ongoing difficulties that she had experienced over a number of years getting parents to write things down.

> But I did think how easily those parents contributed at the Parent Focus Group. I have often thought about how other kindergartens might do settling meetings and or home visits. But actually just to get a group of parents and have a chat sometimes eh? There was a lot of richness that came out of those [women's conversation], and actually it was quite effortless.
>
> (Jasmine, Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014).

At the Parent Focus Group, we discussed questionnaire responses about whether their children noticed aspects of diversity and difference such as social class, sex and gender, and skin colour. The mothers of Caitlyn (aged 4 ¼ years) and Felix (4 ½ years) both identified that they did not think that their children noticed 'any of that stuff'. Dylan's mother disagreed, saying 'Yeah, I think they do'. The conversation turned to children's ages, their expanding peer group, their place in the family, and whether they had older siblings or not. The participants agreed that these factors all affected children's thinking and actions about diversity, in addition to how they regarded others outside of their immediate family.

Vignettes provided as conversation starters for the Parent Focus Group described various scenarios including skin-colour and cultural preferences in terms of food (Appendix J). These vignettes were not formally discussed beyond participants having a cursory read at the outset. Although Jasmine alluded to them when she said,

> I think…if you are reading the vignettes that you can't divorce yourself from your own value base, what's ok for you or not ok, what's acceptable in your home. Those things are often value based, core beliefs, or things that might trigger a reaction or response to certain things.

Hence, there was little discussion about issues related to ethnicity and fairness, except when Jasmine described scenarios when there was a much larger cohort of Punjabi-speaking children and families involved in the kindergarten community prior to this research.

The third party in ECE is children's families and whānau. There has been little mention up to this point of families and whānau in terms of children's thinking about ethnic diversity linked to fairness. Hence, their views are now explored in detail to answer Research Question 2 that enquires: How do families describe, encourage, and respond to children's explorations of fairness and difference?

Parent Whānau Questionnaire

As part of this research, responses were sought from parents and whānau via a Parent Whānau Questionnaire which asked two specific questions related to children's responses to human diversity and difference, beyond their immediate family. Respondents were asked to please describe their children's responses to two questions:

Question 5. What is the most heart-warming thing your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family (what made you proud of them)?
Question 6. What is the most surprising or unexpected thing your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family?

The Parent Whānau Questionnaire was handed out to the majority of kindergarten parents in mid-August 2014, around the same time as the critical incident that is the centrepiece of this chapter. Therefore, I was interested to read reference to this 'critical incident' in a responses received the following month. Unlike Dylan's family who were not informed, Rylee's family had heard from teachers about Dylan's 'controversial' comment, and Rylee's 'cute' response,

> There was a discussion at kindy about brown faces?! Some lads were very upset as a kid made a remark about not allowing brown faces to his birthday! The teachers informed me that Rylee made a comment 'Don't say that, it's not nice, it will break your feelings'
>
> (Question 5 - Rylee - Response 12).

Informal conversations about children's learning with parents are likely to reveal rich insights. These insights can enable teachers to play a mediation role in children's learning as expected in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996). Whilst teachers did not discuss the lunchtime conversation with Dylan's family, possible links can be seen between Dylan's family questionnaire responses and the critical incident. Their responses read:

> All my boys (3 boys aged 4, 6 and 8) have easily made friends with all different children with no issues and never ever questioned their 'differences' i.e. race, age, ~~sex~~ (sic) gender, skin colour, hair colour etc. To them a friend has always been a friend no matter what.
>
> (Question 5 - Dylan - Response 23)
>
> Probably not quite what you are after…but one "stand-out'' thing was when my eldest was explaining about another child of different skin colour as we have never 'differentiated' before. His explanation was "the boy with the burnt coloured skin". Made me giggle and realise how much we have never singled others out and was a learning curve for me to realise children do actually notice the differences in others.
>
> (Question 6 - Dylan - Response 23)

At the Parent Focus Group which occurred after the Questionnaire responses had been returned (mid-September), Dylan's mother disagreed with several other women present who expressed the view that they did not think their children noticed aspects of diversity/ differences between people, as discussed previously. Dylan's mother argued that children do notice differences, and explained that she tried to get her children to look past people's differences. 'What I want to drill into my kids is we can all rock this world differently, but at the end of the day we are all just people' (Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

The family's position expressed by Dylan's mother that they did not question differences or single others out, was mirrored by many other respondents who described 'not pointing out differences'. These families seemed to be promoting that groups and communities are homogeneous, as they do not recognise differences within them (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). A number of Parent Whānau Questionnaire respondents, and several participants at the Parent Focus Group took this tack, as well as universalising or ignoring differences. Macfarlane (2004) argues that when

all people are treated the same, the danger is that "individual differences, cultural identities, and culturally preferred values and practices will be marginalised or ignored" (p. 12).

When people universalise or ignore differences they can also be seen to be 'colour blind' (Austin & Hickey, 2007; Robertson, 2004; Sapon-Shevin, 2007, 2010) or 'colour mute' (Pollock, 2004; Vittrup, 2016a). Colour blindness is a dominant discourse, and "a privilege that only applies to white people" (Robertson, 2004, p. 27). In various research projects, the children of non-white families were seen to be more accepting of difference probably because they do not have the privilege of 'whiteness' (Austin & Hickey, 2007; Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006; McIntosh, 1989, 1990).

Of the 21 responses received to the questionnaire, two were blank or had a question mark in the response space for Question 5 about their child's heart-warming action in relation to difference. Whereas for Question 6 about their child's surprising or unexpected action in relation to difference, six responses were blank and two had a question mark in the space provided. Approximately 50% of the combined responses to these two significant questions were blank. Anecdotally, several parents reported that they had found it difficult to answer these two questions as they have never considered the topics before.

Information about children's responses to people who were different to them and their family were mediated by their parents via their questionnaire responses. The children were not questioned directly by the teachers or researcher. Responses that described what children said or did in relation to people who were different from their family (Questions 5 & 6) were categorised according to aspects of diversity. Examples of responses are now given alongside categories such as homelessness: 'wanted to give homeless man some kai' (Response 30); skin colour: 'Asked if an African man had his skin painted?' (Response 22), 'described a child as the boy with the burnt coloured skin' (Dylan - Response 23); ethnicity: 'I don't like Indians. Turns out a young Indian boy was not sharing the trains nicely and our son got annoyed with him!' (Response 43); language differences, 'she really only comments on people speaking different languages and its only to say, 'they are

speaking Māori'' (Response 34); facial features: 'She laughed at a man with a full facial moko[70], and the man laughed and pointed back at her (Layla - Response 27).

After questionnaire responses had been returned, a parent approached me and admitted that she had left the response to Question 6 blank. She had since realised that she did have something to contribute. Whilst the conversation was fairly brief, it provided a previously unconsidered perspective. The parent told me several stories - one about her son mistakenly identifying numerous Asian women that they saw at the supermarket as his mother's sole Asian friend. The second story had come from her Asian woman friend who told her about a group of young Asian children who mistook a busload of tourists for their grandparents. The parent went on to describe how, despite being Asian themselves, these children shared her son's inability to differentiate between strangers and individuals that they knew well based on their ethnic /racial similarities (Research Diary, 23 September 2014).

Seeing, and not seeing difference

These Parent Whānau Questionnaire responses and conversations cause me to reflect on 'seeing and not seeing' difference. They also made me question whether Dylan's working theory was about skin colour or ethnicity. Dylan did not appear to know that several of his close male peers were Māori or maybe he did not consider them to have brown faces, yet these peers readily identified as Māori when prompted. This raises the question about whether other children could differentiate. Perhaps it was more difficult based on a number of children having dual heritage, with one parent being Pākehā such as Rylee, Alfie, Layla and Caitlyn. If parents and teachers do not name and affirm differences in race, ethnicity and skin colour, then it is likely that more children will grow up to be colour-blind or colour-mute (Austin & Hickey, 2007; Gutiérrez, 2007; Pollock, 2004; Robertson, 2004; Sapon-Shevin, 2007, 2010; Vittrup, 2016a;). At four years old, if children are unable to differentiate between people they know and strangers on the basis of racial characteristics that they share, then this ability possibly develops later. And what of people whose skin colour and facial features do not support easy recognition of their ethnicity?

[70] Ta moko – symbolic facial tattoo

The following examples drawn from questionnaire responses and Parent Focus Group discussion relate to children's abilities to see difference, to differentiate - to make a distinction. In the latter examples, the issue is whether parents support children's understandings in this area or not. If Dylan was primarily concerned with skin colour and not Māori ethnicity, then what of his peers? The questionnaire responses suggest that other children saw or knew about differences in this area, and parents were sometimes confused about what course of action they should take. The number of blank sections or question marks on the response form for Question 5 and Question 6 show that parents were either unwilling to respond, or at a loss as to how to respond, to questions about their children noticing, and responding to, diversity and difference beyond their families. In the following section, quotes from Caitlyn's mother sum up the confusion that some parents feel, and suggest that teachers could provide leadership with parents in this regard.

Caitlyn's family answered the question that asked: How important is it for children to learn positive messages about fairness and difference? The parent response had a hand written comment on the questionnaire that read, 'We don't highlight differences because then they become obvious differences. We prefer to allow them to blend in' (Caitlyn - Response 15). This response could be categorised as an example of being colour-mute (Vittrup, 2016a). This response was consistent with Caitlyn's mother's statement at the Parent Focus Group: 'We don't teach our children about differences, not purposely. Differences just aren't really a topic of conversation in our house'.

Then she went on to describe how Caitlyn's 7 year old sister is starting to figure out stuff about differences in races. When the 7 year old was asked about what colour skin their South African friends have, she replied, 'They are just like us'. Caitlyn's mother found it interesting that her daughter thought their 'coloured' South African friends were just like them (Caitlyn's mother - Transcript of Parent Focus Group, 26 November 2014).

Whilst Caitlyn's mother did not elaborate on this scenario, on their questionnaire response the family was listed as having dual ethnicities - NZ European/ Māori. This was a revelation to me, as I am not sure anyone had mentioned it, or even that I had noticed it before I began writing up this thesis. Was this more colour blindness

on my part, or another case like Kelsey where the family did not sing their ethnicity from the rooftop, so to speak.

Caitlyn's mother: "I hadn't really thought about it before the questionnaire. It raised a few questions. We just accidentally haven't. And is that cool? What's better? To actually talk about these differences and really highlight it, and then they get their heads around it quickly…"
Alfie's mother: "Just accept what's going on?"

(Parent Focus Group Transcript, 26 November 2014).

Follow-up interviews were not held with parents or families after the Parent Focus Group, so the extent of the confusion expressed by Caitlyn's mother (herself the parent of a child with dual Māori/European heritage) was not canvassed further. Nevertheless, her brief responses signal an area where teachers could provide some leadership, giving families a steer about what they might say and do in relation to their children's working theories about ethnicity and skin colour.

Questionnaire responses and the Transcript of the Parent Focus Group confirm that Caitlyn's family, and many other families at Beech Kindergarten, were homogenising or universalising ethnicity and skin colour differences. Diversity and difference are being ignored when people are not seeing differences (being colour-blind) or not naming differences (being colour-mute) or suggesting that 'we are all the same' or that 'we are all human'. Hence, diversity is not being seen as 'a rich resource for life and learning' (Booth & Ainscow, 2011, p.23), and silence prevails.

This dominant discourse of homogenising or universalising ethnicity and skin colour differences was surprising given that a number of children engaged in this research encountered multiple racial or ethnic groups in their own family make-up. Fifty percent (50%) of the children attending Beech Kindergarten were identified by their families as belonging to more than one ethnic group (Figure 3). Either their parents were ethnically different from each other; as was the case with five of the eight focus children - Ruby, Caitlyn, Archer, Layla and Rylee; or one or more of their parents identified as mixed heritage. These are complex issues for a young child to make sense of, and working theories are highlighted as an area where adult mediation is likely required.

Notwithstanding the high percentage of children identified as being from more than one ethnic group, language diversity (or language differences) was barely noticeable at Beech Kindergarten. Teachers and some children reported that, in a small number of families, other languages besides English were spoken at home. Children were curious when they heard their peers conversing in language other than English, for example, Sachin and Sandeep spoke to each other in Punjabi in their play. Additionally, parents and caregivers were sometimes overheard speaking their home language with each other or with their child at drop-off or pick-up times.

Despite the 'language of instruction' at the kindergarten being 'English', many Māori 'loan words' (Macalister, 2005a, 2005b) were audible in adults' and children's conversations. This was unsurprising given that Te Reo Māori is one of the official languages of Aotearoa New Zealand, and in ECE there is a bicultural curriculum that includes a commitment to uphold the Treaty of Waitangi. Children learn about ethnic and language diversity through their everyday encounters with people, places, and things (MoE, 1996).

Parents are often surprised to find that research shows 'weak correlations' between parents' and children's racial attitudes (Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006). Vittrup and Holden (2011) concluded that without explicit conversations about race, children are more susceptible to influences from other sources such as peers and the media. Therefore, as this research has shown, children are noticing differences between themselves and others, despite what parents are saying or not saying, seeing or not seeing. Children are being influenced beyond their immediate family. At the Parent Focus Group, parents noted that there are more influences on their children when children go to school, and are further away from their family's influence. Hence, teachers have a responsibility, as well as clear curriculum obligations to ensure that children develop positive judgements about their own ethnicity, and the ethnicity of others (MoE, 1996, p.66) during their early childhoods, and to provide the language to do this.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has explored children's theorising concerning ethnicity and skin colour, and discussed whether adults provoke and/or respond to such theorising, and how they do so. The main points derived from the critical incident 'no-one with

brown faces is coming to my birthday party' that is the centrepiece of this chapter are now summarised, along with other significant observations from the relevant field texts, to conclude this chapter.

This discussion has shown that teaching is a complex ongoing serious business as is children's learning. This research highlights that identity work relating to others, ethnicity and skin colour, friendships, empathy and understanding about bias and prejudice and fairness are all part of the highly significant work that children are doing especially when they are four-year olds. Children are interested in ethnicity as the 'lunchtime conversation' and relevant mini-narratives drawn from Parent Whānau Questionnaire responses show. Many children had knowledge, attitudes, understandings and working theories in this area of social diversity. Children participated in the lunchtime conversation, and other conversations with their parents and whānau, based on their understandings. Each of the teachers took a different role during the lunchtime conversation based on their individual subjectivities, perspective and positioning (Moss, 2016).

This conversation and the teachers' subsequent reflections about it - on the day, and some time later (see Chapter 8 for further discussion) caused them to have several realisations individually and as a team. In hindsight, the teachers realised that a valuable opportunity was lost because they had not attempted to explore or triangulate Dylan's comments during the 'no-one with brown faces' lunchtime conversation with his family. There is no clear explanation for this 'missed opportunity'. Perhaps this 'pre-prejudice' on Dylan's part was something considered to be 'difficult knowledge'. In Kelly (2014), I concluded that "knowing children well, and involving their families in discussions about their current thinking and understandings, can lead to rich analyses of their meaning making" (Article 5, p.1). This was indeed a 'lost opportunity' to gain the family's perspective on Dylan's meaning making. When another parent commented about this incident in her questionnaire response, it flagged this issues in terms of equity and fairness. Perhaps the 'cute' comment during the lunchtime conversation about 'break your feelings' was what precipitated teachers giving Rylee's family an abbreviated version of the lunchtime conversation as context for what Rylee said. Rylee's comment also connected with the parent's description in the questionnaire about their hurt feelings about Rylee thinking that being Māori was a bad thing,

Meanwhile, teachers had some revelations of their own as a result of the critical incident. In the context of her championing Sachin when Dylan sought to exclude him from his party, Grace was prompted to recall a childhood experience (See discussion in Chapter 8). Whereas, Kelsey realised that in future situations she could share her feelings with the child in question (Kelsey - Teacher Reflection Two). The teachers' verbal reflections discussed in this chapter show that these issues and the learning associated with them played out over time for them and the children. Our Participatory Action Research with its recording, reflecting, and discussing gave rich meaning to this critical incident of children theorising about skin colour, exclusion, and inclusion. For adults and children alike, it appears that this learning takes time. The incident also points to the need for more professional development for teachers in terms of enhancing their cultural competence when working with diverse families.

Thirty years ago Alton-Lee, Nuthall and Patrick (1987) recorded a child saying, "Take your brown hand off my book" in a primary school classroom in Aotearoa - New Zealand. Yet, despite many programmes, interventions, and awareness since then, a similar statement surprised us all in this research. This sentiment had persisted in 21st century Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite what adults are saying and seeing, or not saying or seeing, children are noticing ethnic and other diversity, and developing ongoing working theories about these differences between people. Their early thinking may show signs of pre-prejudice as it is being influenced by others beyond their immediate family, including popular culture.

The 'lunchtime' conversation could be seen as 'difficult' because it was about race (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008; Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006). It could also be viewed as 'unpleasant' (Vittrup, 2016a) or even 'risky' or 'dangerous' (Britzman, 1991) because it pushed teachers' buttons, so to speak. The conversation related to some of them personally in terms of their identities, or was seen as discriminatory or racist against their ethnic group, or in conflict with their values, or because it triggered childhood memories. Grey and Clark (2013) state that teachers' "beliefs, values and attitudes have the power either to positively affect and privilege or to negatively affect and marginalise those whom we teach" (p. 3).

If ‘working theories’ had been at the forefront of teachers’ thinking during the ‘brown faces’ lunchtime and subsequent conversations, they all may have responded differently in terms of the options available to them - for example: respond to, extend, complicate, unpack, disrupt or provide spaces for uncertainty (Table 10). They may also have been clearer about ‘interrupting with social justice intent’.

There was no evidence in his Profile book of Dylan's ongoing theorising in this complex and significant area for him and his family to revisit. I questioned the teachers generally about the absence of much of children’s significant learning about the social world from their pedagogical documentation. The team position was that what was documented in a child’s portfolio were ‘snapshots’ and ‘mementos’ of ‘children’s learning journeys’ in what were referred to as children’s ‘learning treasure books’ (Jasmine, Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). From my perspective, the teachers and I had different understandings of summative and formative assessment, and the purpose of assessment itself. Dylan’s statement and the ensuing conversation were not documented anywhere. This may have been because the teachers neither appreciated, nor wished to validate it (Alaasutari, 2014). They might not have wanted the topic to have become negotiable as it would have been if it had been reified, or made public (Wenger, 1998). Possibly it was ‘difficult knowledge’ that may have disrupted the dominant discourse of the kindergarten as an inclusive place for all children and their families regardless of their ethnicity, and it may have had unpleasant consequences.

Incidents such as the ‘no-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party’ conversation can be viewed as having ‘generative possibilities’ (Blaise & Taylor, 2012). Beyond being the subject of field texts and research texts in this research project, and engaging the attention of children and teachers for a few days, other possibilities existed. The entire parent/ whānau community could have been involved as suggested in the example proffered in the ‘Open Letter to Teachers’ that concludes this thesis.

A key message in this chapter in relation to the incident involves inconsistencies in reporting back to families. A teacher told Rylee's parent about her child's 'cute'

comment - ‘break your feelings’ but omitted to tell Dylan's parent about the 'hard' stuff about ‘no-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party’. There are also links between this ‘critical incident’ and responses to the Parent Whānau Questionnaire as it is possible to read dominant discourses of colour blindness and colour muteness into many of them.

Multiple question marks and blank spaces on questionnaire responses in relation to children noticing and responding to diversity and difference beyond their families, signals an area of concern in relation to ‘parents as children’s first teachers’. These responses point to parents either having previously given little or no consideration to their child’s response to difference beyond their family, or being unwilling, or at a loss as to how to respond to these questions. Possible reasons might include: a lack of parental awareness in this area; parental confusion; and the power of discourses such as being ‘good parents’ or ‘getting it right’, or ‘political correctness’ or ‘childhood innocence’ or the ‘irrelevance of some issues to young children’.

These possibilities are all seen as highly problematic particularly given research evidence about (pre)prejudice in young children, and the increasing diversity in this country’s demographics. Children are living in an increasingly diverse world, and their “early ideas and feelings may develop into real prejudice if reinforced by societal biases” (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010, p.xiii). “…our encounters with others serve to bind us together or divide us…from these everyday encounters we derive our identities” (Colvin, Dachyshyn and Togiaso, 2012, p. 159). This is a key area where teachers could provide some leadership, giving families a steer about what they might say and do in relation to their children’s working theories about ethnicity and skin colour.

Another message which could be taken from the field texts presented in this chapter is that teachers need to keep doing this anti-bias social justice work on an ongoing basis, opening up conversations, and provoking and responding to children’s working theories about ethnicity and fairness. Teachers also need to recognise (pre)prejudice, being ever mindful of it, and the power of their own beliefs, values and attitudes to negatively affect and marginalise, or positively affect and privilege children who they teach.

The final key issue relates to the time that it takes for issues to play out as highlighted by the critical incident discussed in this chapter in the reflections of the teachers (Individual Teacher Reflection Two). This learning, involving critical thinking, cultural competence, and reflecting about attitudes, values and beliefs, takes time. Teachers too have working theories (MoE, n.d.) and "use their existing knowledge to make sense of new experiences…[and] having the inclination and skills to inquire into and puzzle over ideas and events…will often lead to the development of working theories" (MoE, 2017, p.23). But all of this takes time.

Looking forward

In the final discussion chapter (Chapter 8), teaching about diversity, with an explicit focus on teachers' pedagogy in relation to children's working theories is explored. This discussion contributes to the future-focused research question about how teachers can enact socially just pedagogy focussed on diversity and inclusion.

Teaching is seen as a 'risky terrain' that teachers have to navigate. Along the way they are likely to encounter the power of discourse; the importance of theory; risk and difficult knowledge and realise the value of multiple perspectives on children's learning, and their teaching. Key ideas from relevant literature are highlighted and several field texts and research texts are introduced or revisited. These issues illustrate the complexities of teaching, the power of habitus, and the significance of critical reflection and critical reflexivity in the risky terrain of teaching.

CHAPTER 8:
TEACHING AND THE RISKY TERRAIN

> Regardless of how uncomfortable it makes us…there is no pedagogy without choice. Choice always involves selection, and when teachers choose not to engage in discussions of difficult subjects, the criteria of selection need to be examined carefully. This is not to deny the very real constraints under which teachers work but to insist that there is always room to negotiate, a thousand small daily choices that speak to the teacher as decision maker – and this is nowhere more evident than in classrooms with younger children where the content of the curriculum has been most difficult to define (Cuffaro, 1991, as cited in Silin, 1995, p.82).

Introduction

The kinds of knowledge being produced at Beech Kindergarten, as children expressed their working theories about the social world, featured in the three previous chapters (Chapters 5-7). Knowledge was produced in a host of interactions where teachers and families engaged in meaning making with children about fairness and friendship, gender, sex and sexuality, and ethnicity and skin colour. This knowledge was contextual, and sometimes seen or perceived by teachers as difficult or uncomfortable. Teaching about diversity, with an explicit focus on teachers' pedagogy - their actions, reactions and inactions, is further explored in this chapter. This discussion contributes to the future-focused research question about how teachers can enact socially just pedagogy focussed on diversity and inclusion. Children's and families' voices are largely absent herein because the focus is on the 'risky terrain' of teaching about fairness and diversity.

The content of this chapter is structured in seven sections, each having a specific focus related to teachers and teaching. Different readings are made possible, and new insights emerge as each section begins with relevant literature framing the discussion, then an example from the field texts and research texts is used to illustrate the focus area. The sections covered are the power of discourse; the importance of theory; risk and difficult knowledge; the value of multiple perspectives; the power of habitus, critical reflection and critical reflexivity; and teaching strategies or techniques. The sections illustrate key ideas in relation to this chapter's focus on 'navigating the risky terrain' of teaching, taken from the title of an article by Areljung and Kelly-Ware (2016) where we explored working theories, from our respective doctoral research projects (Appendix V). The chapter concludes

by looking back, and looking forward to the conclusion and implications for practice.

The power of discourse

Discourses have much power and influence; "discourse puts words into action, constructs perceptions and formulates understandings" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p.93). A system of morality is created and maintained in ECE settings, and 'normal' or 'natural' ways of thinking become dominant, affecting the ways that adults and children act, as the following discussion shows. This system becomes a 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1997) linked to discourses that construct "what is and what isn't a 'good', 'true' way to be an early childhood professional" (MacNaughton, 2003, p.84), because 'discourses are ways of being 'certain kinds of people' (Gee, 2010). Dominant discourses affected the pedagogy of the teachers in this research, and in some instances empowered, or oppressed and disempowered the children (Davies, 1991).

'Good teachers' and 'naughty children'

Educational discourses, such as being a 'good teacher' and its association with treating children fairly take on greater status because they have been officially sanctioned in legislation, and promulgated in official documents such as curriculum statements (MacNaughton, 2003). The discourse of being a 'good teacher' at Beech Kindergarten meant teachers saw themselves, and were seen by others as "knowledgeable, approachable and professional teachers" (ERO Report, 2015). Teachers were cognisant that being 'a good teacher' connected with the adult roles and responsibilities in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996), and the New Zealand Teachers Council [71] Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers (NZTC, 2004), and the Registered Teacher Criteria (NZTC, 2009).

When Margaret, their Senior Teacher, took teachers 'to task' for their behaviour towards Layla, a feisty and rambunctious three-year-old, she illuminated practice that rocked them, as noted previously ('All of us were against Layla'- Chapter 5).

[71] The New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) was replaced by the Education Council of Aōtearoa New Zealand (ECANZ), and the Code of Ethics (NZTC, 2004) was replaced with the publication - Our Code, Our Standards: The Code of Professional Responsibility for the Teaching Profession (ECANZ, 2017).

It was upsetting for teachers having to confront the powerful (and disempowering) effects that their actions had had on Layla, and children's perceptions of her. They had contributed towards her reputation as 'the naughty child'. Recognising that they had fallen short in supporting Layla was an emotional and critical incident that taught teachers a great deal. Grace's peers agreed when she described feeling "challenged, humbled and sombred" (Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014). For the teaching team, the incident evoked the discourse of 'good teacher'.

The teachers identified that they wanted to be 'good teachers', describing teaching as 'values-based' (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). They characterised modelling[72] professional and inclusive behaviour[73] towards children, and to parents, especially parents who spent time at the kindergarten during sessions, as being a good teacher. Recognising that 'all of us were against Layla' caused them all to respond differently to children from that time forward, particularly those children whose behaviour they found challenging. Most often, the challenge occurred because children were still developing appropriate 'communication and social skills', and learning 'the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour' (MoE, 1996, pp. 15, 54) at Beech Kindergarten as set out in the Kindergarten Treaty (Figure 1).

'Credit based assessment' (Carr, 2001) or 'appreciative inquiry' (Chapman & Giles, 2009) was used by teachers to describe children's behaviour during our final recorded discussion. Several teachers explained their 'revisioned' teaching practice, which I labelled 'role-modelling inclusion'. Jasmine urged teachers to offer alternative readings of children's behaviour to counteract possible negative judgements by parents. Grace supported her comments in relation to the 'new boy, identified as having special educational needs, who communicates via overtly aggressive behaviour'. She highlighted 'the importance of building relationships with children', describing how she was relating to this child proactively. Her

[72] Modelling is one of the strategies referred to in the teachers' palette for 'Building Learning Power (Claxton, 2002) that was the subject of a wall display during the research

[73] Professional and inclusive teacher behaviour can be understood in terms of teacher obligations and responsibilities outlined in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) under Adults' responsibilities, the Code of Ethics (NZTC, 2004) and Teacher Registration Criteria (NZTC, 2009).

aspiration was that other children would see this child as capable, rather than as the 'naughty boy'. On the basis that they had seen her relating positively to him, Grace reasoned that children would want to play with this child. She attributed her newfound responsiveness to the Layla situation, noting, 'it showed me really quickly the effect we can have on children's perceptions of other children' (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). Teachers were recognising that children unintentionally learn from interactions with teachers and peers.

The importance of theory

Teachers' provocations and responses to children's behaviour and their working theories are part of teaching; a dynamic and political process that is interactive and ever changing, occurring in minute-by-minute, day-by-day interactions with young children. Throughout this research, the teachers and I drew on different knowledges as a result of our "affiliations to diverse theories, discourses and practices" (Blaise et al., 2014, p.3). Teachers at Beech Kindergarten had varying kinds and degrees of theoretical knowledge to draw from in terms of their pedagogical practice, including in relation to children's theorising, and their responses. These teachers had gained their one- to three-year-long teaching qualifications from different tertiary education providers over a fourteen year period (Table 4); a significant timespan in terms of research informed theoretical, understandings about ECE pedagogy. None of the teachers held post-graduate qualifications, which it could be argued are precursors to attaining advanced levels of understanding of critical theoretical perspectives. These teachers appeared to prioritise informal knowledge gained from life experience over theory, akin with findings by Hedges (2011, 2012) in her working theories research with ECE teachers.

Understandings about sociocultural theory linked to formative assessment practice and what constitutes curriculum were areas where the teachers' theoretical understandings were variable from my perspective, and sometimes at variance with my understandings. Teachers were seen to be tentatively engaging in cultural politics for change, understanding how individuals and groups may be "privileged, marginalised, judged, included and excluded through everyday practices and language" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p.3). Several teachers described education

about diversity focus in terms of an appreciation of diversity rather than tolerance, as the following excerpts show:

Grace:

> I see us as a little mini-society and a really important aspect of that is supporting our children, like Jasmine said to…I hate that word tolerate, that actually it is not about tolerating people who are different, it's actually about accepting, respecting, understanding those people who are different than we are, and seeing that as a celebration. I see diversity as a huge celebration.

Jasmine:

> I put that too actually (referring to her written reflection). 'That we have an acceptance of each other's differences and move beyond tolerance to embracing and celebrating the richness of diversity'
>
> (Transcript of third recorded conversation, 14 August 2014).

Seemingly, the next praxis turn for these teachers is to embrace 'critical multiculturalism' an urgent task in ECE (Schoorman, 2011; Vandenbroeck, 2007). Taking an activist stance and working for social justice through critical curriculum, recognises power relations, teachers' and children's agency, and education's transformative potential to change the status quo (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; MoE, 1996, 2017; Scarlet, 2016; Schoorman, 2011). Such a turn would mean that the bases of their teaching involved understandings of critical theory perspectives to support them to consistently address unequal power relations in practice. Feminist poststructuralism also provides a "useful, productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society and the possibilities of change" (Weedon, 1987, p.10). Such theoretical perspectives could develop through professional development including discussing readings and /or post-graduate study. More theory would support teachers having different understandings of the development of gender identity in young children for example. Deeper understandings would also enable teachers to challenge normative thinking, and 'the natural order of things'. Their subsequent curriculum decision-making choices made daily in the sometimes 'risky' terrain of teaching would then support a broader, more inclusive, curriculum that also addressed the 'shadow side' of diversity.

Risk and difficult knowledge

The subject of children's working theories about diversity and difference is potentially an area of risk for teachers. Robinson and Jones-Diaz (2006) introduce the notion of a 'hierarchy of differences' arguing that some areas of diversity are more likely to be taken up by individual teachers than others. Specific issues are seen as more significant, and worthy or deserving of promotion and attention than others, and teachers' preferences are "primarily based on levels of (dis)comfort around doing work in various areas of social justice" (p.168). This hierarchy of differences can be related to 'difficult knowledge' whereby people "come face to face with disruptions to their socially constructed subject positions as well as their fears and uncertainties of otherness" (Britzman, 1991, as cited in Johnston, Bainbridge & Shariff, 2007, p.75).

'Risk' was one of the analysis categories in this project, and the guiding question associated with risk was 'what is possibly at risk if the teacher was to unpack children's working theories?' (Table 9, Chapter 4). Some knowledge about diversity is uncomfortable, difficult, or 'risky' for teachers to address with young children and their families, leading to some issues being put in the 'too hard basket', or seen as 'private family matters'. Sensing personal and professional risks associated with discussing 'difficult knowledge' - 'complex and contested issues', or tricky subjects traditionally considered taboo or irrelevant to innocent and vulnerable children, teachers are sometimes anxious, uneasy or fearful (Campbell, Smith & Alexander, 2016; Larremore, 2016; Scarlet, 2016; Smith, Campbell & Alexander, 2017; Affrica Taylor, 2010). Gender and sexuality are such issues that I have encountered in previous research (Terreni, Gunn, Kelly & Surtees, 2010; Kelly, 2012; 2013; Kelly & Surtees, 2013; Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016; Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016).

The 'tricky' subject

The teaching team rejected my initial suggestion that gender dynamics be 'the problem' or focus that this research should address. Instead, they chose 'fairness and equity', collectively agreeing that an explicit, and singular research focus on gender might spotlight Felix, a gender 'diverse' child (Gunn, 2012; Morgan & Kelly-Ware, 2016). Teachers wanted to avoid undue attention on him based on tension between his parents about Felix's preoccupation with all things feminine.

Despite his mother being supportive, the child's father's discomfort was allegedly mounting with his first-born son's 'performative gender' (Earles, 2016) as the child's experimentation continued. In one of my early conversations with his mother, she remarked 'his dad doesn't like it, but I keep saying it's his choice, he's playing things out' (Research Diary, 21 May 2014). Akin to a scenario in Gunn and MacNaughton (2007, p.126), Felix's working theories about 'playing things out' in regards to gender, and his peers' working theories in response to him, were uncomfortable or 'tricky' subjects, with risk associated with them.

Soon after my conversation with his mother, I found a story with several photographs in Felix's Profile book, in which he was wearing a tiara made at kindergarten. The story reports on his conversation with Grace, describing the reaction at home from his younger brother Sammy (aged between 2-3 years) and his father.

> Felix came in wearing the tiara we had made last week. I asked where the earrings were. Felix said Sammy threw the earrings over the fence. My Dad didn't like them. He said 'take them off'. My Dad smacks me…when I touch the dishwasher and do naughty things. Sometimes I get cross with my Dad. Sometimes I cry. He says 'these are for girls - take them off, and I get cross, and that's the story THE END. Written by Grace, Friday 30th May, in Office
>
> (Learning Story written by Grace, Visual Diary, 29 July).

In the story, we hear Felix's voice, but there is no analysis by the teacher. Felix appears to make a link between wearing the earrings and doing 'naughty things' i.e. touching the dishwasher. The child's father, and younger brother possibly, can be seen to be policing or regulating Felix's gender performance. From my perspective, this story was a surprising find in Felix's Profile Book for a number of reasons, including that this conversation has been documented, it talks about 'smacking' another risky topic, and Felix's Dad will likely get to read it when Felix's Profile Book went home with him.

The teachers' position of not wanting to spotlight this child in the research was understandable based on several factors - the teachers' fondness for him, and his experimentation - seen as his ongoing working theories, his father's growing unease

with his son's performative gender, and the tension between his parents. From my perspective, teachers generally seemed 'blind' or 'laissez faire' about children trying to police or regulate Felix's behaviour, such as Jack's comment about him being a boy and wearing a dress (28 May 2014), and other stories[74]. I shared 'Even pink tents have glass ceilings: Crossing the gender boundaries in pretend play' (MacNaughton, 1999) with them as I was aware of possible risks for Felix based on his performative gender, and the normalising discourses that some children subscribed to. Teachers suggested that there was widespread acceptance by children of Felix 'just being Felix' (Transcript of second recorded discussion, 28 May 2014). Individually, and as a team, teachers were seen to be very supportive of him. Felix spent a lot of time in the company of teachers, or in the office where he was observed to have a special relationship with the kindergarten administrator (Research Diary - multiple entries).

Kelsey sought to develop a community or institutional response (Rogoff, 1998) of greater inclusivity and acceptance of gender diversity by reading the picturebook 'My Princess Boy' (Kilodavis, 2009) to a group of children (Kelsey - Anecdotal story, Research Diary, 14 August 2014). Otherwise, teachers' actions appeared confined to an 'interpersonal' level (Rogoff, 1998) between themselves and Felix, and with his mother. The absence of a community or 'whole setting' response (Rogoff, 1998) points to teachers being (un)comfortable with the issue of gender 'diversity', possible fears and uncertainties of otherness or gender 'diversity' not being seen as important, or deserving of promotion and attention.

On several occasions near the end of the research, referring to Felix's ways of being as 'quirky' and 'queer' earned me a rebuke from several teachers. A teacher spokesperson asserted, "That's Felix's character, and that's the way that he is. And I don't think it is queer either!" (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). Teachers were clearly interpreting the word 'queer' differently to me, where I was using 'queer' in the theoretical sense of the word (Britzman, 1995; Gunn, 2016; Robinson, 2005b; Taylor & Richardson, 2005). They may well have

[74] On 21 May, Davina related a story to me about Felix's eyes lighting up, and him exclaiming 'Oooh, make-up' when he saw some pink eye shadow at kindergarten one day. His friend Caitlyn quickly replied, 'No, you're not allowed that. That's for girls. You need a Ken doll, not Barbie' (Research Diary, 21 May 2014).

been drawing on a discourse of normativity - normalising and/or individualising Felix's gender diverse behaviour, rather than seeing it as a social justice issue worthy of exploration. As the recorded discussion and the research were nearing their conclusion, there was no time to explore this tension. Nor was there time to discuss several academic readings that Jasmine requested from me, to give to Felix's mother to read on the subject of gender in ECE.

As these teachers were 'navigating the risky terrain' of children's working theories including those of Felix and his peers, there appeared to be 'risk' associated with unpacking some working theories (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016). In our article, we concluded that some working theories are riskier than others from a teacher's perspective, because unpacking them could expose the teacher's lack of knowledge/ skills, undermine the rules of the kindergarten, or be inconsistent with its philosophy. Furthermore, unpacking risky working theories could mean putting at stake the children's well-being. These are all possible considerations in terms of the 'tricky' subject of Felix and his performative gender.

The value of multiple perspectives

Multiplicity in terms of multiple perspectives from different people, multiple readings of the field texts in the process of composing research texts, and multiple theoretical perspectives also proved significant in this research. Campbell, Smith and Alexander (2016) argue that,

> Davies (1998) reminds us that within multiple readings, each reading can be valid and contribute to 'an understanding of 'what happened'' (p.134) or what is going on. Multiple readings provide partial 'truths' and glimpses of events. Multiple theoretical interpretations help us to gain diverse perspectives, but diverse people's interpretations due to their own experiences, histories and subjectivities also provide 'truths' and insights (p.47).

Teachers brought diverse and multiple perspectives to situations, based on factors such as the theories and discourses that informed their teaching, and their (dis)comfort with the topic as the two previous sections have discussed. Parents also understood children's learning in relation to diversity differently based on their own understandings as discussion at the Parent Focus Group showed. Teachers often made deeper meaning of children's working theories by gathering multiple perspectives from other adults, and children themselves. These perspectives could

be seen to be based on knowledge that was constructed for example, by the participants on the scene (context-specific), what the child said or did, an adult's knowing of the child, or an individual's perspectives and interpretations (that informed their actions). Field-texts were also read discursively, and multiple times from different theoretical perspectives, for example, 'Friends don't do that' when Sachin and Ruby had a quarrel after she accidentally stood on his fingers in the block area (Chapter 5), or 'the sandpit hui' as the following two readings illustrate.

Multiple readings of 'the sandpit hui'

An example of different knowledges and multiple perspectives occurred around 'the sandpit hui' (Photographs & Research Diary, 28 May 2014). Several girls initiated a hui[75] by talking to teachers about their concerns. Teachers responded by gathering everyone together in and around the sandpit. Some older girls and a younger peer stood on the deck of the shed, adjacent to the sandpit. Teachers quietened down the crowd and made sure they were all listening, and several of the girls addressed the crowd. Their message to their peers was about everyone needing to keep the sandpit storage shed tidy. The girls told everyone gathered that they had spent ages that morning organising the toys, sweeping out the sand, and generally tidying up the space. They wanted everyone to keep the shed organised in this manner in the future, especially when they were putting vehicles, spades etcetera away at tidy-up time.

Later that afternoon, I challenged teachers, noting that I had seldom seen these, or any other, girls playing in the sandpit. I proposed that the mess in the shed was not caused by them; they had taken responsibility for cleaning the mess of others, predominantly the boys who regularly played in the shed environs. Grace confirmed my feminist analysis of the gender dynamics in this situation, including the inequities. Jasmine initially condoned the situation as the girls were not directed to do the cleaning noting it was a voluntary act. Then Jasmine appeared to have 'second thoughts' about the situation.

[75] Child- or teacher-initiated hui were a common, and democratic, feature of the programme at Beech Kindergarten when there were issues of concern, seen to affect the whole group, that needed to be discussed.

Grace: The girls actually cleaned the boys, it was the boys', the boys' mess.

Researcher: I know! That's what I mean, cos girls are cleaners and boys are mess makers?

Jasmine: Well they volunteered, it wasn't like…, but actually the boys did all opt out, they chose not to bother cleaning it up'

(Transcript of first recorded discussion, 28 May 2014).

Six months later, I identified the 'sandpit hui' among the critical incidents and telling examples that occurred during this research (Teacher Discussion Agenda, 27 November 2014 - Appendix P). In response to the sandpit hui featuring on the list of incidents and examples, Jasmine reported the team's feedback.

Jasmine: We weren't sure about the fact that they were girls, more about the fact that they were the oldest in the programme at that time. They took the utmost responsibility for making those things happen.

Researcher: It was just my observation that they were girls, and that they probably hadn't made lots of that mess.

Grace: Yeah, that it was more about their character, as opposed to the fact that girls should be cleaning up the mess that the boys had made

(Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014).

From my perspective, teachers appeared to be minimising the gender factor at this juncture, suggesting a different, possibly broader analysis. Grace's earlier position where she supported my reading of gender inequities inherent in the situation, had changed after she had given it more thought. She and Jasmine invoked the discourse of 'responsible elders' or ako and tuakana/teina[76]. In this everyday practice, teachers were referencing an important facet of children's social relations at kindergarten; their expectations of older children based on age and seniority within the group. However, neither teaching with social justice intent regarding 'gender fairness' (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010), nor consideration to disrupting

[76] Ako (cross-gender) and tuakana-teina (gender specific) are Māori pedagogies that involve a learning relationship where there is an expectation that older siblings or peers will take responsibility for their younger siblings or peers, and that both have much to teach each other. Ako also describes where the educator is learning from the student (Williams & Broadley, 2012).
Tuakana/teina - senior and junior siblings, used where an older or more knowledgeable child supports the learning of a younger or less knowledgeable child

the social order or power relations that currently exist in society (Vandenbroeck, 2007) were evident.

From a feminist perspective, teachers could be seen to be perpetuating the status quo and normalising gender inequities. Normalising discourses are a prime site where disruption is necessary (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). Six months earlier, there had been some acceptance by teachers of my challenge based on my feminist analysis. I had been attempting to disrupt, what I saw at the time, as a normalising discourse about who cleaned up whose mess in the sandpit storage shed. Coming at the end of the research, this solidarity and 'about turn' on the part of several teachers may have been an attempt to 'correct' understandings of issues in the social world (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016), or reinforce the kindergarten's 'inclusive narrative' (Moss & Petrie, 2002) in respect to gender.

At that time, I saw these "different and even conflicting perspectives" as problematic, and evidence of constructed knowledge in their situated context destined to replicate the status quo, rather than transform it. Instead, I now see that these perspectives are "positive and productive", and have "generative possibilities" (Blaise et al., 2014, p.3). My initial readings set the teachers and me up in opposition to each other, when more readings were possible, and could have generated more possibilities.

With hindsight and some prompting, I see this scenario as another opportunity to resist the urge to simplify things in keeping with modernist binary thinking of either/or. There were other possibilities, or perspectives that could be read from it, including perspectives in keeping with the Mana Tangata Contribution strand of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996). "Children develop: the self-confidence to stand up for themselves and others against biased ideas and discriminatory behaviour" (MoE, 1996, p. 66). These older girls were not timid or passive; they used their initiative to clean up the shed, and then organised a hui in keeping with kindergarten's democratic focus. They assertively spoke to their peers, making demands about what needed to happen to change the (unfair) distribution of cleaning work. Implicit in their message was the notion that each person who used the shed / sandpit should be responsible for putting things away and tidying up. This was a powerful demand

for these children to make. It showed leadership and collective responsibility, and the teachers applauded them for it.

Habitus, reflexivity and reflection

Britzman (2003) argues that teaching is always a process of becoming, never a finished product, and the "teacher is continually shaping and being shaped by the dynamics of social practice, social structure, and history" (p. 49). The concept of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1991), that is our dispositions and tendencies based on our individual and group social positions in the world, our complex lifetime experiences, and the lenses we look through (McArdle, 2012) impacts significantly on our understandings of the world, and our teaching pedagogy (lisahunter, Futter-Puati & Kelly, 2015). In the present research, the types of knowledges and worldviews that we experienced as a research team, what we thought, believed, how we acted, and what we saw as we constructed the field texts are related to our 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1991).

Throughout the research, teachers' positioning, including their ethnicities, and their values-based perspectives impacted significantly on their actions. Grace illustrates the idiom, 'who you are, is how you teach' when she states 'It's just what you value, and who you are, and if that's what you value, that's what you teach' (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). Unlike the teachers described in other texts mentioned herein (Paley, 1986, 2009; Larremore, 2016; Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016), Jasmine, Grace, Kelsey and Davina were not sole charge teachers in a single-cell classroom. Instead, the teachers at Beech Kindergarten taught as part of a team of four, in a large purpose-built space. There were individual differences in their philosophies, their teaching, and communication, styles. Additionally, they had differing understandings of 'working theories' and these combined factors also added to the complexities of their teamwork, and their teaching. Their individual subjectivities, and understandings of social justice, diversity and difference, Action Research, and even pedagogy itself added to the richness offered to children at Beech Kindergarten, and to the complexity of this research. Hence, in conjunction with teachers' habitus, reflection and reflexivity from critical perspectives were important to the research process.

Critical reflexivity and critically reflective practice

"Thinking critically about the impact of our assumptions, values and actions on others in order to develop a more collaborative, responsive and ethical response" constitutes critical reflexivity (Arthur et al., 2015, pp. 427-428). Whereas, "reflective practice becomes critically reflective practice when educators continually inspect from diverse viewpoints to construct new understandings of, and the connections between, theoretical perspectives, philosophy, ethics and practice" (Arthur et al., 2015, p.427). MacNaughton (2003) also argues for a form of critical reflection that extends beyond the individual teacher and their understandings and changing practices. She emphasises the 'critical' and the 'collective' in reflection. "Critical reflection is the collective examination of the social and political factors that produce knowledge and practices, together with the use of this knowledge to strategically transform early childhood education in socially progressive directions" (p.3).

Teacher Reflections

The research processes encouraged teachers to be reflective and reflexive (Broadley & Fagan, 2010). At my prompting, they completed several reflections: one at the outset; one about the critical incident instigated by Dylan's exclusionary comment; and one for each of the other focus children (Appendices L, M, & N). Soon after the lunchtime conversation, and our third recorded discussion that afternoon, I developed the 'Individual Teacher Reflection Two' template (Figure 4), arranging to collect them several weeks later. I considered that teachers might benefit from time to reflect on what we agreed was a 'critical incident', and I was interested to hear 'what happened next' in terms of children's working theories, particularly Dylan's and his close peers', about skin colour, ethnicity, and fairness. Excerpts from Reflection Two are reproduced, and discussed in the section that follows, illustrating teachers' varying perspectives and understandings about themselves and their pedagogy, and the 'no-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party' critical incident (Chapter 7), and its aftermath.

Figure 4: Individual Teacher Reflection Two

1. On 14 August, what was your initial reaction to Dylan's statement that "No one with brown faces can come to my birthday? Why?
2. Have you had further discussion with Dylan? Seen any evidence of him taking another's point of view?
3. How have you? Might you respond to his working theories? Intentional teaching strategies?

A selection of teachers' individual responses to the questions on the Reflection template (Figure 4) follows, along with some background information where applicable to illustrate the power of reflection and reflexivity. Some teacher' responses are quoted verbatim, while others are summarised, to illustrate teachers' thinking. Teachers recognised connections between the conversation, their responses and their experiences and beliefs.

Initial reaction - Question 1

Teachers were asked to describe and explain their initial reaction to Dylan's statement, 'no-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party'. Grace described her instinctive reaction:

> I immediately thought about how Sachin would be feeling on hearing this and asked in his defence - "What about my friend Sachin?" In discussion with (the researcher) afterwards I think I reacted similar (sic) to how I tried to defend Priscilla and her brother when I was younger (Grace - Individual Teacher Reflection Two).

I prompted Grace to recall an experience about Priscilla, her childhood friend, based on the narrative that she shared in her Individual Teacher Reflection (Appendix L) about the origins of her social justice inclinations in her teaching. Excerpts of Grace's reflection, seen as a 'telling example' (J. Clyde Mitchell, 1983, 1984), follow:

> …eldest of four children in a small, white, working-class town. My Dad was racist, and I accepted this as the norm, until a black family moved into the area and two children started at my white Primary school. Not only did I have to listen to my Dad, I saw how they were treated in school…by chastising my Dad, I was taking my life into my own hands - but I did it, I challenged his thinking, questioned his beliefs, and befriended Priscilla. To my surprise, my Dad listened, saw how upset his words were making me, and accepted Priscilla into our home. I made a difference. An eleven- year-

> old me made a difference!! This experience has shaped my life… agent of social justice, endeavouring to challenge and interrupt the oppression that children and families face on a daily basis (Grace - Individual Teacher Reflection One).

Consistent with her childhood challenge to her father's racist comments about ethnic minorities, Grace stood up for Sachin, a young boy of Indian descent who Dylan was professing to exclude from his birthday party. Grace's response can be related to the notion that the stories we tell about ourselves influence our sense of self and agency (Hull & Katz, 2006; Davis, 2000; Bliss & Fisher, 2014). Grace's advocacy on behalf of Sachin was designed to make Dylan more empathetic towards him. At the time, Dylan did not rescind his stance of excluding Sachin from his party, and Grace was concerned about Sachin's feelings afterwards. The power of what happened during the lunchtime conversation was still swirling around her as Grace reflected-on-action and for-action in her Individual Teacher Reflection Two. Seemingly, Grace realised that the 'stuff that happened at lunchtime' amounted to her shining a light on Sachin as having a brown face - the brownest face at the lunch table. Grace thought that such an action could have negative consequences for this already minoritised child (Grace - Individual Teacher Reflection Two).

Kelsey described her initial reaction to Dylan's statement in response to Question 1 in her Individual Teacher Reflection Two (Figure 4), stating:

> My reaction was that it was totally not ok, and to shut it down. Put it back onto him 'How do you feel if you weren't invited?' To be honest pure disgust! I was brought up, 'You respect everyone' and that is totally not ok (Kelsey - Individual Teacher Reflection Two).

Kelsey's 'disgust' might suggest that she had taken the comment personally, perceiving it as a possible 'race thing' as the discussion transcript records[77]. Kelsey's Māori identity had not been visible in the kindergarten until this point. In the face of Dylan's remarks, she stood in solidarity with her teacher-peer Naomi

[77] The transcript of the recorded discussion with teachers (14 August 2014) immediately after the lunchtime conversation records Kelsey stating "No way I could sit there and not go there about it. 'Cos if that's a race thing, that's just not fair, and that's not justice".

and a number of children, identifying as Māori and pointing to themselves in their waka on the wall display. Kelsey's ethnic identity can be seen to be shaping her practice, and her relationships in this situation (Santoro, 2009).

Both Grace's and Kelsey's individual responses to Dylan's comments were triggered by previous experiences. In Grace's case, the experience was a childhood act characterised by personal risk and her resistance and agency, whereas, in Kelsey's case, the trigger was not clarified although it could have been related to her Māori ethnicity, and perception of Dylan's remark as a 'race thing'. These examples illustrate the bearing that these teachers' habitus and identities/subjectivities had on their responses, and their reflection and reflexivity.

Further discussion with Dylan - Question 2

The teachers had different stories to tell about their interactions with Dylan following the lunchtime conversation. Jasmine recorded how the next day some children raised the conversation with him. She proposed that Dylan's peers were his best teachers. Jasmine identified that there had been opportunities for teachers to support Dylan, alongside other children, reinforcing valuing difference (Jasmine - Individual Teacher Reflection Two). Kelsey described birthday party conversations continuing in the ensuing days, noting that lots of children were talking about parties. She thought that Dylan had taken on board children's comments because the next day he said that Sachin could come to his birthday, and invited everyone (Kelsey - Individual Teacher Reflection Two). Grace's reflection also details how the next day she observed Dylan being excluded by some of his peers[78]. However, one person who was playing with him was Sachin. Grace commented on this to Dylan, reminding him that yesterday he had said Sachin could not come to his party because he had a brown face. Grace reported that Dylan was pretty nonchalant about the whole thing noting that he'd changed his mind, or Grace identified that she may have questioned him saying, have you changed your mind? (Grace - Individual Teacher Reflection Two).

[78] This exclusion could possibly have been related to the Māori Party previously discussed (Chapter 7).

Grace was the only teacher who referred to Dylan's thinking and acting as based on his working theories, in her individual reflection. Jasmine and Kelsey alluded to the roles played by Dylan's peers and teachers in terms of his thinking. It was evident that the teachers viewed Dylan's learning as 'valued knowledge' in relation to the Contribution strand learning outcomes (MoE, 1996). Yet, this learning about fairness, empathy and positive judgements of other ethnic groups was not documented, reified or negotiated beyond the teaching team and me.

Teacher' responses – past/ future, Intentional teaching - Kelsey - Question 3

Kelsey's response to Question 3 shows her stepping back and seeing things somewhat differently from her initial reaction/ responses. She reported that:

> Actually, our discussion made me look at all parties involved and think how everyone might feel. I guess though as a team we know each other's triggers, and know that each child generally gets some sort of support or discussion around areas. I guess I have brought my personal experiences into how I might react, and maybe I could share how I feel about that situation with the child in future (Individual Teacher Reflection Two - Kelsey).

The process of stepping back and reflecting on the critical incident once the heat had gone out of it appears to have been a valuable process for the teachers, especially Kelsey. She was able to see a bigger picture of how everyone might feel, rather than her own emotional response. Kelsey realised how her personal experiences, values and beliefs affected her reaction to Dylan's repeated statement. Working theories do not appear to be at the forefront of her thinking and responding. Her suggestion that she share her feelings with the child in future could possibly be related to her emotive reaction, and realising the ineffectiveness of her approach to Dylan, where she was seen 'bulldozing' as opposed to 'blending' new knowledge in this sensitive area of race-talk (Waite et al., 2005; Pollock, 2004).

The process of reflection also enabled these teachers to critically reflect on their pedagogy, and their teaching strategies at a community or organisational level (Rogoff, 1998; Smyth, 1989), particularly in relation to two critical incidents 'All of us were against Layla' and 'No-one with brown faces' when the kindergarten's culturally inclusive, and fair and equitable narratives were seen to stutter. This process enabled the teachers to refocus their pedagogy and teaching strategies in order to better meet the social justice intent of *Te Whāriki*, through the principle of

Empowerment, and overarching focus on upholding the mana of each child (MoE, 1996, 2017).

Teaching strategies or techniques

Throughout this research, teachers' provocations and responses to children's working theories about the topics covered in Chapters 5-7 have involved a range of teaching strategies (Table 9), and responses.

Opening up and closing down

From a critical perspective, this research has shown that teachers (and significant others in a child's life) had the power to open up or close down children's possibilities for meaning making through the things they said and did, and through their silences or omissions. Through dramatic play, playground dynamics, and routines (mat-times and mealtimes), children were shown to have working theories about their social worlds. Children did not appear innocent or ignorant of what constitutes fairness, sex, gender, and sexualities, and ethnicity and skin colour in relation to themselves and others in the social world.

Valuing and giving voice to children's working theories

The selectivity of what teachers choose to document and/or 'report back' to parents is noted as an important consideration in this research. It is unclear whether this selectivity in reporting is intentional, unintentional, conscious or unconscious. Teachers' knowing of the child, and the extent of their relationship with the child's family, and the topic seems to have a bearing on what is documented and reported, for example Caitlyn and Rylee's mothers heard about their rejection and cute comments, while Dylan's family did not hear about his lunchtime comment of the 'F' word, and none of these scenarios were documented. This selectivity of documenting children's learning, and reporting to parents, contrasts with Blaise's (2010) notion that children's knowledge should be heard and valued. It also relates to the guiding question under voice (Table 9, Chapter 4) that enquires, 'How do teachers value and give voice to children's working theories?' Throughout the research, teachers were seen to be responding to children's working theories in various ways. It appears that when teachers were working with children and there was risk associated with their discussion or actions or behaviour especially anger, rejection or sadness, then less space was made for uncertainty. Because the space

is uncomfortable, and there is tension, the teachers appeared to want to close down, solve, or lead children through it, as I did with Sachin and Ruby in Friends don't do that (Chapter 5).

My initial hunch at the outset of this project was that teachers may avoid documenting children's tentative, speculative theorising about diversity and difference topics because they do not see such theorising (working theories) as 'appropriate' topics for credit-based assessment (MoE, 2004; 2007; 2009). This hunch was confirmed as I searched, mostly unsuccessfully, through children's Portfolios, seeking formative assessment documentation related to the diversity and fairness research themes at the end of the term (Appendix Q). What was noticeably absent, from my perspective, in terms of what was reified and valued in this place was 'difficult knowledge'. Such learning was not visible, made public, open to be negotiated, or recorded for future reference. Documenting children's learning is one of the responses that teachers can make in terms of reification, validating, appreciating and making public (Alaasutari 2014; Wenger 1998).This idea of something being "made concrete and public in order that people can start to negotiate its meaning" is significant in terms of children's theorising and working theories as the discussion in this thesis shows.

On many occasions during this research, more than one adult provided an alternative or additional perspective (or confirmation) of a child's understandings. For example, a composite picture[79] was built up of Caitlyn and her working theories through teachers informally sharing their observations, interactions, and perspectives about her with each other, and with her mother. The vignette 'That's a girls' song (Chapter 6) formed part of this composite picture of Caitlyn's development and her theorising. A rich oral narrative was co-constructed by Jasmine and Caitlyn's mother, as they simultaneously shared their teacher and parent perspectives about the same event. This conversation occurred at the Parent Focus Group - a 'one-off' event at Beech Kindergarten. On other occasions, teachers reported discussing particular incidents with parents to deepen their understandings around their child's thinking or acting. Additionally, teachers

[79] Details about focus children and their working theories were documented in Appendix P - Teacher Reflection - Focus Children

shared their perspectives to build composite pictures of children's developing identities and working theories, as evidenced in many of our informal and formal recorded discussions.

Except as part of the 'research texts', many of the critical incidents and telling examples concerning diversity and fairness were not documented. Very few were made public by teachers or shared with parents to highlight what learning was valued in this place. Or so that their meaning could be negotiated, or recorded for future reference particularly by the children themselves in terms of their developing and ongoing learner identities (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). Meanwhile, I documented a number of Learning Stories (Carr 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012) to record children's working theories, making concrete and visible the connections between the children's learning and the research focus. These Learning Stories became field texts and research texts, and copies of them were put in children's Portfolios for them and their families to revisit. The Learning Stories included 'Friends don't do that', 'This house is not for people with glasses', and 'Does hair colour make a difference?'

At the end of this project, I noted that little of what I observed, over six months visiting the kindergarten, ever made it into children's Portfolios designed to record teachers' assessment of children's learning. Whilst I did not systematically analyse the topic content of focus children's Portfolios, I regularly looked through each focus child's Portfolio. Teachers seldom documented Learning Stories about children's working theories concerning difference or otherness (Table 2). Despite what could be seen as their ethical and curricular responsibilities (MoE, 1996, 2017), teachers documented very little in relation to children's learning about gender, ethnicity, social class, or English as an additional language for example. Teachers' rationale behind this phenomena can be seen in the uncertainties they expressed concerning documentation about the research focus on equity and fairness for children, and Layla, whose behaviour they had found challenging. The meeting notes record a teacher's question: 'Learning Stories - what would you

write?' In response, either Margaret or I suggested 'strategies and skills on how Layla may join a group'[80] (Research Diary - Staff meeting notes 18 June 2014).

Further rationale for not documenting some of children's ongoing learning about diversity and fairness relates to 'emergent curriculum'. The research focus on fairness during Term 3, and advance notice of the research questionnaire, was communicated to parents and whānau in the Beech Kindergarten newsletter (August, 2014). At the end of the term, when I sought to collect the Learning Stories and other forms of assessment documentation around this focus that I had anticipated in line with MoE (2004) (Appendix Q), teachers identified that they had not specifically documented stories about equity and fairness as they had been following children's interests, otherwise known as 'emergent curriculum'. During the Evaluation phase, when I noted this lack of research-focus-related documentation in children's portfolios, Jasmine responded that children's Portfolios were 'learning treasure books' containing 'snapshots' and 'mementos' of children's time at kindergarten (Jasmine, Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014).

Jasmine and the team agreed that 'you can't ever record every incident that's going to happen' with Jasmine adding, '[incidents not being recorded] will have meant that you will have had a conversation with a parent" (Jasmine, Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014). Yet, this was not the case as noted several times previously. Teachers described the 'essence of their relationship with a child as something that could not be captured on a piece of paper in a portfolio'. They agreed that when they recognised things, or received feedback from informal conversations with families, that this new knowledge would help them think about 'how we [they] might work with a child or what their learning opportunities might be' (Transcript of fourth recorded discussion, 27 November 2014).

The teachers' conversation at our final research discussion illustrates that relational pedagogy was valued above all else at Beech Kindergarten. Their relationships with children and their families were paramount, and face-to-face. Group projects were

[80] Issues such as exclusion and specific skills and strategies for joining a group are explicitly addressed in the Learning Stories and their analysis contained in *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning Exemplars Book 15* (MoE, 2007), a government funded and distributed professional development resource available to support teachers in every ECE setting.

documented in wall displays around the kindergarten during the research including the Kindergarten Treaty, Background to the Treaty, the Speedway interest, the Waka project, and Building Learning Power based on the work of Claxton (2002). This documentation was evidence of a focus on group learning, and values that were significant at the kindergarten.

Looking back, looking forward

In this chapter (Chapter 8), there was an explicit focus on teaching, and teachers' reactions or inactions to children's working theories about the social world. In the course of 'navigating the risky terrain' of teaching, issues canvassed included: the power of discourse; the importance of theory; risk and difficult knowledge; the value of multiple perspectives; the power of habitus and critical reflection and critical reflexivity; and teaching strategies or techniques. Using key ideas from relevant literature, and visiting / revisiting field texts and research texts, these issues were illustrated in relation to this chapter's topic about working theories and the risky terrain of teaching.

In the concluding chapter (Chapter 9), the study is reviewed. Key 'findings' are identified, and the potential value of the research discussed, followed by limitations of the research design, and ideas for future research. This thesis ends with an 'Open letter to teachers', in which some possibilities arising from this project are about what is needed to 'advance the frontiers in this terrain' are proposed.

CHAPTER 9:
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Introduction

The teachers at Beech Kindergarten and I were interested in ways of understanding and teaching diversity linked to fairness for children and families. Located in a kindergarten community with up to 45 three- and four-year old children, their families and their five teachers over seven months in 2014, this Participatory Action Research study involved a mosaic of methods. A parent questionnaire and parent focus group, teacher discussions, observations, critical incidents and telling examples, and assessment documentation were utilised to gain multiple perspectives on teaching and learning about diversity in answer to four research questions. Through critically and discursively reading and re-reading field texts, aspects of diversity that children were concerned with, including exclusion, the 'shadow side' of diversity, were identified.

The overarching understanding arising from this project is that diversity and difference are concerned with relationships, and relationships matter. The unique combination of working theories, power/knowledge perspectives, and dominant discourses offer new insights about critical pedagogy in this terrain. The limitations of the research design, ideas for future research, and suggestions for professional development and initial teacher education make up the remainder of the chapter, before it concludes with an 'Open letter to teachers' where possibilities arising from this project are set out.

Review of study

Despite the fact that a story line has been written, this thesis is interpretive as the field texts and research texts were ambiguous. I concur with Knupfer (1996) who argues that, "we run the risk of not fully addressing the perplexities, the contradictions and the conflicting perspectives if we attempt to create cohesion at the expense of complexity" (p.142). This research project does not make universal claims nor advocate outcomes that can be reproduced. Rather, this thesis contains a selective and thematic collection of narratives from a kindergarten community that illustrate how fairness and diversity were being negotiated in the lives of

children, families, and teachers from multiple perspectives. Alternative possibilities to those that were readily identified were signalled on occasion, and this was, and is, an important caveat throughout the research and beyond. Whilst these 'findings' are not generalisable, transferrable, fixed or certain, they support further consideration of children's perspectives of diversity and difference related to inequalities despite adults seeming uncomfortable addressing some issues. They also support teacher leadership in the area of parent support and education about children's learning about diversity. Key 'findings' are now summarised.

Key 'findings' from this research

Relational pedagogy was a significant feature of the culture of Beech Kindergarten. Ongoing and dialogic conversations about diversity and fairness took place between children, teachers, and parents and whānau. The 'cultural climate' generally involved valuing differences, although some blind-spots were evident, and 'gender' was one of them. Omissions and silences were noted in respect to teachers reporting individual children's theorising and conversations to significant others involved in caring for them. Social gatherings such as formal group hui[81] and mat times, and meal times offered places and spaces where significant conversations were likely to take place (Albon, 2014), as illustrated by a number of critical incidents and telling examples herein.

An important thread for this study was the consideration of how multiple perspectives add depth to pedagogy and research. Each teacher, and I as the researcher, brought different ways of knowing to each child's learning, and there was recognition that families knew their children best. Dialogue involving negotiation about children's theorising concerning diversity in the social world took place between children, teachers and parents. On many occasions, individual stories came together to form collective pictures that provided depth and greater meaning to children's thinking.

Children's theorising and working theories

Consistent with other studies, this research shows that much of children's focus at kindergarten, a key setting beyond the home, was identity work. They were learning

[81] Hui – group meeting

about ‘self’, individually and in relation to ‘others’ including similarities and differences. Drawing on dominant discourses, children constructed narratives of selfhood and otherness. Observing this identity work showed that children’s identities were multiple, partial, and performed, rather than knowable, fixed and stable.

Children are social actors and the primary sites where their working theories about the social world were developing and being expressed were in peer interactions (Research Question 1). Issues of fairness and diversity were context-specific, and the complexity of children’s thinking, including their working theories, was not always readily understood by adults. Children expressed ongoing working theories about differences they noticed between people, despite some parents suggesting otherwise. Children’s working theories were influenced by people and things beyond their immediate family, including popular culture.

Ethnicity and other aspects or characteristics of diversity, including gender stereotypes, were evident in children’s developing working theories about similarities and differences between themselves, their families, and others. As noted by parents at the Focus Group, children who responded to ‘sensitive’ issues raised by their peers had understandings, and prior knowledge - ‘something to hang it on’, while other children without these ‘hooks’ or ‘coat hangers’ were oblivious to these discussions.

The role of parents and whānau

Families described, encouraged, and responded to children’s explorations of fairness and difference in various ways (Research Question 3). Many families did not explicitly point out differences, or support their children’s understandings about diversity and differences. These inactions and silences connect with discourses that parents were seen to be subscribing to, such as ‘universalising’ or ‘homogenising’, ‘colour-blindness’ (Gutiérrez, 2007) and ‘colour muteness’ (Pollock, 2004). Having not previously considered their child’s responses to diversity beyond their family, several parents reported difficulty responding to Questions 5 and 6 in the research questionnaire, suggesting a lack of diversity literacy. Opportunities for teachers to provide leadership in this arena were evident throughout the research,

as some parents were unsure what to say or do in terms of their children's developing understandings of diversity in the world around them.

Teachers' interactions with parents and whānau often involved face-to-face information sharing, reporting on children's words and actions (storytelling), and responding to parents' queries and concerns. These two-way processes happened to varying degrees depending on the extent of relationships that teachers had developed with significant adults in children's lives. The selectivity of what teachers reported back to some parents became apparent during this project. Teachers admitted that they sometimes 'missed the boat' when it came to sharing significant information about children's learning with families. Obviously, some selective reporting or missed opportunities to discuss issues with families were to be expected in a busy kindergarten with 45 children and 4 teachers.

Finding genuine and meaningful ways to involve parents and whānau in children's learning beyond their initial 'All about my child' contribution was highlighted. Learning Stories have traditionally been considered a vehicle for eliciting individual 'Parent Voice' but, besides anecdotal conversations with some parents, this was not a feature in this setting. The relative simplicity of engaging parents, to get their input and hear their voices via a small group discussion, was a revelation to teachers.

Teachers and pedagogy

Whilst I employed critical perspectives on knowledge and power when studying teacher pedagogies/interactions around children's working theories, in the following sections power is sometimes discussed from a socio-cultural rather than critical, feminist and post-structural perspectives as teacher understandings of power are generally consistent with the former rather than the latter. The teaching team's work, individually and collectively, with children including the focus children involved some uncertainty, as well as instances of careful observation and intentional teaching. Teachers generally followed children's surface interests under the banner of emergent curriculum or child-centred pedagogy. These surface interests, akin to volcanoes[82], were highly visible and included Speedway and car

[82] Refer footnote 89

racing, chickens, dinosaurs, dolls and the movie *Frozen*. Children were also interested in complex social issues related to diversity and fairness, obvious only when one looked and listened closely to what lay beneath the surface - the seabed[83]. Claxton's metaphors of children's interests as volcanoes or seabeds could prove useful for teachers when considering children's deeper interests.

Children's social learning was mediated by teachers, parents and significant others in their lives, including their peers, reinforcing the vital role of adult mediation in children's learning. Each of us understood the critical incidents and telling examples differently based on our habitus, and our subjectivities. Teachers also had different pedagogical foci based on their individual histories, philosophies, and understandings of children's theorising. Hence, they provoked and responded to children's working theories differently to each other (Research Question 3) using a range of strategies or techniques.

Ongoing discussions and dialogic reading were illustrations of specialist teaching techniques known as community building and democratising (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009). Particularly evident in the head teacher's leadership, and during children's meaning making at group times, these strategies were highly relevant and applicable to the goal of social cohesion at the kindergarten. This finding is consistent with previous research where mealtimes provided a forum for conversations and for children to be enculturated into settings learning about what is valued, and the ways things were done in this place (Albon, 2015; Brennan, 2005; MacNaughton & Williams, 2009).

Teachers' responses to children's working theories included: not supplying direct answers, responding to, extending, complicating (Hedges, 2011) disrupting (Peters & Davis, 2011) and 'unpacking' (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016). The teachers were not conversant with, or did not use the strategy of 'interrupting with social justice intent' (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008), which could be applied to children's working

[83] Dr Guy Claxton is a British academic whose early work informed the construct of working theories in Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996, 2017) as discussed (Chapter 4 - Literature Review). Claxton was also an advisor on the TLRI project 'Moments of Wonder' (Peters & Davis, 2012) where he introduced the metaphors of volcanoes and seabeds to describe children's interests; the former being easily visible while the latter means you have to really stop and look (Personal communication AP Sally Peters, 29 July 2017).

theories when they contravene the spirit of fairness and justice for all. The revised *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) includes explicit reference to critical theory and addressing inequalities. The increased focus on working theories in the revised curriculum, along with new information and understandings about them was not available during the fieldwork stage of this research.

Teachers were keen to promote an inclusive response to diversity by children (Research Question 4) and were providing leadership in the area of the kindergarten's bicultural journey. Less evident was the promotion of the equal worth of children irrespective of their differences. On occasion, some teachers were seen to be responding more favourably (exciting trips), or differently to boys. Generally speaking, boys' verbal reactions received more attention than girls' non-verbal or 'silent' reactions. Teachers recognised that an ongoing challenge for them was to treat children equitably, especially children on the margins of the group: children who were quiet; had English as an additional language; and children whose behaviour teachers found challenging. When children's statements or actions about diversity and difference were viewed as possible working theories, teachers generally recognised 'teachable moments' and acted accordingly, although some opportunities for teachable moments were not identified throughout the research.

The importance of critical thinking was affirmed as investigation, dialogue, and reflection was prompted by 'critical friends' such as their Senior Teacher and me. The effects of this thinking meant 'opening up' conversations which had positive consequences for teaching and learning. Being respectfully questioned and challenged about their pedagogical practice was not easy for the teachers, but proved valuable in terms of developing pedagogical equity and fairness. Without provocation, teachers did not always look critically beyond assumptions of 'this is how we always do things' to think about the kinds of knowledge that was prioritised and marginalised in their setting. Teachers realised that they had been complicit in social practices that disempowered some children (Brown & Jones, 2001). In terms of teachers being gender- and ethnicity-conscious in line with their curriculum obligations, the need to look beyond the surface with a critical lens, and consider the implicit or 'hidden curriculum' was particularly evident. Providing teachers with opportunities such as readings such as 'Sameness-as-fairness' (Rivalland &

Nuttall, 2010), and Reflection Templates to consider their practice prompted them to critically reflect and be reflexive, leading to rich insights and understandings.

Contestable understandings of pedagogical documentation existed between the teachers and me. The kindergarten walls showcased comprehensive documentation from children's group investigations and learning such as Speedway and the Waka Project. Conversely, children's portfolios contained little in the way of formative assessment documentation as described by MoE (2004), related to the Contribution strand to support children's developing learner identities (Appendix Q), related to critical incidents or telling examples about fairness and diversity.

Collective, community and structural responses to fairness and social justice were less evident than interpersonal responses. Teachers often responded individually to a child or children, rather than collectively to the issue, be it exclusion or (pre)prejudice. Some of the findings showed that teachers could empower children by critically reflecting on pedagogy related to diversity at a community/structural level rather than an individual or group level. The teachers were preparing to revise their team philosophy post-research, and this process may have provided an opportunity for them to reassess their collective position in relation to diversity and fairness. Their Team Appraisal Goals, focused on responding to their multi-ethnic and linguistically diverse kindergarten community and enhanced professional practice through research and self-review, also related to organisation/ institution wide teaching practices.

Teachers were being watched and listened to as they worked alongside young children, in this group setting outside of the home, fostering their social competence. "To teach is to be watched, and watched closely" (Silin, 1995, p.182). Teachers recognised they needed to be positive role-models, providing leadership to children and their families in terms of inclusion and fairness, as well as support for parents around children's working theories about difference.

A discourse of emotional responses was identified as teachers and children negotiated fairness and diversity. Under pressure and in the moment teachers could sometimes be seen to resort to strategies from a previous approach to working with fairness and diversity, or voices and strategies inherited from their own childhood experiences of adults dealing with diversity. While emotions do not currently figure

in the list of things contributing to children's theorising (knowledge, skills, strategies, attitudes, expectations - MoE, 1996, p.44), there is some evidence in this thesis to suggest that in the working theories space, it might be useful to talk about the cognitive and affective aspects of working theories.

Risky subjects and risk

Power, knowledge and truth operated in multiple and complex ways and the effects on children and adults were multifarious as has been previously described. Fields of force derived from regimes of truth - what was acceptable and unacceptable to say and do, know and not know - exerted control over participants' thoughts and behavior (Silin, 1995).

Whilst negotiations were a feature of this research, some areas of diversity were taken up and others were not. Because knowledge around diversity is contestable, dialogue is fundamental to negotiation and meaning making. There were occasions when spaces for negotiation were closed down rather than opened up. Some conversations did not occur or were not pursued possibly because they were risky, dangerous, difficult or unpleasant. It is suggested that some working theories were possibly seen to be riskier than others because unpacking them could expose a teacher's lack of knowledge or skills, undermine the rules of the kindergarten, or be inconsistent with its philosophy. Teachers' responsiveness or otherwise was likely affected by their levels of (dis)comfort with the topic, perceived riskiness of the issue, or the aspect of diversity being deserving of attention and promotion. This selectivity supported my initial hunch about 'difficult knowledge and tricky subjects'.

There were risks for children too in terms of their mana and their wellbeing. Children risked damaged relationships, and being abandoned, rejected or excluded by their friends and peers for a number of reasons. The examples herein include: unfair treatment, a perceived unfairness; exclusion on the basis of their glasses or hair colour, or their penchant for feminine things; their unsuitability as a marriage partner, their dance music tastes, or their skin colour. These examples highlight the critical importance of teacher mediation in children's learning as their mana and wellbeing are paramount.

Potential value of the research/ Recognition of contribution

This thesis adds to scholarship about ECE teaching, involving families, and children's meaning making about diversity and fairness in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. As children were constructing their identities, subjectivities, and understandings of self and others in a group setting beyond their homes, issues related to differences in biological sex, gender, sexuality, skin colour, ethnicity, and home language, and their links to fairness were found to be important to them.

This research reinforces the value of gaining multiple perspectives on children's learning, and opening up spaces for negotiation around diversity and fairness to occur within the ECE setting. Multiple perspectives strengthen teachers' knowing of children, enabling them to better understand and support children's theorising concerning fairness and difference. The focus children, their peers, teachers individually and collectively, and children's parents and whānau, all had valuable contributions to make. Understanding/supporting/extending children's working theories often required sensitive interventions involving a range of possible teaching strategies (Table 9) including 'interrupting with social justice intent' (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008).

This research has shown that whilst the term 'working theories' conjures up scientific thinking, it's meaning in the context of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand relates to children's theorising - the knowledge, skills, attitudes leading to dispositions and working theories that children refine and apply across new situations (MoE, 2017). The construct of working theories offered the teachers at Beech Kindergarten opportunities to consider what children know and how what they know can be refined, and applied across new situations. Working theories can be unpacked, developed or extended over time. The 'working theories' construct has much to contribute in this field of diversity and fairness.

Contemporary thinking about working theories is in transition, and the construct has attracted interest internationally (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016). Since 2014 when the field-based research for this project took place, *Te Whāriki* has been revised based on concerns about its implementation (ERO, 2013, 2015; OECD, 2012) as well as need to review it after 20 years (Hon Hekia Parata - Foreword). The revised version contains more detailed understandings about working theories

- what they are made up of, and how they develop, refined and extended as children "revisit interests and engage in new experiences" (MoE, 2017, p.23). Hence, this project has a valuable contribution to make to the ongoing debate and understandings about working theories by academics and researchers nationally and internationally.

In terms of the explicit contribution of this research to the ECE field, pedagogy specifically related to diversity and fairness does not appear to have been investigated via the lens of working theories in this, or any other, country to date. Despite the presence of the constructs of identity in terms of gender, ethnicity, skin colour and fairness in *Te Whāriki,* and the increasing significance of diversity in ECE settings individually and society generally, with one exception (Davis & McKenzie, 2018a), this is a new research arena. Combining working theories, with power/knowledge perspectives and dominant discourses has enabled new insights about critical pedagogy in this terrain.

Additionally, the findings of this research suggest that teachers could gain valuable insights into children's understandings about fairness and diversity using working theories as a lens to support their provocations and responses. Considering working theories alongside teacher power, valued knowledge and discourse could support more intercultural education through critical curriculum. Research dissemination through publications, conference presentations, and other professional development opportunities will assist in this regard.

Alternative theoretical perspectives such as feminist poststructuralism and critical theory could supplement sociocultural theory and inform teachers' professional practice. The timing of this research contribution is significant given the revised curriculum's expectations of teachers now and in the future. The curriculum document states that "It is expected that kaiako will prioritise the development of children's learning dispositions and working theories because these enable learning across the whole curriculum [learning outcome] 'Making sense of their worlds by generating and refining their working theories'" (p.23).

Student-teachers in initial teacher education programmes could also gain from the insights this research provides into pedagogy around complex issues like understanding self and others who are different based on biological sex, gender,

ethnicity, skin colour, and home language differences for example. Inclusive responses to diversity occur through socially relevant curriculum that moves between the interests of the child and the community.

In this project, teachers generally followed children's surface interests under the banner of emergent curriculum or child-centred pedagogy. Despite these surface interests, metaphorically akin to 'volcanoes', being blatantly obvious, children were also interested in complex social issues such as gender performance, making babies, and skin colour. These issues, seen as the 'seabed', were not readily obvious unless one looked or listened closely. To promote intercultural competence among children, the seabed is where teachers should be looking and listening.

Teaching and learning about fairness and diversity is important pedagogical work. Children's developing understandings are imperative in areas which are difficult, sensitive, unpleasant or even dangerous for some. Therefore, it is important that teachers provide leadership to parents and whānau, and that they all respond to children's working theories in terms of complex issues that are socially relevant. OECD (2012) also suggested that strengthening parental involvement in curriculum design and implementation would enhance the implementation of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). This research has potential insights to offer as a practical suggestion about strengthening parental involvement in curriculum design and implementation is covered in the 'Open letter to teachers' that concludes this thesis.

Limitations of the research design

All research should be considered with respect to its limitations, a number of which were evident in the research design, and during the research process. Some of these limitations are described in the following section, beginning with the sample of children and families and the relative lack of diversity amongst them. This discussion is followed by pragmatic issues related to teachers' work (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2007), and the researcher's perspective and positioning (Moss, 2016). The messiness and uncertainty of teaching and learning coupled with the many pressures on teachers contributed to the complexity and contradictions inherent in this research.

The Sample

Several limitations noted with the sample of children and families include its small size, and lack of diversity for example in terms of home language backgrounds, ethnicity, family composition, and biological sex of adult participants. The kindergarten was staffed by 4 teachers, a regular reliever, and their senior teacher, all of whom were female. Whilst there were up to 45 children on the roll during the research, only eight children (less than 20%) were selected as 'focus children' on the basis that we saw these children as the most visibly/audibly engaged in 'identity work' - making sense of themselves, themselves in relation to others in their social worlds, and consequently diversity and fairness. This group of eight children represents a balance in terms of ethnicity, biological sex, and age, however they all had English as their first language, with one exception, a simultaneous bilingual child exposed to both languages during her early childhood.

The decision to prioritise eight focus children, and the methods for choosing them highlight that articulate English as first language speakers stand out, and are more likely to be seen and heard by teachers. Whilst teachers consciously sought to treat children who were quieter, and younger, and from minority groups equitably, this was seldom recorded in the field texts generated for this project.

Another limitation of the research is that while 42 families received a questionnaire, only 21 responded, and no families who had English as an additional language were part of the sample of questionnaire respondents. Eight families were invited to attend the Parent Focus Group because they were related to the 'focus children', and in the interests of keeping the group manageable in terms of size. Four parents attended; a relatively homogenous group of female participants all identified as NZ European, European, or Kiwi, and as being married with husbands. Two women identified as full time or stay-at-home mothers and the other two identified as self-employed and a company manager, respectively. One woman identified that her children were Māori, and it was known from their questionnaire and enrolment form that in a second family, the children and their male parent were European/ Māori. Thus this research was limited in terms of being representative of the kindergarten community, and children families/whānau.

Participatory Action Research and workload

From the outset, the teachers saw the research as a form of professional development; having expectations of their involvement including individual and team growth, and improved teaching practice in this arena. Despite being conceived and progressed as Participatory Action Research, this was problematic in the sense that it was my doctoral project, and teachers work under numerous constraints. Time was a scarce resource exaggerated by "work intensification - increased regulation and accountability" (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2007, as cited in MacNaughton & Williams, 2009, p.33). Whilst the research cycles were not always clearly discernible, our four recorded discussions provided a forum to reflect and think ahead.

Things did not always go according to plan in terms of Action Research, confirming that the theory and practice are vastly different. Frictions and tensions arose unexpectedly from time to time which in hindsight was to be expected given the various motivations and expectations of the team and me. The research was already underway when teachers expressed concerns about its all-consuming nature. One questioned how they could complete all the documentation in relation to their 'Looking, Thinking, and Acting' (Transcript of second recorded discussion, 19 June 2014). Others identified that they were not good at being systematic in terms of the proposed cycles. There was some disagreement about whether teachers needed to plan, or act, in relation to things that had been identified to date. Teachers were unanimous that the amount of work required of them nowadays, was onerous, and agreed that they needed to prioritise their everyday commitments around teaching, and family and community involvement, over my doctoral research. The decision to follow a small number of children, rather than all children's working theories about diversity and fairness, was made in the interests of manageability, and depth.

The 'systematic' generation of field texts for this research, or as evidence for their team appraisal (self-review) goal appeared at odds with the daily business of teaching and learning at Beech Kindergarten. Whilst teachers often 'noticed, recognised, and responded' to children's learning (Carr, 2001), they were less likely to document it immediately, waiting instead until they could see where it was going, for example Grace's Learning Story for Jack that began with 'girls not being able to do Speedway'. The field texts and research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

that were constructed and composed throughout this small-scale research project were drawn from seven months in the lives (and stories) of the participants in one busy kindergarten community. As Peters (2014) has said, "the data that were gathered and analysed form[ed] only a small segment of the much wider mélange of social life" (p.109) going on for us all at the time.

Besides four recorded discussions, ongoing individual discussions, and a few Learning Stories and anecdotes of children's learning, many of the field texts and most of the research texts were constructed and composed by me. This was to be expected given it was my doctoral research. The teachers' participation was variable including one teacher's absences at three of the four recorded discussions. The bulk of the research load fell to Jasmine, the Head Teacher and official liaison person between the team and me. As the principal researcher, I was sometimes guilty of losing sight of the bigger picture(s) of the participants' work and lives, as my research agenda and preoccupations drove the processes (Holliday, 2002), despite Participatory Action Research being a collaborative endeavour.

While the three phases of the action research - Reconnaissance, Intervention, and Integration/ Evaluation, and the proposed timetable were neatly planned (Table 5), the research was messier in practice in terms of timing and cycles. Teachers acted quickly once something became obvious, or was pointed out to them. For example, Grace's decision to read *This is our house* (Rosen, 1996) at the end of the morning session was likely precipitated by my suggestion that Jack had earlier excluded Felix from the hut, possibly for wearing a dress. There were also occasions when my proposed visits had to be rescheduled because of other commitments and illness for example.

At our final discussion, teachers variously described how: their teaching and the research were 'definitely values-based'; 'being engaged in this research was affirming of our practice' and that the research was 'timely because we had already identified that we were going to be looking at our philosophy after this process' (Transcript of final recorded discussion with teachers, 27 November 2014). The action research could also be seen to have strengthened culturally-responsive practices in the kindergarten (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010).

Researcher's perspective and positioning

At the outset, teachers individually and collectively expressed a commitment to social justice. From my perspective, their teaching was generally informed by liberalism, a concern for the individual and their freedom. This philosophical orientation contrasted with my feminist poststructural positioning from which I sought to disrupt commonly held understandings about what is 'normal' and 'true' and analyse inequality, "specifically gender inequality, with an orientation to gender politics, power relations and sexuality" (lisahunter, emerald & Martin, 2013, p.36). Unsurprisingly, there were occasions when the teachers and I could be seen to be talking past each other (Metge & Kinloch, 1993).

Teachers had varying kinds and degrees of theoretical knowledge to draw from in terms of children's theorising, not appearing fully up-to-date with critical multiculturalism, or intercultural approaches to human diversity in education that seeks social transformation. In hindsight, I see that this was a gross assumption on my part. The gulf in our theoretical understandings was wide, and served to reiterate the importance of shared understandings in future collaborative endeavours with teachers. Nowadays, in a user-pays environment, time for professional reading, and widespread professional development are not readily available to teachers, and initial teacher education is unlikely to cover the breadth and depth of theory issues traversed in this thesis.

Notwithstanding these issues, the teachers' experience, subsequent intuitiveness, and deep knowing of many of the children and their families were highly significant to their individual and collective teaching practices, and to their support of children's learning.

Ideas for future research

There is a need for further research into ECE pedagogy associated with intercultural education and diversity and difference. Several possible areas pertain to knowing ourselves and diverse others; and working with difficult, sensitive, or dangerous knowledge. There is also further scope for research related to children "making sense of their worlds by generating and refining modifying working theories' about the social world (MoE, 2017, p.47).

Parent and whānau responses to children's theorising related to diversity could have been better understood more fully by exploring parents' positioning, subjectivities and framing of fairness and difference. There was limited opportunity for this throughout this project. This research highlights conflicting and uncontested responses by parents to diversity and difference, so further research in this area would be beneficial.

Like Petriwskyj (2010), the findings of this thesis indicate that "the challenge of different cultural perspectives was highlighted with respect to family involvement, and further investigation of effective relationships with families of young children is needed" (p. 210). Knowing others, that is genuinely hearing the voices of diverse groups with ECE communities, is challenging when language and cultural barriers prevent some families from actively and fully participating. Some issues such as talking about skin colour and sexuality for example were seen to be challenging for the teachers in this research. Hence, research along with professional development in the area of difficult, sensitive or dangerous knowledge is called for.

Despite some uncertainty and tensions, this research proceeded to its conclusion, and left me with a huge sense of gratitude to this learning community for welcoming me into their place over a seven-month period. The participants taught me a great deal about teaching, including often stark reminders of the pragmatics, as opposed to the idealism of one who has not been teaching in an ECE setting for more than a decade. As a result of this project, I am left with a few pertinent provocations and responses of my own including the importance of 'interrupting with social justice intent' and 'opening up' spaces so negotiations about fairness and difference can be ongoing. Hence, following the example of Larremore (2016), I will end this thesis by documenting these provocations and responses in an open letter to teachers to conclude this thesis.

An 'Open letter to teachers'

Teaching is dynamic, political, and values-based. Teaching can also be complex, messy, and uncertain. Relationships and ako[84] are fundamental to teaching, for as

84 Ako (cross-gender) and tuakana-teina (gender specific) are Māori pedagogies that involve a learning relationship where there is an expectation that older siblings or peers will take responsibility

we teach, we are taught; as we help others develop, we grow and change as well. Beyond the home, ECE settings are often the first contact that families have with education settings, making them important social spaces for children learning about the world - especially the increasingly complex and diverse societies that we live in.

Diversity and fairness really matter to young children and teachers as this research has shown. Long ago, Silin (1995) argued that contemporary curriculum needs to speak to, "the things that really matter in children's lives or in the lives of those who care for them" (p.40). *Te Whāriki* is the framework for socially relevant, critical curriculum. Children's social learning about self and others happens in ECE settings, while each person's mana is being enhanced. These goals, woven throughout the *Te Whāriki* principles and strands, frame what is to be taught and learned in ECE settings (MoE, 1996, 2017).

In the revised version of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017), teachers are urged to use "critical inquiry and problem solving to shape their practice" (p. 59). The curriculum document is now explicit that "critical theory perspectives challenge disparities, injustices, inequalities and perceived norms" (p. 62). These perspectives are "reflected in the principles of *Te Whāriki* and in guidance on how to promote equitable practices with children, parents and whānau" (p. 62).

Critical theory perspectives are also fundamental to critical multiculturalism and in keeping with renewed/revisioned anti-bias approaches to socially relevant curriculum. These teaching approaches were identified in Chapter 8 as the next pedagogical turn for these teachers, and an urgent task in ECE (Schoorman, 2011; Vandenbroeck, 2007).

Consciously thinking about power imbalances, and question[ing] their practices by asking who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged are fundamental to realising the transformative potential of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017). 'Troubling' diversity and seeing it from a range of perspectives is vital in order to better understand how to

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for their younger siblings or peers, and that both have much to teach each other. Ako also describes where the educator is learning from the student (Williams & Broadley, 2012).
Teina - younger sibling, cousin, same gender, novice.
Tuakana - elder sibling, cousin, same gender, more competent other

teach children about inequalities in relationships, keeping focused on the goal of social inclusion. The challenge becomes deciding what knowledge is valued and spoken about, and what knowledge is ignored or silenced. Additional challenges relate to hearing everyone's voices, especially marginalised and silent voices.

Discourses permeate teachers' and children's interactions, discourses that can be embraced, challenged, resisted or ignored. This research has shown that normalising discourses can effect power inequalities, and limit children's potential. Statements such as, 'she's the naughty girl', 'girls can't do Speedway', 'friends don't do that', 'what's he doing that for? he's a boy', 'that's a girls' song', 'probably because she's hot', and 'no-one with brown faces is coming to my party' are related to normalising discourses about social relations. Teachers can promote fairer relations by rejecting/disrupting normalising and limiting discourses (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006), as part of renewed/revisioned anti-bias approaches to socially relevant curriculum (Table 1).

Exclusion is evident whenever children's participation, agency, and voice are limited, including when realities of the world which they are a part of, are hidden from them. Children's understandings, and their potential can be constrained by dominant discourses as shown in this research. Left unchallenged, discourses such as white and/or male dominance, feminine passivity, (hetero)normativity and childhood innocence perpetuate the status quo. These limiting discourses do not offer solutions to problematic social issues.

Children's interests do not have to fall into narrow stereotypical categories. Nor should children's interests be limited by their biological sex, or their gender performances despite external pressures from mass media. Movies, television and product advertising all carry messages about acceptability and desirability, deeply entangled with traditional stereotypes based on children's biological sex. Parents and teachers will constantly face decisions whether to challenge and resist these stereotypes.

'Risky' topics like kissing, marriage and babies, skin colour, or 'smacking' were of interest/ relevant to some children as this research has shown. Children are not innocent, and sensitive issues are not irrelevant to them as is sometimes assumed. Neither should teachers presume that children are oblivious to differences including

size, social class, gender and ethnicity for example. Working theories related to stereotypes and (pre)prejudice need to be disrupted or 'interrupt[ed] with social justice intent' (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008), as they are inconsistent with the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki*. Conversations, statements and incidents have 'generative possibilities' (Blaise & Taylor, 2012) as the 'no-one with brown faces' lunchtime conversation showed. The 'generative possibilities' of incidents can also involve parents and whānau as the example provided at the end of this Open letter illustrates.

Claxton's metaphors of volcanoes (highly visible interests) or sea beds (harder to see interests)[85] are pertinent for teachers as children's ongoing working theories about diversity and fairness may well be operating below the surface of what is readily seen and heard. Therefore, working theories, that is "the evolving ideas and understandings that children develop as they use their existing knowledge to try to make sense of new experiences" (MoE, 2017, p.23) are a useful construct to support children's social learning about diversity.

As young children spend longer periods of their day and their early childhood years in ECE settings, the importance of group times including mealtimes should not be underestimated as a potential site for learning about difference - in terms of gender, ethnicity, cultural and other differences. Food is a significant aspect of any culture, and sharing food or eating together while talking about socially relevant issues can build community, and/or mirror traditional practices in some family homes.

Education should offer solutions and alternative possibilities. "Early years settings can become welcoming sites of creative dialogue, collaborative thinking and imaginations where children, parents and teachers can become agents for social change as opposed to accepting the status quo of dominant discourses" (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Berikoff, 2008, p. 263). 'Opening up' spaces for negotiation and meaning making, and valuing multiple perspectives and possibilities are part of

[85] (Repeated from 83 so 'Open Letter' could stand alone). Dr Guy Claxton is a British academic whose early work informed the construct of working theories in Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996, 2017) as discussed (Chapter 4 - Literature Review). Claxton was also an advisor on the TLRI project 'Moments of Wonder' (Peters & Davis, 2012) where he introduced the metaphors of volcanoes and seabeds to describe children's interests; the former being easily visible while the latter means you have to really stop and look (Personal communication AP Sally Peters, 29 July 2017).

renewed anti-bias approaches that are needed if a fairer, more just world is to be realised.

Since there is no pedagogy without choice, relevant questions for teachers to consider include: what counts as, or constitutes, 'curriculum'? What is 'socially relevant curriculum'? And are we conscious of the 'hidden curriculum'? A related and worthwhile investigation is, what counts as 'children's interests'? In the interests of things that matter to children and to the adults who care for them (Silin, 1995), what about providing a broader curriculum where 'constructs of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexual orientation are addressed openly and actively in the classroom' (De Lair & Erwin, 2000, p.154).

In addition to planning for children's learning, teachers are expected to formatively assess and document children's developing skills, attitudes, knowledge, dispositions and working theories. Often linked to 'giving children a voice', documentation has several key purposes. First, documentation enables children to revisit their learning, second, parents and whānau can share in children's developing understandings and add their perspectives, and third, everyone can see what learning is valued in the place. Reification makes learning concrete and public, supporting everyone to negotiate its meaning (Claxton & Carr, 2004). Rich insights gained in dialogue between parents, teachers and children can enable teachers to play a mediation role in children's learning as expected in *Te Whāriki*.

> [Early childhood is] a period of momentous significance for all people growing up in [our] culture…By the time this period is over, children will have formed conceptions of themselves as social beings, as thinkers, as language users, and they will have reached certain important decisions about their own abilities and their own worth (Donaldson et al., 1983, p.1, as cited in MoE, 1996).

I would add the words '*and the abilities and the worth of others*' given the sociocultural underpinnings of the curriculum. The interests of the child and the interests of the community, like self-worth and the worth of others, are mutually constituted as can be seen in socially relevant curriculum.

As children mature and leave ECE for the wider world of school, younger children with less experience of socialisation with diverse others beyond their home and

family contexts, come in their place. These children are accompanied by families who often look to teachers as models of what to do and say about sensitive issues or behaviour they find challenging. Derman-Sparks (2008) suggests that teachers need to provide leadership in these areas, and 'keep on, keeping on' doing and redoing social justice issues so that they become part of the daily curriculum, rather than when they arise as an issue, or an 'interest'. "Central to effecting change is that negative attitudes towards difference and diversity are countered with new understandings and knowledge" (Gordon-Burns et al., 2012, p. 7). We need to "blend rather than bulldoze new ways of thinking" (Waite et al., 2005, p.273) on hearing children's concerns, and questions, and their developing working theories about sensitive issues.

As authentic partners in children's learning, parents and teachers together can navigate the complex terrain of children's theorising about diversity and difference in an increasingly diverse, multi-faceted and post-modern world.

As I conclude this thesis, based on seven months of interactions with 45 children, their families and six teachers, I leave you several challenges today:

Be critically reflexive. Who you are, where you come from, and how you relate to others, your habitus, identities and subjectivities, are constituted in discourses that affect how and what you teach (Education Council, 2017).

Interrogate your way(s) of understanding the social world, how it is, and how it might be. Tell each other your stories, and talk about the world you want to live in, and want your great grandchildren to live in.

Think critically, and engage in dialogue, critical reflective practice and investigation through 'Self Review' and 'Internal Evaluation' (ERO, 2009, 2015), and action research to foster culturally-responsive practices in your setting.

Develop your awareness of power imbalances that advantage some and disadvantage others, actively responding to normative and limiting discourses that work against inclusion. Remember diversity has a dark or shadow side.

The 'learning disposition of responsibility' involves taking responsibility, recognising justice, and resisting injustice (Carr, 2001; MoE, 2017). Model these behaviours to children and families because they are watching you.

Recognise the child-in-the-society. Support them to negotiate fairness related to aspects of diversity so they realise their full potential. Intentionally seek to notice, make meaning, and respond to the expressions of children's working theories (Davis & McKenzie, 2018b).

Be clear about the curriculum choices you make. All aspects of diversity need to be covered in relation to fairness and the Contribution strand of *Te Whāriki*. Look beyond the volcanoes to the sea-bed, and enact socially relevant curriculum that moves between the interests of the child and the interests of the community. Remember, your interests matter too.

Be courageous. Teaching can be a rocky, risky terrain (Palmer, 2007). Take an activist stance, remembering that while there are risks in doing and saying things, there are even greater risks if we do or say nothing. Silence is no resistance for oppression and injustice.

Seek multiple perspectives from children themselves, parents, and other teachers to uncover broader understandings about children's meaning making. Open up spaces for negotiation so children's meaning making can be supported. Embrace messiness and uncertainty, resisting the urge to simplify or settle things.

Document children's learning, not just the good sanitised stuff, but the real, hard 'difficult' risky learning too. This will support children revisiting their learning over time, and enable parents to share in children's developing understandings.

Genuinely involve parents and whānau in children's learning (see example below), and provide leadership to parents who are unsure of what to say or do in terms of their children's developing understandings of diversity in the world around them.

And finally,

Build communities to support yourselves and your renewed social justice, anti-bias teaching by sharing the difficult, risky, messy and uncertain aspects of your daily work with supportive others.

This example of involving parents is reproduced from Blaise and Taylor (2012). [My additions appear in *italics*]

> Teachers can bring families into these types of discussions. Descriptions of gender and sexuality [*and race, ethnicity, social class, religion*] conversations, including children's questions and points of view, could be included in the daily class journal or weekly newsletter. The teacher might also highlight how such discussions made *them* uncomfortable - and why. Since parents are likely to feel more uncomfortable about these issues than their children, they might appreciate a teacher's honest reflections on what can sometimes be difficult but important discussions about gender, power, inclusion, and exclusion. Perhaps parents will appreciate them more if teachers attempt to include families in the process and are not just always told about it after the fact. For example, a teacher might write about *their* reaction to often hearing children say, 'You're such a girl!' in a derogatory way [*Or what's he doing that for? He's a boy!*]. *They* could ask parents if they have heard similar kinds of remarks at home, whether they consider this kind of behaviour problematic and why/why not, and how they might address it (p.96).

As an early childhood teacher, and someone who believes passionately in social and justice, at the end of this thesis, I am more conscious than ever of how things might be different. I want to continue imagining and working to create a fairer world. This task needs all of us to focus on relationships, improve our practices, and work to change the world, starting with ourselves. Time spent building community is never wasted if we are 'hard on the issues, and soft on the people'.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - KEI TUA O TE PAE: ASSESSMENT EXEMPLARS BOOK 15 - EXCERPT

The Mana Tangata Contribution strand

- Children have formative assessments that they can "read" and comment on.
- Group assessments illustrate children's developing skills and dispositions to initiate, maintain, and enjoy relationships with other children.
- Continuity of assessments over time illustrates individual and personalised learning trajectories or journeys that have developed from the children's particular interests and intentions, the teachers' interests and intentions (including *Te Whāriki*), the available resources and activities, the opportunities that children are given to take responsibility for their own learning, the expectations of competence for all learners, the community of learners that exists at the early childhood setting, and the funds of knowledge and dispositions that the children bring from home and elsewhere.
- The curriculum and the assessment documentation include funds of knowledge about difference and diversity, with the goal of children learning to relate positively in diverse groups.
- Teachers note, recognise as valuable, record, respond to, and revisit episodes in which children question the status quo and offer thoughtful alternatives

(MoE, 2004, p.2).

APPENDIX B - Areljung & Kelly-Ware (2016)

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Navigating the risky terrain of children's working theories

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ABSTRACT

'Working theories' encompass children's theorising about the social and material worlds. This article looks explicitly at power relations involved in pedagogy around children's working theories by focusing on the teacher's control of what and whose working theories get unpacked and extended. From an analysis of four cases from early childhood education (ECE) settings, it is concluded that teaching strategies are related to possible risks of unpacking and extending children's working theories. From a teacher's perspective such risks include: undermining the ECE setting's rules; exposing one's own lack of knowledge or skills; or risking the relations and atmosphere in the group or setting. These risks affect how working theories are dealt with in terms of time – right away, later or never – and voicing, as teachers regulate children's ideas for example through making concrete, reconstructing or silencing them.

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Introduction

In many countries, there is consensus that early childhood education (ECE) pedagogy should build on children's needs and interests, an approach often referred to as 'child-oriented'. Key aspects of child-oriented pedagogy are that children's theories about the world are valued on their own and not compared with adult ways of understanding, and that adults need to decode and build on children's theorising (Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson, and Hundeide 2013) to extend children's thinking. When discussing child-oriented pedagogy, one useful concept is 'working theories', which stems from *Te Whāriki*, the Aotearoa New Zealand curriculum framework (Ministry of Education 1996), where it is described as related to children's developing learner identities (Claxton 1990). The 'working theory' construct encompasses the notion that children have ideas that are being worked on over time, in their everyday experiences with people, places and things. These theories 'become increasingly useful for making sense of the world, giving the child control over what happens, for problem solving, and for further learning' (Ministry of Education 1996, 44). In this article, we draw on the description of working theories provided by Hedges (2008), that is 'the ways children process intuitive, everyday, spontaneous knowledge, use this to interpret new information, and think, reason and problem solve in wider contexts' (284)

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A number of researchers have explored children's working theories in various guises such as 'mini-theories' (Claxton 1990), 'islands of interest' (Davis, Peters, and Duff 2010) and 'working theories' (Claxton and Carr 2004; Davis and Peters 2011; Hedges 2011). This body of research provides important insights into theories of knowledge, cognition and dialogic teaching approaches which are important to extend children's thinking. Though we draw on Hedges's (2008) description herein, we recognise that contemporary thinking about working theories is in transition, due to the body of recent publications employing a wide range of theoretical perspectives and concepts drawn from constructivist (Hedges 2008), sociocultural (Davis and Peters 2012; Hedges and Jones 2012; Peters and Davis 2015), complexity theories and the work of Deleuze (Hargraves 2013, 2014), Piaget (Lovatt and Hedges 2015) and Vygotsky (Hedges 2012). Hence, any shared understandings of working theories are elusive given that they are shaped by the different perspectives employed. Consequently, in this article our understandings of how working theories evolve in time are shaped by our attention to power relations.

How children express their working theories and how teachers recognise, support and enrich them are well covered in more than 30 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters published mainly in the last five years, a selection of which are referred to herein. This work is highly relevant beyond the Aotearoa New Zealand context as, at least throughout the Western world, early childhood teachers are charged with recognising and responding to children's learning starting with children's interests. The studies provide a vocabulary for teaching strategies related to children's working theories, for example *responding to, extending* and *complicating* (Hedges 2011) as well as *disrupting* and *providing spaces for uncertainty* (Peters and Davis 2011). In their research, Peters and Davis (2011) found that adults often assumed that they shared the child's thinking only to *disrupt* children's working theories by making assumptions or not fully grasping children's developing thinking about particular topics. Or adults were quick to provide children with answers or solutions rather than *providing space* for them to find out more information and revise their theories, or to work things out for themselves. Hedges (2011) found that many of the teachers' strategies were about waiting before offering a resolution to children's inquiries, for example by *not supplying a direct answer* to children's questions.

However, there is limited research addressing *what* type of working theories teachers select to unpack and extend, and even less literature addressing *why* they select the things they do. Seeing that power is operating whenever a teacher chooses to acknowledge and build on a child's comment or action, and that some of what children say and do is never noticed and some is silenced, we find it crucial to employ a power perspective on this issue. We have seen little in-depth discussion of power in the existing working theories research literature. When power is mentioned, as when Davis and Peters (2011) point out that power shifts in teacher–child conversations, and that teachers sometimes 'hijack' (12) the direction of children's theorising, the critical issue of power in terms of pedagogy is not fully explored.

Hence, this article seeks to contribute insights to teaching around working theories by drawing attention to the mechanisms regulating what and whose working theories unfold in ECE settings. Here, we operationalise 'power' as teacher's control over *voicing;* that is, if/how children's working theories are valued and reified by teachers, and *time*; that is, if/when teachers handle children's working theories. We also use *risk* (of unpleasant consequences) as a concept to interpret how children's working theories are unpacked and extended by teachers. These concepts will be elaborated below, as they are central to our research

question: *How do the factors voicing, time, and risk interact with ECE pedagogy in the terrain of children's working theories?*

Power relations in pedagogy around working theories

Regarding pedagogy in the terrain of children's working theories, one crucial issue is the power relations involved in the control of when, where and about what to communicate. In order to uncover such power relations, we see Bernstein's (2000) concept of 'framing' as fitting, since it refers to the control over communication. Bernstein speaks of two systems of rules that are connected to framing. The first is the system that concerns the social life and 'regulative discourse', such as expectations of conduct, character and manner; and the second is the system that concerns the 'instructional discourse', such as selection (what to teach), sequence (in what order) and pacing (how fast).

Controlling if and how children's working theories may unfold

Since 'framing' embraces the control over selection, sequence and pacing, the concept offers a way to talk about how working theories unfold in time. What regulates when it is time to start/stop/continue a conversation where working theories are at play, and thus if and when to, temporarily, resolve the issue connected to the working theory? And what rules of social order might be involved in such regulations? Bernstein (2000) argues that, even though teachers often claim that they distinguish between transmission of skills and transmission of values, the instructional discourse is generally embedded in the dominant, regulative discourse. Employing Bernstein's perspective on teaching around children's working theories implies that the teachers' selection, sequencing and pacing of working theories-related communication is embedded in the expectations of conduct, character and manner of the ECE setting.

Such conditions are indicated in Alasuutari's (2014) study of preschool teacher–parent conversations revolving around what children had previously said about life in the preschool (we note that children were not present during these conversations). Alasuutari concluded that if children's comments were to be validated by adults, they needed to fit with ideas of the ECE setting being a well-functioning institution staffed by teachers who had mastered their professional role. The adults appreciated children's comments that included fantasy stories, and stories of daily activities such as singing and playing. These responses were constructed by the adults as 'amusing' or 'lovely'. However, if the children talked of bullying or complained about the preschool, their talk was often refuted by the adults. Alasuutari (2014) interpreted such complaints as compromising, or putting at stake either the teacher's professional role, or the image of the preschool as a well-functioning community, and teacher–parent relations. In such situations parents and teachers often co-constructed a more favourable story, invalidating the child's comments.

Documenting children's working theories

Another aspect of power relations involved in unpacking and extending children's working theories concerns documentation. Out of all that children say and do, what do teachers make concrete through photos, videos, pictures, stories or quotes? Wenger (1998) refers to

'reification' as the process of giving concrete form to an abstract understanding; as in writing something down (such as rules), naming an abstract phenomenon (such as 'gravity'), or producing tools or pictures (such as maps). When something is made concrete and public, people can start to negotiate its meaning. Claxton and Carr (2004) tie the concept of reification to Learning Stories, a form of narrative assessment commonly produced in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE settings (Carr 2001; Carr and Lee 2012). Claxton and Carr (2004) argue that 'such reifications make concrete and visible for the student and the family the kinds of responses that the teachers find valuable' (94), which we read as pointing out the teacher's power over identifying what parts of children's learning will be documented.

Even though visual documentation – video, photographs and drawings – is (increasingly) common ECE practice, there are few examples in research that employ critical perspectives on the power relations involved in documentation. One exception is found in the Sparrman and Lindgren (2010) study, in which the authors highlight that documentation is not simply about objectively writing down 'what children say', or videoing/photographing 'what children do'. They argue that teachers are involved in interpreting and choosing what to document or voice. Thus, the power relations of documenting children's learning can be tied to Bernstein's (2000) terms of controlling the selection and sequencing of teaching, and the idea that children's communication needs to be produced within the preschool's regulative discourse in order to be acknowledged by teachers (Alasuutari 2014).

Methodology

In order to answer our research question about factors that interact with teaching in the terrain of children's working theories, we needed empirical material that included teachers responding to children's theories about the surrounding world. The four cases presented here are selected from data-sets of our respective research projects. In the Aotearoa New Zealand project, children's theorising about social relations, specifically diversity and fairness, was under investigation. This was conducted as a case study where data were collected in one ECE setting, with Kelly-Ware as a participating teacher–researcher. The Swedish project had a research focus on science teaching, thus it was more inclined towards children's theorising about the material world. Here, data were collected by 6 researchers, including Areljung, from 14 preschools. The reason for selecting from both data-sets was that we wanted to cover a 'wide terrain' of practices when it came to the substance of children's working theories, thus including theorising about social relations as well as science content knowledge. Our aim is not to compare ECE in our two countries, rather it is to contrast different cases of pedagogy in the terrain of children's working theories. Nevertheless, we provide a brief description of the two contexts where the empirical material was generated, drawing from an overview of Swedish and Aotearoa New Zealand ECE, developed by Margrain and Mellgren (2015).

ECE in Sweden and Aotearoa New Zealand

Margrain and Mellgren (2015) identify that both Sweden and Aotearoa New Zealand have relatively high ECE participation rates (around 80–95% of children in the age group 1–5 years attend some form of ECE), and a high level of teacher qualifications, compared to other

countries. In Sweden, the teacher–child ratio is 1:5, while in New Zealand the ratio is 1:5 for the youngest children and 1:10 for children over 2 years of age.

For the purpose of this article, it is of interest that ECE in both Sweden and Aotearoa New Zealand has as a main goal to support children's positive images of themselves as learners and confidence in their autonomous thinking, where pedagogy should be attuned to children's own theories (Ministry of Education 1996; Swedish National Agency of Education 2011).

Data selection

As this study focuses on how teachers respond to children's working theories, one criterion for the selection was that the case material for each vignette consisted of observations in practice where we judged that working theories were operating, and where both teachers and children were involved. We recognise, since children are theorising (otherwise known as making sense of the world) all of the time (Ministry of Education 1996), that in the selected sequences there are likely to be several working theories intertwined or operating in tandem about different topics. Following Hedges's (2008) definition of working theories, we have singled out one of these topics, and built the case around the related teacher–child interaction. Furthermore, we chose cases that included interviews with teachers reflecting on such sequences. In order to have a wide-ranging set of data to draw on when analysing factors that affect teachers' responses to children's working theories, we selected cases that were different from each other, both when it came to the sensitivity of the potential working theory, and the setting of the case. The four cases include a series of experiments, a reading-aloud session, a play episode and a conversation between children and their teacher. Despite originating from two different countries, we have seen that all four cases illustrate situations common to ECE settings in both of our projects.

Ethics

The Aotearoa New Zealand project received ethical consent from The University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee whilst the Swedish project followed requirements formulated by the Swedish Research Council (2011). Both projects involved ethical considerations involving informed consent, confidentiality (including pseudonyms for children, adults and settings) and the use of data. Staff, children and guardians were informed about the purpose of the studies and extended the right to refrain from participation.

Analytical tool: themes and categories

The selected data consist of four cases including observations in practice (video, photos and field notes) and transcripts of interviews with teachers. Through an iterative process of individual and joint analysis based on an analytical tool (see Table 1), these data were condensed into the four vignettes presented in the findings section. Each vignette begins with an outline of the topic that we believe the working theories revolve around, from our joint perspective.

We have employed analytic coding, which implies an interpretative stance, with themes stemming from both literature and the data (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011). From the

Table 1. Analytical tool – themes, guiding questions and categories.

Themes	Teaching strategies	Voicing	Time	Risk
Guiding question	*How are children's working theories handled by teachers?*	*How do teachers value and give voice to children's working theories?*	*When is the working theory handled?*	*What is possibly at risk if the teacher was to unpack children's working theories?*
Categories	Not supply direct answers, respond to, extend, complicate (Hedges 2011) disrupt, provide spaces for uncertainty (Peters and Davis 2011) unpack	Refute, validate, appreciate (Alasuutari 2014) reify, make public (Wenger 1998)	From data (for example: immediately, fizzling out)	From data (for example: relationships, kindergarten rules, the teacher's role, 'correct' understandings of issues in the natural/social world)

outset we agreed that our analysis should build on concepts from the working theories research literature regarding teaching strategies. We were also determined to acknowledge the power relations involved in teachers' responses to children's working theories. Here, power is operationalised as teachers' control over voicing, and the 'time-being' of, children's working theories. Our respective data-sets include sensitive topics such as racism and exclusion. As we discussed the cases, prior to systematically analysing them, we also realised that the 'risk' (of unpleasant consequences) was a factor likely to affect how teachers responded to children's working theories. Thus, we have concentrated on four themes when analysing the material:

Teaching strategies

Several concepts related to teaching strategies can be extracted from the various research publications on working theories. We have selected our categories from articles related to two large and influential research projects, where the concepts *not supply direct answers, respond to, extend* and *complicate* originate from Hedges (2011) while *disrupt* and *provide spaces for uncertainty* can be found in Peters and Davis (2011). We have added the category *unpack* to address the act of trying to find out what the child's current working theory is.

Voicing

This theme concerns how teachers value and give voice to children's working theories. Here, we have drawn the categories *refute, validate, and appreciate* from Alasuutari (2014), and *reify* and *make public* from Wenger (1998).

Time

Peters and Davis (2011) speak of 'spaces for uncertainty'; spaces where questions and theories unfold and linger over time, without it being necessary for teachers to immediately provide the 'right' facts. Similarly, 'time' in this article refers to how children's working theories linger in time – if they can be revisited in another moment, on another day, or if they are handled right away. Linking to Bernstein's (2000) idea of 'control over pacing and sequencing', we are interested in the teacher's control over how working theories are handled in a time perspective. Here, the categories, for example 'immediately' and 'fizzling out', stem from the data.

Risk

In ECE research, 'risk' generally refers to (physical) risk-taking in terms of physical challenges, such as climbing trees (See for example Kelly and White 2012; and Stephenson 2003). Alternatively the concept is defined as: 'the possibility that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen' (Risk [Def. 1.1] n.d.). Such risk is not exclusive to physical harm, but could also relate to social unpleasantness. This has some bearing on a proposal by Lovatt and Hedges (2015) that extending children's working theories can involve 'invoking disequilibrium', especially when different ideas are in conflict – for example the child experiences discomfort – and might lead to teachers and children avoiding unpacking conflicting ideas. These authors use disequilibrium mainly when conflict is perceived *within* the individual child, as she or he processes new information that confuses their former explanation.

In contrast, we see that teachers might avoid unpacking working theories for reasons other than possible unpleasantness for a child. For example, their avoidance may relate to working theories that touch upon sensitive subjects or 'difficult knowledge' (Britzman 1991), which could be uncomfortable for the teacher to handle and may cause tension within the group. Hence, we find 'risk' to be a powerful concept to use when interpreting the four cases. Thus, we have studied the cases, asking what could possibly be at risk when or if the teachers unpack children's working theories. The categories have stemmed from our interpretation of the data.

Findings

The results, summarised in Table 2, will be presented case by case, with our analysis following each one.

Vignette 1: where has the water gone?

In this vignette, we interpret that the children's working theories centre on how water can disappear from a glass. The Spruce Preschool is for children aged 1–4 years. Here, as in most Swedish preschools, the cloakroom is the only indoor space that parents will definitely enter, thus it is where most parent-directed information is displayed. One day I (Areljung) noticed an arrangement, with one empty glass and one glass with yellow-stained water inside and a lid on top, on a shelf in the cloakroom. The accompanying sign read 'Where has the water gone?' Attached to the shelf were three children's drawings, including comments such as 'The water snuck out here', and 'A guy has entered here and he took water and he poured some out'.

In an interview, the teacher Hanna described how this project had originated from children observing ice forming in water containers that they had placed outdoors. Next Hanna and a small group of children (3–4 year olds) put a water container indoors, noticing that the water disappeared after some time. Then they put water in two glasses and placed a lid on one of them. Seeing that the water had only disappeared from the glass without a lid, the children made drawings attempting to explain what had happened, hence the drawings displayed in the cloakroom. Hanna mentioned that she had conducted similar activities the year before. She regretted not having time to follow up on the children's drawings and comments: 'That is a sad thing, that sometimes things fizzle out, even though you have planned to follow things up'. Furthermore, she regretted lacking the time to reflect and

Table 2. Summary of the findings.

		Teaching strategies	Voicing	Time	Risk
Vignette	What the working theories revolve around	*How are children's working theories handled?*	*How do teachers give voice to and value children's working theories?*	*When are the working theories handled?*	*What is possibly at risk if the teacher was to unpack children's working theories?*
1. Where has the water gone?	How the water disappeared from the glass	Not supplying direct answers, space for uncertainty, complicates children's working theories by adding material and questions	Reified in children's drawings and recorded comments, made public in the cloak room	Lingers over a long time, letting one investigation lead to another, clear sequencing led by teacher, questions not resolved in the end – risk 'fizzling out'	Teacher not having enough content knowledge to know how to extend children's working theories
2. This is our house	Inclusion and exclusion	Clear teacher intervention, aiming to unpack one child's working theories	One child's working theory validated by teacher in the conversation	Immediately (though had planned to let children ponder for a while) book offers a resolution and a pre-set sequencing, which the teacher is in control of	Child being upset and feeling excluded, not being seen as a nice atmosphere, or children not being taught 'correct' understandings of issues in the social world
3. Friends don't do that	How a friend should behave	Responding to and seeking to disrupt the working theory of one child, not unpacking that of another child	One child's working theory reified in both children's books of Learning Stories, appreciating the working theory that was in line with ECE rules, valuing social learning	Clear teacher control over sequencing, seeking immediate resolution of the conflict between the children	Unpleasant atmosphere, children falling out of friendship, one's reputation in the eyes of the other teachers: undermining kindergarten rules, child not learning social codes
4. The Anthill	Life inside the anthill (and outside the anthill)	Not necessary to base ideas on facts, no clear teacher interventions aiming to unpack children's working theories	Children's ideas appreciated, children's creativity and imagination valued	Fragmentary dialogue, few follow-up comments on potential working theories, no lingering over time	Taking away children's penchant to think creatively

gather information in order to move forward: 'You don't have the time to structure yourself – when to continue and how to continue'.

Analysis

Teaching strategies. Hanna offered a space for uncertainty by not supplying direct answers to why or where the water disappeared. Instead she let one investigation lead into another. She complicated children's working theories by adding material, like the glass with the lid, and questions.

Voicing. Children's working theories were reified in their drawings which were publicly displayed, accompanied by the experiment material, in the cloakroom where parents could be expected to see them.

Time. Even though Hanna did not supply children with facts that resolved the questions, her interview account indicates that she was highly active in directing the practical investigations. Her sequencing was likely affected by experiences from conducting a similar 'line of investigation' the year before.

The questions relating to the phases of water evolved and lingered over a long period time, without being definitely resolved. In fact, though finding it frustrating, the teacher signalled that this question might fizzle out due to her own lack of time for pedagogical reflection and planning.

Risk. The risks were relatively few, given that Hanna had worked with similar activities before, albeit with another group of children. Still, the teacher comments that she has not had the time to gather enough information to go on exploring the phenomenon of phase transition. This can be interpreted as the teacher avoiding the risk of not knowing how to explain the phenomenon, or how to extend children's working theories.

Vignette 2: this is our house

In this vignette, we interpret that the working theories revolve around inclusion and exclusion. Beach Kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand is for 3–5 year olds. Here, teachers often read picture books to the group of 40 children as parents are arriving to pick them up. On this day I (Kelly-Ware) observed a teacher, Grace, reading *This is our house* (Rosen 1996). The story was about a boy with red hair, playing in a cardboard box house. He would not let other children in. First he wanted to exclude the girls, then he wanted to keep out children wearing glasses. When Grace read: 'This house isn't for people with glasses', Gabriel gasped and said in a firm voice 'Oh, that's me, that's me'. He touched his glasses and looked at his mum, who was standing near the mat and had glasses on too. After initially appearing close to tears, Gabriel said 'I'm gonna get angry at that boy'. Grace immediately stopped reading and talked to Gabriel about his feelings and the reasons behind them. Then she read on, recounting how, when the boy with red hair went to the toilet, all the children crowded into the house, shouting 'this house is for everyone'.

Later, three of the teachers talked about the incident and the kindergarten ideals of fairness and inclusion. Grace identified that she had planned to let the children ponder for a while about Gabriel's saying 'that's me', but when she saw his face she 'couldn't just leave it'. Grace commented:

> Every time I said a reason why the boy in the book was excluding the other children, it was as if some children were thinking 'Phew! I would be OK'. And then when it said 'glasses', Gabriel said

'that's me, that would be me' and his little voice cracked and he thought 'oh my god, I could be excluded!' He's just new and his mother was here too.

Analysis

Teaching strategies. From Grace's actions and comments, we interpret that she was unwilling to provide the children with space for uncertainty once she observed Gabriel's emotional response to seeing himself in the story. Instead she intervened and attempted to unpack Gabriel's working theory/theories.

Voicing. Grace valued and gave voice to Gabriel's working theories at the time and in the follow-up discussion with other teachers. Other children's potential working theories (besides Gabriel's) were not unpacked. Though recognising that children seemed relieved as long as the reason for exclusion did not apply to them, no teacher pointed out that 'girls' were another group also excluded in the book, despite almost half of the children present being girls.

Time. The picture-book followed a traditional narrative sequence with an unfolding plot, escalating tension and a resolution at the end. Grace controlled the pace and sequencing of the conversation – stopping reading, talking with the children and starting to read again. While the story was familiar to other children, Gabriel was new to the kindergarten and he may not have heard it before.

Risk. From Grace's response, we interpret that she was not prepared to risk many things – the teacher's role, the child's well-being, the kindergarten ideals including a nice atmosphere, and 'correct' understandings of issues in the social world.

Vignette 3: friends don't do that

In this vignette, we interpret that the children's working theories concern how a friend should behave. One afternoon in my teacher–researcher role at Beach Kindergarten, I (Kelly-Ware) observed Sachin and Ruby (both 4 years old) building in the block area. The children were crouching down when suddenly Ruby jumped up. In the process she stood on Sachin's fingers. Angrily Sachin said: 'I'm taking my car away' and he yanked a box causing the building to collapse. He fled outside leaving Ruby looking confused and upset. She took my hand and together we followed him. As we sat down near him he held up his hurt fingers.

Researcher: I can see you are upset Sachin. Ruby's upset too. She didn't mean to hurt your fingers.

(The children listened silently.)

Sachin: Friends don't do that!

Researcher: No, friends don't hurt each other Sachin, but this was an accident. What do you want her to do or say? She is upset and wants to play with you because you are her friend.

Sachin: Say please! (pause) Say sorry!

Ruby: Sorry!

Together the two children returned to rebuilding their shop. I wrote a Learning Story documenting what I saw as their learning. With the teachers' support I put copies in both children's portfolios. One of the teachers commented:

> Your story is very thorough and precise. Sachin so misunderstood Ruby and I love his comment 'friends don't do that'. I think it is interesting how they have both misunderstood each other in this way. After reading your story it seems Ruby was oblivious to hurting him, he thought it was on purpose and Ruby is mortified once she realizes. I wonder does culture, language (verbal and body) play a part? Anyway, awesome story, great learning here and yes I think it could be put in both of their books.

Analysis

Teaching strategies. Acting in place of a teacher, I sought to disrupt Sachin's (mis)interpretation of Ruby's actions. I responded to Sachin's working theory 'Friends don't do that', but did not supply a direct answer. Rather, I asked Sachin what he wanted his friend Ruby to do to resolve their dispute. I did not unpack Ruby's working theory.

Voicing. I validated Sachin's working theory about how friends should behave. His request to 'say please/sorry' was in keeping with the kindergarten rules, and pragmatics – social relational practices. The Learning Story reified the event, making it public for teachers and the children's families, and valued both children's social learning.

Time. Time was highly significant in terms of the children's communication. I clearly selected and sequenced the conversation for an immediate resolution for these angry and upset children.

Risk. I did not want to risk the children's well-being, or their relationship. My reputation was also at risk: could I (the teacher–researcher) manage, extend and document the children's working theories in a way that would reinforce the kindergarten rules, the nice atmosphere, and children's 'correct' understandings of issues in the social world?

Vignette 4: the anthill

In this vignette, we interpret that there are working theories concerning life inside and outside, the anthill. The Ant Preschool is a Swedish preschool for children aged 3–4 years, where the parents had been asked to bring a photo showing their child's 'meeting with the forest'. These 'meetings' were acknowledged during weekly excursions to the forest, for example when the teacher Jenny and four children gathered around an anthill. It was late autumn and there was little sign of life on the surface of the hill. The following conversation took place after Jenny had told the children that the ants were sleeping inside the anthill in winter:

Teacher:	Do you think that the ants are sleeping during the whole winter?
Children:	Yes.
Teacher:	Or can they play inside the house?
Anna:	They have a laundry room where you can play.

Teacher: You think there is a laundry room inside?

Anna: Yes.

Teacher: What do you think?

Kim: I think they have a windscreen wiper. Then you must have a car.

Teacher: You think they have cars in the anthill?

Kim: Or a big car.

Teacher: What do they do with the car?

Kim: Jump in.

Anna: Go on vacation.

Kim: To Germany maybe.

Teacher: To Germany maybe.

Anna: Where Lucas is.

Teacher: Yes, where he is. Maybe they want to go to him.

Anna: Maybe they go with bus number 4 to Germany.

Soon the group discovered a living ant on the surface of the hill and the discussion moved away from theorising about life inside the anthill.

When the teachers Jenny, Nina and Bette watched a video recording of this conversation, they applauded the children's ingenious ways of connecting their own experiences – of the bus, a laundry room, and a child who had moved to Germany – to the life of ants. When asked, by the interviewer, about the pros and cons of anthropomorphising ants, in relation to learning science, Nina responded:

> If one puts it like this: we know that there is no laundry room in an anthill, we do know that. Because we are adults and we have developed our logical thinking. At the same time, one does not want to say to a child that 'you do understand that there is no laundry room, don't you?' (…) One does not want to take away their desire to think creatively.

Analysis

Teaching strategies. Jenny provided room for uncertainty regarding life inside the anthill, however she did so without intervening: not supplying answers, and not unpacking any working theories.

Voicing. Jenny gave voice to many of the children's comments basically by repeating them, however the tone of her voice sometimes implied a question. In the follow-up interview the teachers appreciated children's imagination and their awareness of things like the bus and Germany as a vacation destination.

Time. The quoted dialogue can be read as a rather fragmentary conversation, with no clear selection or sequencing in relation to the content (life inside the anthill).

Risk. From the group interview, it seemed like the ECE ideal included upholding children's

penchant to think creatively. We interpret, from Jenny's responses in the anthill dialogue, that she was cautious not to risk this ideal, as she did not value the children's comments or lead the conversation in any particular direction.

Concluding remarks

In our judgement, power perspectives are under-explored in previous research in the field of working theories. Hence, this study explicitly focuses on power, in terms of teacher's control over selecting and building on children's comments or actions, in an effort to understand the factors that matter to ECE pedagogy in the terrain of children's working theories. Based on our analysis, we see that some working theories are riskier than others from a teacher's perspective, because unpacking them could expose the teacher's lack of knowledge/skills, undermine the rules of the ECE setting or be inconsistent with its philosophy. Furthermore, unpacking risky working theories could mean putting at stake the children's well-being, for example through damaged relationships, as in Vignette 3 'Friends don't do that', or a child feeling aggrieved as in Vignette 2 'This is our house'.

We propose that the riskiness affects how working theories are voiced and sequenced by teachers (see Figure 1), as less risky working theories are more likely to be verbalised, made concrete and made public, compared to risky working theories. In Vignette 3, Sachin's comment 'Friends don't do that' was in line with the ECE rules and quoted in both his and Ruby's assessment documentation, while Ruby's potential working theories about friendship were not unpacked at all. In Vignette 1, 'Where has the water gone?', the children's working theories were reified in their pictures, and recorded comments, and publicly displayed in the preschool cloakroom. We judge that these working theories, for example 'the water snuck out here', were perceived by the adults as rather 'amusing', in keeping with Alasuutari's (2014) finding that children's 'amusing' or 'lovely' statements were appreciated by teachers and parents. Also in Vignette 4 'The anthill', the children's comments were highly valued by the teachers, who applauded the children references to 'bus number 4' and 'travelling to Germany'. In Vignette 2 'This is our house', on the other hand, the child's comment 'I am gonna get angry at that boy', was supposedly not appreciated as amusing or lovely, but rather it seems that the teachers created a more 'favorable story' (Alasuutari 2014) of the child's reaction, where the anger was explained in terms of the child feeling excluded. This was probably more in keeping with the ECE setting, where 'social inclusion' was one of their priorities.

When it comes to teachers' sequencing (Bernstein 2000) of working theory-related teaching we mean that risky working theories call for quick closure, as was the case in Vignette 3 'Friends don't do that'. This quick closure can be accelerated by children's emotional reactions, for example Sachin's anger and Ruby's anxiety in Vignette 3 and Gabriel feeling aggrieved in Vignette 2, as the teachers responded to children's emotions before their working theories. Not unpacking or extending the working theories might prevent children from developing the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with social competence (Ladd, Herald, and Andrews 2006), if we consider that children's working theories 'become increasingly useful for making sense of the world, giving the child control over what happens' (Ministry of Education 1996, 44).

Vignette 1 'Where has the water gone?' implies that less risky working theories can be extended over a long period of time and through several teaching moments, which is in line with what Peters and Davis (2011) call 'leaving room for uncertainty'. Less risky working

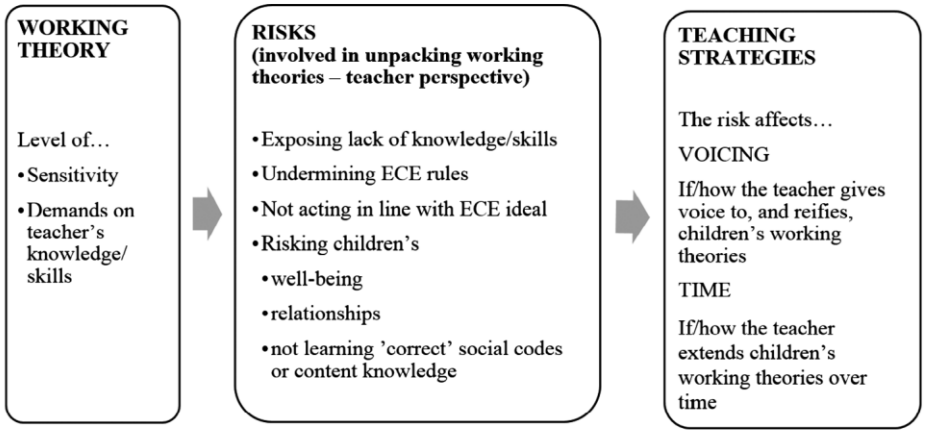

Figure 1. Relations between types of working theory and the risks related to unpacking the working theories, and finally how risk – by regulating voicing and time – interacts with teaching strategies in the terrain of children's working theories.

theories can also be left unresolved, which is indicated both in Vignette 1, where the teacher says that the investigation of evaporation may 'fizzle out', and in Vignette 4 'The anthill', where it seems that none of the children's comments, related to life inside the anthill, were unpacked. In 'The anthill' case, the risk was connected to the act of extending in itself, since the ECE philosophy was strong on not disrupting children's penchant for creative thinking.

Despite the limitations of this collaborative project, which was deliberately engineered out of other projects and is small in scale, we see the findings having broad relevance to ECE teachers internationally. Whether or not they are familiar with working theories as a construct or a learning outcome, there is much to be gained from teachers considering the power relations in their pedagogy. This specific terrain is relatively uncharted so we offer our analysis and findings as a provocation to both researchers and teachers. Further research is needed in this arena and the authors are continuing with this work. We also look forward to others taking up this challenge and to children benefiting from the new knowledge that is generated.

To sum up, we concur with other researchers in ECE that young children are theorising all the time, sometimes alone and sometimes with others, as they make sense of the world. Whether their working theories get further explored, that is whether adults take up opportunities to unpack children's working theories, depends on the estimated risks of the working theory in the first instance, hence the name of this article – 'Navigating the risky terrain of children's working theories'. Our study highlights that these risks interact with teachers' voicing of working: classroom research revisited theories, as well as how such theories are managed in time. The factors 'risk', 'voicing' and 'time', which have been shown to be linked to power, in ECE teaching around working theories are thus significant for developing pedagogy in this terrain.

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APPENDIX C - CONSENT FORM - MANAGEMENT

Title of research: Exploring adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world.

I, [Name, Position, X Free Kindergarten Association] give permission for Janette Kelly to approach the teachers, families, and children at Beech [pseudonym] Kindergarten with a view to having them participate in her Ph.D. study knowing that Janette will conduct this research ethically and collaboratively with the kindergarten community.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research will be used for the writing of Janette's Ph.D. thesis and other related academic articles and presentations and that the thesis will be widely available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of

Waikato's digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that I can request to meet with Janette at any time to be informed about the progress of the research and that I will receive a copy of the final thesis prior to marking and be able to provide comments to her supervisor.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues or complaints about the research I can contact Janette's supervisors, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz ph. 07 838 4466 ext. 7734) or Dr Nicola Daly (nicolad@waikato.ac.nz ph. 07 838 4466 ext. 4298).

Signed…….

Date…….

APPENDIX D - INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

Title of research: Exploring adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world.

Kia ora koe

You have indicated an interest in participating in this proposed collaborative activist research project, as part of my PhD study at The University of Waikato. The project seeks to investigate how teachers, children, parents and whānau understand diversity and difference, and explore possibilities for using diversity as a learning resource to promote effective intercultural education.

The aim of this in-depth qualitative study is to create space for children's working theories about diversity and difference to be fostered; space where activist teachers are promoting inclusive responses to diversity by consciously listening to children, extending their thinking, and involving their families in meaning making about children's developing understandings in this area.

The three research questions are:

When learning about diversity in the social world what working theories do young children (aged 3-5 years) express? And how are these expressed?

How might teachers promote an 'inclusive response' to diversity by young children (i.e. support young children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived difference)?

How do families encourage and respond to children's explorations of diversity?

Whilst my PhD is expected to take a number of years, it is anticipated that the duration of your active involvement will be from March – Dec 2014. If you consent to participate in this project your contribution (*subject to our joint negotiations and agreement*) would be in four key phases, as follows:

Phase One (Term break following Term One, 2014)

Meet with the researcher and your colleagues from Beech Kindergarten, and possibly your Senior Teacher for an initial hui during the term break (or at an alternative time(s) to be agreed).

Read information sheet, sign a consent form, and contribute to a relationship agreement that sets out research protocols, expectations, and timeframes, including dates for other hui involving yourselves, and parents and whānau.

In short presentations to the group, share relevant ideas from your vision, philosophy, and curriculum (especially the Contribution strand of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996), and intercultural education). These may be in the form of dilemmas, conversations, and current understandings about, and teaching practices related to diversity and difference.

Consider specific area/areas of diversity and difference that you may wish to focus on as a teaching team, for example: gender, sexuality, cultural diversity, social

class, race, or spirituality/religion. These area/areas will be supplemented by those areas which are connected to developing working theories that children raise throughout the project.

Take part in an audio-recorded initial focus group discussion about 'activism', the pedagogical strategies that teachers employ (or might employ) during diversity and difference learning experiences, and the intended outcomes for children, families, and community. Ask questions of one another and the researcher and share issues and/or challenges that you are currently facing.

Reflexively 'journal' about your existing beliefs, values and understandings about social justice and cultural diversity, as part of your ECE teaching, and interrogate the origins of your understandings, obligations, and commitments.

Circulate information sheets, and get assent forms signed by children and consent forms signed by kindergarten parents and whānau to be involved in the research project. As new families join the kindergarten community, give them information sheets and consent forms to sign and return to the kindergarten.

Phase Two (Terms 2 and 3, 2014)

Plan interventions, including professional development in the form of readings etc. with the researcher.

Arrange parent/ whānau luncheon to be followed by initial focus group, and make survey forms available to all parents and whānau.

Generate data related to children's thinking, which may include some or all of the following:

- assessment documentation - Learning Stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012);
- their artworks including drawings and photographs;
- video (recorded by teachers) and/or audio transcripts or notes of conversations between children and children, children and teacher-researchers, and the researcher and teacher-researchers about diversity and difference.

Other relevant data may include staff meeting notes, notes of informal conversations with parents and whānau about children's thinking, e mails, reflective journal entries, field notes and research diary notes.

Engage with material related to the specific focus area(s) received from the researcher or own searches, and attend professional development hui to be held during the term break. 'Journal' reflective entries at the beginning and end of each formal session, related to the content that has been discussed at hui.

Possibly arrange to conduct mid-way survey with parents and whānau to seek their feedback about their children's developing working theories about diversity and difference.

Phase Three (Term Four, 2014)

Arrange parent/ whānau luncheon to be followed by final focus group, and make survey forms available to all parents and whānau.

On an ongoing basis, analyse the data with the researcher, in relation to specific research questions.

Meet with the researcher and your colleagues from Beech Kindergarten (pseudonym), and possibly your Senior Teacher for a day long hui during the term break (or other suitable time).

Take part in an audio-recorded final focus group to discuss findings in relation to the research questions. Then consider what has been learned during the project that could be transferred, shared, or replicated by teachers in other ECE settings, teacher education providers and policymakers throughout New Zealand (for example achievements and barriers) and overseas.

At the hui, reflexively 'journal' about your understandings about social justice and cultural diversity, as part of your ECE teaching, and interrogate your understandings, obligations, and commitments as a result of engagement in this activist research project

The attached consent form contains a range of information about confidentiality and anonymity (you can choose a pseudonym), your right to withdraw from the research after the transcript checking of the first focus group interview, data storage, the use of material and the availability of my final thesis. If you have any concerns at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have any concerns, issues, or complaints about the research you can contact my supervisors, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell or Dr Nicola Daly. Their details are below.

Warm regards

Janette Kelly

(kellyj@waikato.ac.nz ph.: 07 838 4466 ext. 6571)

Supervisor Contact details.

Associate Professor Linda Mitchell Ph. 07 8384466 ext. 7734 Email: linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz	Dr Nicola Daly Ph 07 8384466 ext 4298 Email: nicolad@waikato.ac.nz

APPENDIX E - CONSENT FORM - TEACHERS

Title of research: Exploring adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world.

I, (Name) ……

(Position) ……. Beech Kindergarten (pseudonym) give consent for the following:

1) To share my understandings of diversity and difference and intercultural education at an initial reconnaissance hui, along with journaling where my understandings have come from.
2) To be interviewed (audio-recorded) by Janette Kelly as part of a focus group involving teaching colleagues and possibly our Senior Teacher on two occasions at a convenient time and place. One interview will be sometime in March/ April 2014 and the other around late 2014.
3) To send out information sheets and consent forms about the study to parents and whānau, and to collect signed consent forms. As new families join the kindergarten community, I also agree to give them information sheets and consent forms to sign and return to the kindergarten.
4) To have Janette as a frequent visitor to the kindergarten in order to build relationships with teachers, children, and families and community.
5) To assist Janette in recruiting families for the study by sending out invitations and hosting two luncheons followed by a focus groups for parents and whānau who are able/ wish to participate. One luncheon/ focus group will be sometime in April/May 2014 and the other around November 2014.
6) To provoke, and respond to, children's working theories about the social world and to capture this data (including Learning Stories) for shared analysis with Janette.
7) To meet with Janette and other teachers in the term break (or other mutually agreed time) to plan relevant interventions for our kindergarten and to share in professional development related to our area/s of interest.
8) To be involved in discussions of findings on an ongoing basis, including at a final integration hui where the second focus group and more journaling will take place, along with planning about how to integrate findings.

I have been given all the information I require about the research and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that Janette will do her utmost to maintain confidentiality and anonymity where required, and that I can choose a pseudonym.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research after the transcript checking of the first teachers and management focus group interview. To withdraw I need to contact Janette.

I understand that I will receive a copy of interview transcripts and my reflective/ reflexive journaling for checking and amending.

I understand that if Janette and I have informal conversations (face-to-face, by phone, or email) and I say something that she thinks could be significant for the research she will check with me about using my comments as part of her data.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research will be used for the writing of Janette's Ph.D. thesis and other related academic articles and presentations and that the thesis will be widely available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of Waikato's digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that I can request to meet with Janette at any time to be informed about the progress of the research and that I will be given access to the final published thesis.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues, or complaints about the research I can contact Janette's supervisors, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell or Dr Nicola Daly. Their details are below.

Signed…….

Pseudonym or real first name to be used ……

Date:…….

Supervisor Contact details.

Associate Professor Linda Mitchell Department of Professional Studies in Education Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph. 07 8384466 ext. 7734 Email: linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz	Dr Nicola Daly Senior Lecturer Department of Arts and Language Education Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph. 07 8384466 ext. 4298 Email: nicolad@waikato.ac.nz

APPENDIX F - INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS AND WHĀNAU

Title of research: Exploring adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world.

Kia ora koutou

My name is Janette Kelly and I am an Early Childhood Education [ECE] lecturer at the University of Waikato in Hamilton. The teachers at Beech Kindergarten (pseudonym) have agreed to help me in an action research study for my PhD here during 2014. You and your child (or children) are also invited to be involved.

Background

I am interested in children's working theories about other people who are different from them. I am eager to support teachers to extend children's thinking in this area, and to involve you (parents and families) in meaning making about children's developing understandings about difference.

Aims

The study will involve 3 research questions:

- When learning about diversity and difference in the social world, what working theories do young children (aged 3-5 years) express? And how are these expressed?
- How do families encourage and respond to children's explorations of diversity and difference?
- How might teachers promote an inclusive response to diversity by young children? (i.e. support young children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived difference)

What the research involves

- Teachers will be audio recording, videoing, or writing notes about their conversations with children, and children's conversations with each other;
- Teachers will be writing Learning Stories about your children's developing working theories, inviting you to comment on them, and having conversations with you about your child's working theories and developing understandings;
- When I am visiting the kindergarten, I might also have conversations with you about your child's working theories and developing understandings;
- In Term two we will be having a luncheon at the kindergarten followed by a focus group interview for parents and whānau who wish to participate;
- A survey is also planned, and survey questionnaires will be available in Term two.

If you are happy for your child to take part in this study, you are asked to fill in and return the consent form (that you received with this information sheet) to the kindergarten.

At any time, if you have concerns, issues or complaints about the research you can contact my supervisors, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell or Dr Nicola Daly. Their details are below.

Thank you for taking time to read this information. I look forward to meeting you and your children at the kindergarten over the course of the study in 2014.

Janette Kelly

kellyj@waikato.ac.nz

Phone 0800832242 Extn 6571

Supervisor Contact details.

Associate Professor Linda Mitchell Department of Professional Studies in Education Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph. 07 8384466 ext. 7734 Email: linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz	Dr Nicola Daly Senior Lecturer Department of Arts and Language Education Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph. 07 8384466 ext. 4298 Email: nicolad@waikato.ac.nz

APPENDIX G - CONSENT FORM - PARENTS AND WHĀNAU

Title of research: Exploring adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world.

Hi, my name is Janette Kelly and I work at the University of Waikato in Hamilton.

I am going to be visiting your kindergarten lots this year as I have permission from the XXXXX Association and support from the teachers at Beech Kindergarten (pseudonym) to conduct my Ph.D. research here.

Your child's teachers are helping me. We are very interested in finding out about how children understand the social world and are keen to record what they are learning at kindergarten and at home about children, and grown-ups, who are different from them.

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing to the following conditions:

I agree that my child/ children can participate in the research and that teachers will also be getting children's consent to participate in various ways. I understand that they can say 'No' at any time if they do not want me to keep any information about them.

I have read the information sheet for parents and had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I understand that I can participate anonymously in 3 surveys during 2014, and that I can participate in 2 focus group interviews likely to be held in March/April and Nov/ Dec.

I understand that I will receive a copy of interview transcripts for checking and amending, and that I have the right to withdraw from the research after the transcript checking of the first interview. To withdraw I need to contact Janette or the Head Teacher.

I understand that if the teachers and I, or Janette and I, have informal conversations (face-to-face, by phone, or email) and I say something that they think could be significant for the research they will check with me about using my comments as part of the data. I also understand that comments that I make on or about relevant Learning Stories, written about my child, may be used as data for the PhD research.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research will be used for the writing of Janette's Ph.D. thesis and other related academic articles and presentations and that the thesis will be widely available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of Waikato's digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues or complaints about the research I can contact Janette's supervisors, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz ph. 07 838 4466 ext. 7734) or Dr Nicola Daly (nicolad@waikato.ac.nz ph. 07 838 4466 ext. 4298).

Signed…….

Pseudonym…… Date…….

APPENDIX H - ASSENT FORM - CHILDREN

Title of research: Exploring adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world.

[To be read with children by the teacher only after PARENTAL CONSENT has been gained]

Hi, my name is Janette Kelly and I work at the University of Waikato, in Hamilton. I am going to be visiting your kindergarten lots this year. I am writing a report and your teachers are helping me. We are very interested in finding out about what you know, and what you are learning at kindergarten about children, and grown-ups, who are different from you. We want to share what you say and do, and how you get on with each other.

Please put a mark by the following pictures if you agree to me finding out about you in these ways:

	You can talk to me and ask me questions
	You can make notes and write down what I say

	You can take copies of my Learning Stories and use them in your report
	You can take photos and videos of me and the other children
	You can watch me while I play
	I can say No at any time if I don't want you to keep any information No

	I understand that you will keep all records of me safely locked away

- I want my real name to be used. Yes No

(If No what name would you like to be used?) _____

(NB: Please avoid TV or film character' names or names of other children attending kindergarten)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name or photo: _____

APPENDIX I - PARENT/ WHĀNAU QUESTIONNAIRE

Research topic: Children's understandings about fairness and difference

This term the focus at Beech Kindergarten (pseudonym) is going to be 'fairness'. This fits with my research which is about helping young children to learn about themselves and others. Children as young as 3 years old are beginning to notice differences between people such as age, gender, skin colour, and disabilities. They are also learning about discrimination and fairness. Your anonymous response to this questionnaire (no names are required) will help me to answer my research questions. I will be sharing my findings with the teachers and this information will help them to support your child's learning.

1. It is important for my child to learn positive messages about fairness and difference. Please circle one only.

a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree

d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree

2. How do you encourage fairness with your children **at home**? Please give one (or more) examples.

3. **At kindergarten**, is it important for my child to learn positive messages about fairness and difference? Please circle one only.

a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree

d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree

4. Do you see the teachers at Beech Kindergarten (pseudonym) teaching children about what is fair and what is not fair? Please circle one only.

Yes No Unsure

If you answered yes to question 4, please give one (or more) examples.

5. What is the most **heart-warming thing** your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family (what made you proud of them)? Please describe.

6. What is the most **surprising or unexpected thing** your child has ever said or done about someone who is different from you and your family? Please describe.

7. Please tell me a little about your family - numbers of adults, children, ages, ethnicity, etc?

If you would like to discuss these questions with me or a teacher, or you would like one of the teachers or me to fill it in with you, please let Karen know and we will make a time to suit. There will be other times when you can talk with me about these ideas, at a parent evening at the kindergarten or in a recorded session with other parents. Let me or the teachers know if you are interested.

Please put your filled-in questionnaire in the envelope provided and place it in the box at the kindergarten that has 'JK's Questionnaires' and my photograph on it.

Thank you so much for taking the time to respond.

Janette Kelly (JK)

APPENDIX J - PROFILE - FAMILIES/WHĀNAU WHO ATTEND FOCUS GROUP

Title of research: Exploring adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world.

Please take some time prior to the Focus Group to share some details about yourself and your family. I will collect up your profiles and use these as background in the research to write about the families who participated in the work. The information you provide is **confidential** to the teachers and me. One of the teachers will help you fill out this information if you need assistance. Your full name will be recorded, but will not be used in my PhD thesis or publications from the study. I will use your first name only or a pseudonym that you choose.

Your name _____

Chosen pseudonym
_____

What is your ethnicity? *(Please describe)*
_____

_____

What languages do you speak at home? (*Please specify)*
_____

_____

For how long has your child/ children attended this kindergarten? (months/ years)

_____

How many dependent children live at home with you? *(Please write down the gender and age for each child*)

Child	Gender	Age (years and months)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Are there adults (18 years and over) who share your home? *(Please write down their relationship to you, e.g. partner, husband, wife, mother, father, friend)*

Adult	Relationship to you
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Employment details *(Please describe where applicable)*

_____

_____

Tertiary qualifications (*Please tick highest qualification held where applicable*)

NCEA or equivalent	
Tertiary certificate, diploma or equivalent	
Undergraduate degree	
Masters degree	
Doctoral degree	

What interests you about the research topic of diversity and difference?

_____

_____

_____

What hopes do you have for engaging in this project?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for this background information. I look forward to your participation in the project.

Warm regards

Janette Kelly

Faculty of Education

University of Waikato

07 838 4466 Extn 6571

027 308 1291

APPENDIX K - PARENT FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE

26 November 2014

9.00am	Arrive early to set up room – chairs, food and drink, taping devices
11.15 -11.30 am	Meet and greet, Introductions
11.30	Begin recording (two devices – iPad, iPod Touch)
	JK to outline background, process etc (from her notes)
	Research Questions (copies available)
	- Specific question relating to parents/ families
	Parent Questionnaire Feedback
	(blank copies available)
	Showed vignettes to start discussion (copies available)
	Ethnicity
	Gender
	Sexuality

General discussion followed – see tape 1 hour approx.

1. Have you seen evidence of our renewed focus on diversity, equity and fairness in your child's play/ their conversations/ Learning Stories?

2. Are there any stories or conversations that you would like to share in relation what your child now knows, has learned and does, in relation to diversity and difference?

3. What has been your reaction to this evidence? (*Prompts: Positive? Any negative?)*

12.30 End discussion

Thank participants for their contributions. Offer to meet individually with any parents to review specific data, consents etc

APPENDIX L - PARENT FOCUS GROUP VIGNETTES

Story One:

My niece is now six years old. When she was four years old she came home from kindergarten and at bath time she asked her mother to wash her skin so that it would be lighter. She wanted the colour to come off. She was the only dark-skinned child in kindergarten (Adapted from MacNaughton, 2005, p.167). Imagine this is your child, or that your child attends this kindergarten. What are all the ways we might respond to this event? How would you respond? How would you want your child to respond? How should teachers respond, in your view?

Story Two:

Two girls aged two and-a-half go into a food shop owned by an Indian family to buy some rice. They are with their Home-based Educator. One little girl wrinkles up her nose, hunches her shoulders, and says 'Ooh, doesn't it smell!' in a tone of voice that indicates she finds the smell unpleasant. The Educator says 'That's a new smell for you, isn't it – you've not smelled that before have you? We can ask Mr Patel what makes the smell'. Mr Patel shows them what things make the smell. Later, their Educator talks to them about how different foods smell and how, when we are more familiar with them, we usually get to like the smells. She tells them that people who have not smelt fish and chips before often find it unpleasant, but that they usually get to like the smell when they eat the food (Working for equality with children under 3 - Early Years Trainers Anti-Racist Network, 2002)).

Story Three:

Child: This is the boys' table
Teacher: Why is that Tony? Why is this the boys' table?
Child: This is the boy's table because that is the girls' table.
Teacher: Did you know that we can sit anywhere at our kindergarten? All the children sit together or wherever they like, on any chair they like (MacNaughton, 2000, p.94). What do we think is going on here? What is your reaction to the teacher's final comment? How might her response impact on those involved, and those who hear this conversation?

Story Four

I think children are really too young to deal with sexuality issues. They have no understanding of it; it isn't part of their experiences…like they do get into playing house, mothers and fathers, and getting married, that sort of thing, but that's normal everyday play that children get into. They see it all the time on television and in their lives. But beyond that, I don't think that it is appropriate and it's not part of their experiences (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006, p.155). What are all the ways that we might respond to this statement made by a kindergarten head teacher? What is your reaction to this comment?

APPENDIX M - PHASES OF THE RESEARCH

Kindergarten visits 2014	Purpose of visit/ phase	Field texts constructed (some are included herein)
Term Two	**Reconnaissance phase**	Informal discussion with teachers
14 May	Observations during session (Visit 1)	• Kahu and Kurahaupo waka - **LS** • What's he doing that for? He's a boy
21 May	Observations during session (Visit 2)	• Felix the butterfly – **Transcript** • Kissing, marriage and babies **Transcript** Informal discussion with teachers
28 May	Observations during session (Visit 3) 1st Recorded discussion with teachers	• Sandpit hui – **Notes/ photos** • 'This is our house' story - **LS**
19 June	2nd Recorded discussion with teachers - Margaret present, Davina absent	Layla incident discussed and 'fairness' proposed as research focus by teachers (See **Transcript**)
Term Three	**Intervention phase**	
22 July	Observations during session (Visit 4)	
29 July	Observations during session (Visit 5)	• Felix with the magazine • Light sabre duel • 'Friends don't do that' - **LS**
14 August	Observations during session (Visit 6) 3rd Recorded discussion with teachers - Davina absent	• No-one with brown faces **Transcript** • Layla broke the tree **Transcript**
19 August	Observations during session (Visit 7)	Handed out Parent/Whānau Questionnaires
		• A place for everyone - L**S**
	Integration phase	• Felix and Prince George • Kelsey the builder
9 September	Observations during session (Visit 8)	Tabled Teachers' Reflections about Dylan
16 September	Observations during session (Visit 9)	• Dylan and Sachin playing in the sandpit • Kahu's birthday and Jet planes
23 September	Final observations during session (Visit 10)	• Jasmine retelling the story of Jack, and Lucas with Baby Jackson Final Teacher Reflections about Layla, Ruby, Jack and Felix
Term Four		
26 November	Parent Focus Group (**PFG***)	Final Teacher Reflections about Alfie, Rylee and Caitlyn
27 November	4th Recorded discussion with teachers - Davina absent	

APPENDIX N - INDIVIDUAL TEACHER REFLECTION ONE

Name:

1. **Please share where your understandings about diversity and difference, and your inclinations towards social justice in your teaching, come from?**

2. **Why did you choose to be involved this research?**

Please complete and return to me on my visit - 29 July 2014.

Many thanks Janette

APPENDIX O - INDIVIDUAL TEACHER REFLECTION TWO

1. On 14 August, what was your initial reaction to Dylan's statement that "No one with brown faces can come to my birthday? Why?

2. Have you had further discussion with Dylan? Seen any evidence of him taking another's point of view?

3. How have you? Might you respond to his working theories? Intentional teaching strategies?

APPENDIX P - TEACHER REFLECTION - FOCUS CHILDREN

Teachers' Reflection – [Focus child's name] October - November 2014

1. From the data generated, what do you see as [Child's name] working theories about diversity and difference (and fairness) in the social world? And how were these expressed?

2. How did you provoke and respond to these working theories?

3. How did you see [Child's name's] family's role in terms of encouraging and responding to his explorations of diversity and difference?

APPENDIX Q - TEACHER DISCUSSION AGENDAS

Meeting Agenda - 28 May 2014

Individual Teacher Reflections - Progress?
Reconnaissance phase - how's it going?
Research Focus – 'Problem'
Research Questions
Looking ahead
Proposed Visit dates - This term, Next term
Association Scholarship Application

Meeting Agenda - 18 June 2014

Feedback on draft agenda from staff meeting held 18 June 2014
Action Research - Changing or improving social practice
Research focus - Not gender - want instead to focus on Fairness.
Teachers on board and keen to move forward
Team discussion about proposed agenda as one teacher going to be absent the next day.

(Source: Notes from emails and transcript)
Methods/ Methodology related issues
Consents, Assents
Revisit what AR is about – Changing or improving social practices, and what each stage - Look, Think/Plan, Act looks like. Teachers as researchers / systematic data gathering needed. Margaret (pseudonym) and I (Janette) both pushed them to do this, and will keep doing so. Note keeping in a book and writing narratives do not quite go far enough.
Research Focus
Kindergarten focus for next term is going to be Fairness, will be conveyed to parents
Action Items
Teachers will use microphones/ recorders and video to document what's happening with/ between particular children and themselves
Keep notes in their research book, write Teaching Stories/ Reflections throughout the various cycles, build their collection of relevant picturebooks,
Read the Nuttall/ Rivalland article on sameness and fairness from EC Folio
Think about hijacking/ disrupting working theories. What is their responsibility when children's working theories relate to injustices towards others.
Survey Questionnaire
Agreed to send out a and offer parents the opportunity to fill it in/ have it filled in by a teacher/ researcher who will be available on several days at the end of the morning and
afternoon sessions specifically for this purpose with pen or tape recorder. (Allegedly several parents are dyslexic or illiterate but great communicators verbally).
Parent Evening
Planned for next term, looking to connect to research focus.

Initial Teacher Reflections
Getting on with their initial reflections about who they are, what fairness means to them, how they came to this place, and why they want to be involved in the research.
Discussion recording / transcript
90 minute tape will be transcribed over the semester break and sent back for checking
Next meeting up - Guy Claxton seminar in their term break
My regular visits - will start up again on Tuesdays beginning 21 July.
Lots of updates about specific children

'All of us were against Layla' – took up much of the discussion

Meeting Agenda - 14 August 2014

Starter Question: What does diversity and difference in the social world mean to you? And fairness and equity?

Research Questions

'No-one with brown faces' conversation occurred this morning and took up much of the discussion.

APPENDIX R - TEACHER DISCUSSION AGENDA - 27 NOVEMBER 2014

Notes for teachers to consider prior to Final Focus Group Nov 27, 2014
Looking back over the past 6 months it seems that a number of incidents were key to my developing thinking around the research topic - and these related primarily to gender/sexuality and ethnicity/ skin colour. There was little indication of other aspects of diversity and difference such as social class, spirituality, religion, age, abilities, language?

- **Is this how you see it, I wonder?**

During the early reconnaissance phase, gender was an issue that I identified based on a number of events seen or discussed:

- the speedway gang/ trip
- girls cleaning up the sandpit shed
- children appearing to challenge Felix's dressing up behaviour on the basis of his gender
- boys/ girls overtly or covertly suggesting that this was a boys'/ girls' only space

Over time I came to see various children 'doing gender' differently - Layla, Caitlin, Felix, Jack etc. I also came to see individual children's expressions of gender as fluid and responsive to the time and place they found themselves in - complex and sometimes contradictory e.g. Jack crying at being excluded, and then being the tuakana with Felix re the swing, and co-parenting the doll; Layla's aggression (is it fearlessness or something else?) and Ruby's timidness and passiveness (or is it learned helplessness?).

- **How do you define 'boy'? 'girl'? Does everyone agree I wonder?**

Dylan's lunchtime statement about 'no one with brown faces coming to his birthday' and the subsequent conversation that day, and in the days that followed involving him and other children, particularly boys – references to an all - Māori party, playing closely with Sachin etc.

- **What about 'brown faces'? Did this mean skin colour? Or ethnicity or language differences?**

Margaret's challenge to teachers about their part in Layla being cast as the 'naughty girl by other children shifted the focus from diversity and difference (gender) to fairness. Fairness featured from time to time as teachers challenged children's behaviour – Naomi and 'the light sabre duel'; children questioned other's behaviour – Dylan 'that's not fair'. I even remember asking Jasmine if limiting Caitlyn's access to the chickens was fair to her.

This brings me to my research topic - **Adults' provocations and responses to children's working theories about diversity and difference in the social world**

And the teachers' question - **How might teachers promote an inclusive response to diversity by young children? (i.e. support young children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived difference)**

In terms of our Action Research Cycle - Look, Think, Plan and Act - and us looking to 'change or improve social practice' here (19 June), **how do you think we got on?**

- What about your individual teaching approach to gender/ ethnicity/ fairness? The team's approach?

- Are you/ How are you responding differently to exclusion/ inclusion on the basis on how children understand gender/ or skin colour etc? following our Action Research

NOTE:

Try to think from the perspective of two "I's" – The I who is the teacher-researcher, and the second "I" is the teacher in the classroom (doing the best she could under the circumstances). Remember the I you were yesterday is not the same I as you are today.

APPENDIX S - ‘FRIENDS DON’T DO THAT’- A LEARNING STORY

29 July 2014
Written by Janette (from University of Waikato)
(Pseudonyms added)

Sachin and Ruby are friends and they often play together. Today they built an awesome ice-cream shop using lots of wooden blocks and a black painted cardboard (banana) box. They were crouched down by the shop when Ruby jumped up and accidentally stood on Sachin’s hand. Sachin was upset, and his fingers were sore. He held them out for me to see as I was nearby. I offered to get him the ice pack. Ruby did not know that she had hurt her friend. When I told her, she seemed embarrassed and looked away. I do not think that she knew what to say or do. I talked to them both about it being ‘an accident.’

“I’m taking my car away” Sachin said in a cross voice.
He pulled the black box, causing the whole ice-cream shop to come crashing down.
Now Ruby was upset, and her friend Sachin had gone outside to play without her.
I talked to Ruby about the ‘accident’ and we went to talk to Sachin.
He was sitting in his ‘box-car’ on the bridge.
Ruby was very quiet, so I said to Sachin,
“Ruby is your friend and she is upset too. She didn’t mean to hurt you by standing on your fingers; it was an accident!”
Sachin listened and then he said, “friends don’t do that!”
“What do you want Ruby to do or say because she is upset, and she wants to play with you because you are her friend?” I asked him.
Ruby nodded, agreeing with what I was saying.
Sachin said “Say please! Say sorry”.
So, Ruby said “Sorry” and she and Sachin went inside to fix their busted shop.

Later in the afternoon I recorded Sachin on video telling me what happened.
Ruby looked uncomfortable and did not say anything; looking away as I talked to her. However, she seemed very pleased that she and Sachin were playing together again.

What learning is happening here?
The two children clearly had different points of view about what happened. Sachin was hurt and upset. Ruby did not say or do anything after she had 'accidentally' hurt him. Sachin was upset and took his box-car outside. In the process, he destroyed the shop that they had spent a long time building together. Later he was able to discuss his feelings and clearly state his view that "friends don't do that". Maybe this explains Sachin's working theory about friendship.

I wanted to support both children to resolve their conflict. When I asked what Ruby could do to help fix the problem, Sachin knew that 'please' and 'sorry' were necessary words to use when relating to others. When Ruby said 'sorry' he was willing to play with her again.

In my view, Ruby was unprepared for the consequences of 'accidentally' hurting Sachin. She seemed upset, embarrassed, and shy about Sachin's angry response and said nothing during the whole episode until the very end.

When I videoed the children later, Sachin was able to explain to me that Ruby had hurt his fingers by standing on them. Ruby still appeared too shy and anxious to talk on tape about what happened. Both children do not know me very well and this may also have affected their responses.

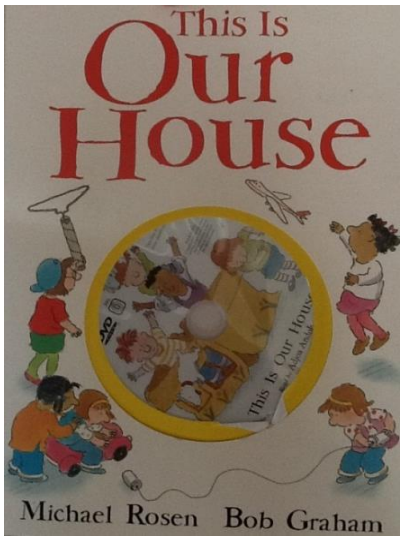
What next? Opportunities for further learning
These children, and their peers, are learning about relationships/friendships in the social world. Teachers and other adults can support them as they gain the confidence to stand up for themselves in situations that they see as unfair. Through interactions with others, children learn to take another's point of view, to ask for help, to see themselves as help for others, and to discuss or explain their ideas to adults or to other children. These are valuable skills, dispositions and working theories for relating to others in the diverse social world.

When I asked the teachers for feedback on the Learning Story, Davina commented:

Your story is very thorough and precise. Sachin so misunderstood Ruby and I love his comment 'friends don't do that'. I think it is interesting how they have both misunderstood each other in this way. After reading your story it seems Ruby was oblivious to hurting him, he thought it was on purpose and Ruby is mortified once she realizes. I wonder does culture, language (verbal and body) play a part? Anyway, awesome story, great learning here and yes, I think it could be put in both of their books (Davina).

APPENDIX T - THIS HOUSE BELONGS TO EVERYONE

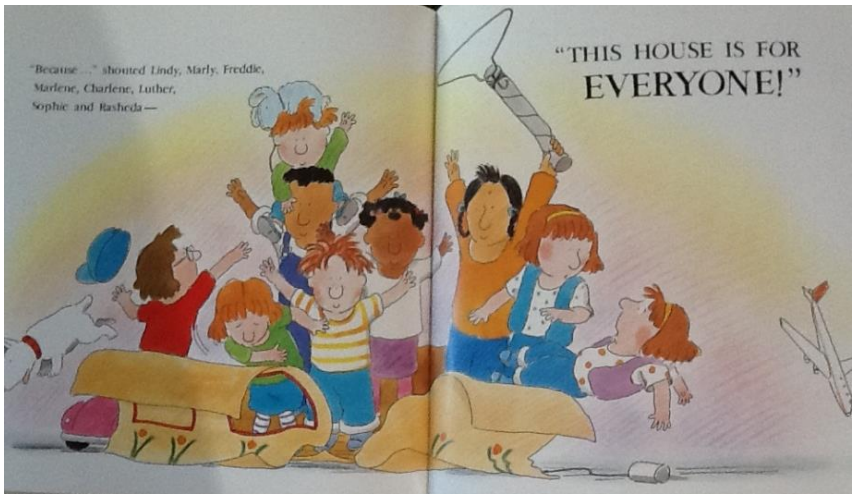
Written by Janette (from University of Waikato)
28 May 2014
(Pseudonyms added)



Today at the end-of-session mat time Grace read a children's picture book called '*This is our house*'. Gabriel, I suspect that you had not heard this story before, as you are a new boy at Beech Kindergarten. You listened intently and heard in the story that a boy, called George was playing in a house that he had made from a cardboard box. When the other children wanted to play, he wouldn't let them in. First he said 'this house is not for girls', and then he wanted to keep out (exclude) the small people. Finally, he wanted to exclude children who wear glasses.

When Grace read the line in the story that goes: "This house isn't for people with glasses", I heard you gasp and say in a firm voice "Ohhhh, that's me, that's me." You realised that you would be excluded if you were playing that game. George, the boy with the red hair would not let you play in the house. I saw you touch your face and the glasses that you wear. The other teachers and I observed how upset you were by this part of the story. We thought that you were nearly going to cry.

And then you looked over at your mum who was near the edge of the mat and she had glasses on too, just like you. You seemed to be silently saying 'Would they do that to me? That's not fair!" Your mum gave you a reassuring look. And then you said "I'm gonna get angry at that boy". Grace stopped reading and talked to you about your feelings and the reason behind them. Then she kept reading the story and we heard that, when the boy with red hair went to the toilet, all of the other children crowded into the house. The group of children included Sophie, the child in the red T shirt who wore glasses. They shouted, "this house is for everyone".



What learning is happening here?

Gabriel, you are clearly developing ongoing working theories about the social world. You were able to identify your own emotional response to the discriminatory behaviour in the story.

You confidently expressed your anger as you put yourself in the shoes of the child(ren) being excluded because they wear glasses, like you do. In your eyes, this was an injustice that demanded a response (just like the children in the story).

You have an understanding of some early concepts of the value of appreciating diversity and fairness. You also have an ability to take another's point of view and to empathise with others – the child in the story who wore glasses. Gabriel, at Beech Kindergarten, and at home too, I expect that you will learn more about standing up for yourself and others. You will get to practise responding appropriately if you are being excluded in play, or if someone is hurting you, or hurting your feelings. The teachers, other adults, and other children can help.

Maybe your family, especially your mother who was at the kindergarten on the day you heard the story *This is our house*, could add more details to Learning Story about how you are making sense of the world in relation to 'fairness' and 'justice' these days.

What next? Opportunities for further learning

Gabriel, why do you think that the boy wanted to exclude children who wear glasses? And I wonder, do you see yourself as different to other children because you wear glasses? It would be interesting to show you this Learning Story and talk to you about it, and the picture book called "This is our house". You might be able to watch this story if you have a computer at home http://vimeo.com/58214461 or we can read the book over again and again at kindergarten.
Janette

Child's Voice

NOTE: *Not sought due to time between visits, time constraints etc.*

Parent/ Whānau Voice

No feedback received in Child's PORTFOLIO

ABOUT THE BOOK
George has a house made from a big cardboard box, and he says that no one else at the playground can come in. Not Lindy, because George's house "isn't for girls," nor Freddie, because it "isn't for small people." Sophie can't come in because, George says, "This house isn't for people with glasses." But when George leaves his house for a moment, everyone piles in, and on his return, George gets a taste of his own medicine. Aided by Bob Graham's striking illustrations of an urban playground, Michael Rosen tells the tale of a little boy who makes a big discovery that letting everyone into his playhouse is a lot more fun than keeping them out.

APPENDIX U - A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

19 August 2014 - Janette

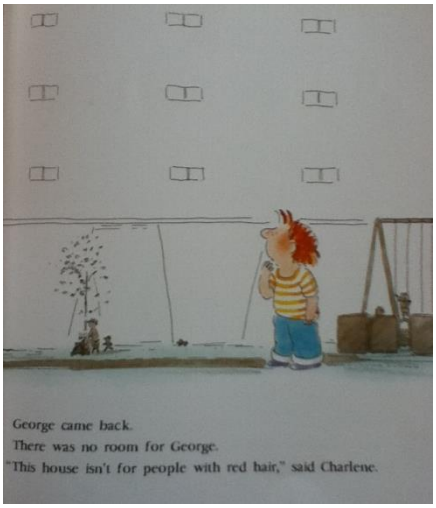
(Pseudonyms added)

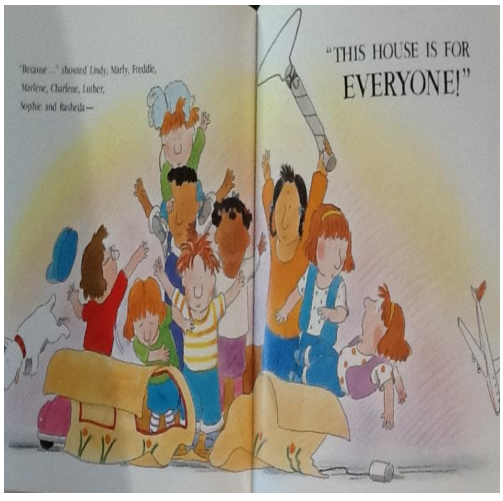
Jack, I have noticed that you and Dylan and Kahu (the big boys) often play together. Lately though Kahu has taken Tom, a new boy under his wing and has been looking after him. Sometimes you boys play with girls too and Gina is often part of your gang.

One Tuesday, when I was visiting the kindergarten, I noticed you standing outside crying. "Hey Jack, what's the matter? Why are you crying" I asked. "He (Tom) took my place. I shoulda been in there" you answered, pointing to the hut where Kahu, Dylan, Gina and Tom were eating their morning tea.

"Are you having a hard time because Kahu is playing with Tom" I suggested. Jack, you didn't reply but you seemed to be agreeing with me. The hut was full and there was no room for one more boy. To you I bet that seems like it is NOT FAIR.

This story reminds me of that picture book called *"This is our house"* where George the boy with the red hair wouldn't let the others children play in the hut with him; not the girls, or the ones with glasses, or the ones who liked to burrow (dig underneath the house). And then the children said "this house isn't for people with red hair". The book had a happy ending though, because at the end everyone played in the hut. Maybe if we had a bigger hut at kindergarten, you could also have fitted in to eat your lunch.





Just then Felix called out to me “JK, can you help me get the swing?”
“I can help him” you said as quick as a flash. You appeared to forget about your hurt feelings as you went to help Felix. You stretched up on your toes and pulled down the material swing. Then you held it still for Felix to get on.

Jack, you are a star helper just like big kids should be at Beech Kindergarten. Like Kahu, you are showing that you support the younger boys (and girls) when they ask for help. I have also included a picture of you and Gina helping each other to scrub the easel this afternoon to show how responsible you are being in this place as you near five years old. Maybe you are also feeling what it is it like when you are included, and when you are left out. You are also likely learning that sometimes things are FAIR and sometimes things are NOT FAIR.

I wonder what you and your family think about this story Jack?

Janette (JK)
University of Waikato Researcher

Child’s Voice
Jack, when I showed you the story that I had written and asked you about it, you were caused to remember you exclusion from the hut. You replied emphatically “It wasn’t fair that they didn’t let me in there”.

APPENDIX V - NO-ONE WITH BROWN FACES IS COMING TO MY PARTY TRANSCRIPT

Lunchtime conversation – iPad recording

Someone came into the office to get me from my lunch break, knowing I would want to hear children having a conversation that began with the statement 'No-one with a brown face can come to my party'. I started filming part-way through the conversation - This is an excerpt.

Kelsey (T): What about people with pink faces or white faces?
Jack: What about paint job?
Dylan: I know maybe build a house
Kelsey (T): It's a bit like that book, you know that, this is? What's that book called?
Grace (T): 'Our house'
Kelsey: 'Our house', yeah what about that?
Jasmine (T): What does everyone else think? Like Kahu, have you got any rules about who comes to your party?
Jack: How do you open this?
Kelsey (T): Alfie, what did you call him before? You said something to him, you said you're a ...
Jasmine (T): Did you feel a bit cross about what Dylan was saying?
Kelsey (T): Cos you didn't like what Dylan said, did you? And what did you call him? can you remember that word? It was the L word. You're a l...
Other children: Loo-ser
Kelsey (T) But you called him something. How did that make you feel when he said, 'you've got a brown face'?
Louis: He said loser
Kelsey (T): Yeah, he did say he was a loser, didn't he
Unidentified child: I don't have a brown face.
Another unidentified child: I don't have a brown face
Agnes: I don't have a brown face.
Grace: Agnes hasn't got a brown face. Can she go to the party?
Dylan: Who doesn't have one?
Kelsey (T): Alfie, hey Alfie
Jasmine (T): What about Moana? Can Moana come?
Kelsey (T): Oh yeah
Dylan: Uhh, maybe. Err yes.
Jasmine (T): What about Vau?
Alfie: And what about me?
Kelsey (T): What colour's your face Alfie!
Alfie: Brown
Kelsey: (T)How did that make you feel when he said if you've got a brown face, you can't come. How did that make you feel?
Alfie: Sad
Kelsey: Sad! Why?
Alfie: Cos
Rylee: Cos he has a [brown] face, then you're not allowed to come
Jasmine (T): Listen to Rylee's thinking, well she knows
Grace (T): What about my beautiful friend Sachin here? Can he come to your party?

Dylan: If they have a brown face, they can't come
Grace (T): So, what about Sachin?
Dylan: Err, if they have one brown face they can come
Grace (T): So, can he come to your party?
Dylan: Err, I can choose, err, I choose
Jack: Alfie
Dylan: Al - fie!
Grace (T): So, you are only choosing one person with a brown face, is that what you're saying?
Dylan: Yeah! And I'll choose Keisha
Grace (T): Keisha
Kahu: And me?
Jamal: And me
JK (Me): What about Kahu?
Dylan: And Kahu…and Jamal. That's all.
Luther: And me?
Dylan: Ah yeah
Unknown: And me?
Dylan: Ok
Kelsey (T): Oh well, it's my birthday in this many weeks. How many weeks is that?
Children: Four, five
Kelsey (T): Four more weeks, it's my birthday. And I'm going to have a party and it's actually on a kindergarten day
Kelsey (T): What if I had a big party at the kindergarten, and I'm going to shut the doors and I'm going to choose (then she named almost all of the children at the lunch tables by name). Have I missed somebody?
Dylan: Mee
Kelsey (T): Ohh I don't want to invite you though. How would that make you feel? If I had a biiggg party at kindergarten, and I went 'Oh come in guys' and then when you come to the door and I'll shut the door and I'll go 'No, you can't come'. How would that make you feel?
Dylan: What if I…
Other children: Sad…
Kelsey (T): Why would it make him feel sad?
Dylan: Maybe I can smash the roof …and I'm in
Kelsey (T): No. I'd say No. I'd ring your dad and say No Dylan can't come. How would that make you feel Dylan?
Dylan: Well, what if…
Kelsey (T): But think about your feelings. If I said to you, You can't come, and everybody else can come, how would that make you feel?
Dylan: Well uhh, I'd jump over the school fence
Kelsey (T): Would it make you feel sad though?
Dylan: Noo
Kelsey (T): Cos you're thinking of reasons you can get in to my party but if I didn't give you an invitation, how would that make, how would that make your heart feel?
Children: Sad, sad
Dylan: (Indiscernible)

Kelsey (T): That’s not nice, cos that’s, that’s, that’s… yeah. Oh what happened if I invited everyone and say not you Rylee, but I would, how would that make you feel? How would that make you feel Rylee?
Layla: Sad
Rylee: Break my feelings
Grace (T): (Repeating it louder for all to hear) Break your feelings
Kelsey (T): Cos that’s not very fair is it? Is it fair to invite some people and not other people, because they have got different coloured skin? Is that fair?
Children: Nooo
Kelsey (T): Are we all friends? Sometimes you don’t invite your friends, all your friends cos it costs lots of dollars and Mum might say just choose five
Children: Yeah
Layla: Or ten
Kahu: Or eleven
Jamal: Or seven
Kelsey (T): How did that make you feel Archer when he said 'no brown skin'?
Two teachers turned and spoke to me
Jasmine: (to Grace) He totally disengaged. What did he say before...He changed it to "If you don't like chicken, you can't come
JK (Me): What's that?
Jasmine: If you don't like chicken, if you don't like chicken you can’t come.
Grace: (T to me) Cos we turned it back on him and we said 'If you wear glasses you can’t come' and he goes 'well, if you don't like chicken you can’t come'
Kelsey (T): How did that make you feel? And why brown skin?
Child: Excuse me, I've finished!
Children: I’ve finished now, Me Too!
Kelsey (T): Alf, what does it mean to have brown skin and what does it mean to have white skin? What does that mean?
Alfie is distracted and talking to Grace
Child: I've finished now
Kelsey (T): Remember to sit down Jack. Remember our wakas up there. What kind of people are those on the waka up there? (pointing to the pictures of waka on the wall)
Child: Māori
Kelsey: (T): Māori people. What colour are Māori people's skin?
Children in unison: Brown, brown
Kelsey (T): Oh so is that all Māori people? Put your hand up if you have got Māori on a waka up there.
Children (in unison): Me, me
Jasmine (T): Oh, heaps of people
JK (Me): Heaps of people
Kelsey (T): Did you hear that Dylan? All those people belong to one of those wakas up there. And what kind of people are they? They are...
Children in unison: Māori, Māori
Kelsey (T): Māori people. Is Dylan on a waka? (Gets up and goes around to stand in front of the wall display)
Layla: I know, I know (pointing to the wall display)
Kelsey (T): Bye to the parent helper
JK (Me): Bye. Ka kite ano
Layla: I'm on the waka, I'm on the waka

Kelsey (T): Layla's on a waka and what colour is Layla's skin?
Child: White
Kelsey (T): But she's got, she's Māori too
Grace (T): Mmm
Long pause
Keisha: I'm white, I'm white
Dylan: Sneaky...
Kelsey (T): That made me feel really sad then Dylan, that you made that choice
Jasmine (T): What's the name of Mereana's waka?
JK (Me): What about you Kahu?
Kelsey: Which waka are you on Kahu?
JK (Me): Kahu's waka is called...
Kelsey: Takitimu isn't she? No
Grace (T): Mereana is Tainui
Jasmine (T): Oh Tainui.
JK (Me): Doesn't it start with K?
Jasmine (T): Yummy birthday cake. Guess who turned one?
Kelsey (T): Me and you are on the same waka Alf. Yeah, we're on the same waka
Child: Where's my waka Kelsey?
Kelsey (T): Umm
JK (Me): Is Kelsey Māori as well?
Kelsey (T): Yip
Jasmine: And Naomi (reference to reliever)
JK (Me): And Naomi? So sometimes people are a bit paler, their skin is a bit paler, but they are still on the waka
Kelsey (T): Yip, Naomi is on the waka. That means because we're Māori, when our grandparents or maybe your great great grandparents, they might have been full Māori that means they would have had, what colour skin?
Children: Brown, brown
Kelsey (T): Brown, really, really brown skin. So all these people here, we've got brown skin. That means we can't go, to Dylan's party.
(Several teachers talking to Naomi who has just arrived - they are catching her up)
Kelsey (T): Come over here guys! Who else? Dylan, are any of these people your friends? Ohh guess what? We've all got brown skin. You may not be able to see it but we've all got brown blood in our bodies. We can't come to your party. Well you said people with brown skin couldn't come!
Child: I know, I know…
Naomi (T): This is gold for you eh JK?
Dylan: Kahu can come
Kelsey (T): How can we change the colour of our skin?
Jasmine (T): Naomi, you're on the waka
Kelsey (T): Naomi, you can come with us. You've got brown skin. We can't go to Dylan's party.
Naomi (T): Ohh I've got lots of amazing people in my whanau. Lots of ancestors have done really cool things.

The conversation tailed off as children began packing up their lunch and teachers and children drifted off, or became interested in the camera and Ipad which were being used for recording purposes.

APPENDIX W - Kelly-Ware (2016)

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Article

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'What's he doing that for? He's a boy!': Exploring gender and sexualities in an early childhood setting

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Abstract
In young children's worlds, gender and sexualities are constantly policed. Who children play with, where they play and how they play are often subject to regulation by others to perpetuate 'normativity'. This colloquium draws on 'telling examples' from an in-progress study in an early childhood education setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. Examples of challenge and resistance show several children actively constructing and performing their gender in flexible and multiple ways, some of which contest/resist traditional and cultural norms and dominant discourses. The central argument is that 'doing gender' in relationship with others is complex work for children that can be better understood through the constructs of 'performativity' and 'working theories' jointly.

Keywords
Dominant discourses, gender, performativity, sexuality, 'working theories'

Introduction

The focus of this article is on how the gender and sexualities of 3- and 4-year-olds were constructed and performed within an early childhood setting in New Zealand. It uses data from my ongoing doctoral research project, which sought to find out about the children's 'working theories' – knowledge, skills and attitudes related to diversity and difference – and to consider the role of teachers in this process. 'Working theories' are described in *Te Whāriki*, the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education (ECE) curriculum, as one of its two key learning outcomes, the second being dispositions (New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE), 1996). The curriculum describes how

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> knowledge, skills and attitudes are closely linked … and combine together to form a child's 'working theory' and help the child develop dispositions that encourage learning … children are developing more elaborate and useful working theories about themselves and about the people in their lives. (p. 44)

A small number of researchers have been exploring children's working theories in Aotearoa New Zealand over the past 5 years and are publishing prolifically about them (see, for example, Hedges, 2011; Peters and Davis, 2011 for some seminal works). Yet to date, there is no record of children theorising specifically about gender and sexualities. This has led to my attempt to fill this research gap as early childhood is a formative time in their lives when young children's working theories about themselves and others are being developed.

The study was set in a not-for-profit, suburban ECE setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. The setting has a roll of 40 children: 20 boys and 20 girls aged 3–5 years and is staffed by four qualified teachers and an administrator (all female). Children attend each week-day morning with half the group staying on in the afternoon until the end of the school day. Over a 6-month period, I collected data as a 'participant-observer' in the setting, with the teachers, children (for whom pseudonyms are used herein) and their families.

Theoretical framings

Three key concepts frame this discussion and are briefly outlined here to set the scene: working theories, dominant discourses and performativity.

First, ECE settings are microcosms of society where children learn about living life with, and alongside, others. As such, they have the potential to transform social relations in the wider world. A high percentage of young children attend ECE settings, and from a very young age, they can be seen to be theorising about the social world and developing their identities and subjectivities. Hedges (2011) suggests that working theories are

> … ways children process intuitive, everyday, spontaneous knowledge, use this to interpret new information, and think, reason and problem solve in wider contexts … The word 'working' suggests that these theories are tentative and speculative … children employ working theories to make sense of new experiences during their ongoing inquiries into their everyday lives and worlds. (p. 284)

Adults may gain insight into children's working theories through watching and listening to them during their play and in dialogue with them. As young children process everyday knowledge, they can be assisted by skilled teachers to revise or extend their working theories.

Learning about gender and sexualities is fundamental to young children's developing sense of who they are as individuals and in relation to others. Robinson and Davies (2014) argue that gender is the framework in which children view their futures and who they are as sexual subjects. Along with Blaise and Taylor (2012) and other feminist, poststructuralist and queer thinkers, they see gender and sexualities through a lens focused on discourses and the power of language. They recognise gender and sexualities as non-normative, fluid and potentially changeable rather than knowable, fixed and stable.

Second, dominant discourses prevail particularly in relation to the construction of gender. Blaise (2014) highlights that 'how these discourses are made visible in children's play depends upon the theoretical framings used to understand gender, sex and sexuality' (p. 115). Various theories are common within people's understandings of gender: biological determinism (nature), environmental discourses (nurture), socialisation alongside discourses of dominant/hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity. These theories that make up discourses are imbued with power. They

influence how adults, teachers and young children engage, understand and interpret particular experiences and what happens in play/life.

The discourse of heteronormativity – the presumption that everyone is heterosexual – is another dominant discourse that has a powerful influence on people's lives. The narrow ways in which gender and sexualities are seen can be related to adult blindness to, or children's lack of awareness of, other ways of being. In lisahunter et al. (2015), we discuss heteronormativity and relate it to normativity described as 'a set of ideas, attitudes, biases and discriminations that can shape the way people think, speak and act and serve to "other" those marginalised or alienated by the normalised or dominant identities, positionings and practices' (p. 207). Teachers and other adults can limit children's agency, and their ways of being, by saying and doing things (and by their silences), and these actions perpetuate normativity.

Third is Butler's (1990/1999, 2004) notion of performativity – that is, that gender and how children (and adults) 'do gender' is a performance that is socially and culturally constructed, and mediated by others. The gender, sexual and cultural identities of children are less about who they are, as about what they do on an ongoing basis. Multiple identities can be performed, and each makes up the whole child/person. Who children are and how they perform who they are, that is, what they do, are also fashioned through the power of what is acceptable, desirable and rewarded (Blaise and Taylor, 2012). The world at large including popular culture sends powerful messages to young children.

Gunn and MacNaughton (2007) identify that children do gender in a myriad of ways and that these performances can change at a moment's notice given the circumstances, context or other players. Gunn (2010) spells out how, despite our biological sex,

> we can all be a mix of feminine, masculine or anywhere in between because we express our gender via subject positions available to us, and the discourses we access with different people at different times (Weedon, 2007) – so there is no single and fixed way to be properly masculine and feminine. (p. 12)

I argue that supporting children's working theories in this complex domain can be problematic if teachers, parents and children themselves do not have an understanding of the contextual influences and various fluid possibilities of doing gender.

Despite gender being framed as 'a construct that can be done, redone and undone' (Lee-Thomas et al., 2005: 25), in dramatic play and real life children come up against gender binaries – boy/girl, tomboy/girly-girl, jock/wimp, gay/straight, cis/trans according to Ervin (2014: 2). In ECE settings, certain ways of being, doing and saying become 'truths' and are reinforced by peers, teachers and even absent parents and siblings. Normativity prevails despite *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum, stating that 'children [will] develop respect for children who are different from themselves and ease of interaction with them' (MoE, 1996: 66). These truths or normal ways of 'being' have much power and are often assumed or taken for granted.

Findings and discussion

Three specific 'telling examples' relating to Jack are presented here to show the trajectory of his working theories over time and space/place. The 'telling examples' are drawn from my research case studies developed around various children identified as having ongoing working theories around gender and sexualities. These examples are followed by commentaries made up of interpretations/framings from my theoretical vantage point. These commentaries are intended to guide readers by signposting key ideas and possible readings of the data.

Example 1: Jack, leader of the Speedway gang, and reinforcing gender binaries

Jack was 4 years 3 months old when I met him. He and eight male peers had recently visited a car racing track – 'speedway' and done a lap of the track in a 'monster' truck. Led by a teacher who owned and co-piloted a racing car with her husband, the trip reinforced Jack's prior knowledge of speedway. His expert status made him the leader of the gang who re-enacted speedway daily in the ECE setting's sandpit.

Yet Jack was adamant that girls couldn't 'do speedway'. This view persisted despite the teacher having shown them her car racing suit and other artefacts related to her hobby. Another teacher, formerly a stranger to the sandpit, deliberately became a regular player alongside Jack and the gang after she heard Jack's sexist assertion. Rather than directly challenging Jack's stereotype about speedway being 'only for boys', she waited to hear what else he might say. She quickly learnt the rules, and jargon and her presence seemingly gave girls the permission and confidence to join in.

Jack came to revise his opinion that 'girls can't play speedway'. 'I n'used to think that, but that was when I was four' he told teachers as he neared age five and became one of the 'big kids'.
Jack's notable shift from narrow gender stereotyping to an inclusive stance that anyone could 'do speedway' was celebrated by his teachers and documented in a comprehensive Learning Story.

In *Example 1*, Jack's assertion that speedway was not for girls could be seen as a working theory. This theory was possibly reinforced by two events: first, a previous trip to the speedway with his Dad and older brother and, second, the gendered nature of the boys-only trip with eight male peers. Jack's initial perspective typifies how rooted stereotypes are in children's understandings of gender. He can be seen to be drawing on discourses of dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity. Were Jack's views reinforced by what he observed in his attendant context – the ECE setting environment and beyond – I wonder?

From my observations, the sandpit was a 'boys-only' space. Few girls ventured near the noisy, boisterous Speedway Gang. They mostly appeared preoccupied with babies and the popular movie *Frozen*. It is possible that Jack, in his leadership role or with his male peers, surreptitiously policed or regulated who played in the sandpit. From my perspective, Jack was distinguishing between what was appropriate for boys and girls based on the discourses he had access to (Blaise and Taylor, 2012). It makes me think about the significance of his family life – no female siblings, a mother who worked in an executive role and a stay-at-home dad.

Jack's working theory/stereotype was likely challenged because unlike the first teacher who co-piloted racing cars and took the boys to the speedway, the second teacher actively engaged in their sandpit play talking speedway language with the gang on a daily basis. Seemingly, her presence provided Jack with access to a counter discourse, one that challenged the demarcation line between boys and girls in his play space. The celebratory tone of his Learning Story (Carr and Lee, 2012) attesting to the shift in Jack's working theory (ongoing inquiry into gender) could also be seen to have reified Jack's learning, making it concrete, visible and valuing it.

The actions of the two teachers could be seen as inconsistent. I wonder whether they recognised their contradictory pedagogies. Despite her 'non-traditional' racing interest, the first teacher could be seen to be reinforcing gendered roles and stereotypes. She grouped boys together for the 'one-off' speedway trip, reinforcing cars, trucks and racing as traditional boys' interests. As only boys went to the speedway, her actions could be seen as contrary to the curriculum expectation in *Te Whāriki* that 'children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background' (MoE, 1996: 66). I suggest that had girls been taken along to explore this non-traditional girls' interest, they too would have been fascinated, especially with support, encouragement and modelling from a female teacher with expertise in this field.

Meanwhile, the second teacher could be seen to be challenging gender stereotypes and promoting gender equity with all of the children – girls and boys. Through her presence and engagement in the sandpit on an ongoing basis, and girls joining her, she could be seen to be modelling that this area was not gender-marked as 'boys-only' territory. From her perspective, anyone could share in the re-enactment of speedway with its artefacts and jargon. However, her 'wait and see' attitude was passive rather than deliberate in terms of hijacking or interrupting Jack's working theory (Peters and Davis, 2011) about girls not being able to 'do speedway'. This inaction could be viewed as at odds with the stated expectation in *Te Whāriki* that teachers support children to 'develop positive judgements on their own gender and the opposite gender' (MoE, 1996: 66).

Example 2: Jack, the masculinity enforcement officer, and gender diversity (3 months later)

Today I observed Felix (aged nearly four years old) dressed in an elaborate, floor-length, flowing gown. He was standing still while a teacher plaited the electric blue wig he was wearing. Jack (aged four and a half year) entered the building. He stopped on seeing Felix and exclaimed loudly, 'What's he doing that for? He's a boy!'

Later in the day, I observed Felix admiring the butterfly wings he was wearing in the bathroom mirror. Sandeep, who was alongside him, held one of the butterfly wings outstretched in her hand. She looked at Felix quizzically as she turned and emphatically stated to me 'Me girl! Him boy! Him boy!'

In *Example 2*, Jack, and possibly Sandeep, appeared to be drawing on working theories about what masculinity or being a boy means, suggesting that there is a 'right' or 'correct' way to do gender and that Felix had got his boy performance 'wrong'. From my vantage point, Jack was censoring Felix with his surprised tone, question and assertion of Felix's biological sex. Jack was likely drawing on discourses of dominant masculinity and subservient femininity as he policed or tried to regulate/control how his peer, a biological male, performed his gender. Conversely, Felix could be seen to be resisting any kind of 'narrow' or 'rigid' gender policing or censorship. Surprisingly, from my perspective, Jack's loud public criticism of Felix passed without comment from the hairdresser/teacher or anyone else in the vicinity. Unsurprisingly, in my view, Felix did not respond in this instance.

Later, during a formal recorded discussion, I relayed these events to the teachers. They informed me that Felix had dressed this way on other occasions including wanting a hair plait 'on the side'. One teacher posited that this hairstyle was copied from Elsa, the heroine of *Frozen*, a contemporary movie popular with some children. Another teacher noted that 'nobody ever said anything – no one stops in their tracks, it is just Felix!' She was emphatic that his behaviour had become normalised in the ECE setting, and the other teachers agreed. However, these assertions were contrary to the challenges from children that I witnessed and described. Was this gender blindness on the part of the teachers? The hairdresser/teacher suggested that we 'keep listening' in response to my expressed concern about Jack's comment about Felix. Hence, my interpretation of this incident, particularly Jack's attitude towards Felix, appears not to have been shared by the teaching team.

From my positioning, I constructed this episode as an example of a child crossing traditional boundaries. On my next visit, I shared a reading by MacNaughton (1999) where she identifies that 'children may avoid crossing gender boundaries because of the possible consequences of peer rejection, peer aggression and loneliness' (p. 91). Raising the possibility of risks for young children associated with doing gender differently, I posited that they (teachers) should actively work to minimise these risks. I argued that they needed to be alert and proactive about supporting young children who may potentially be at risk from their peers or adults because their non-normative performances of gender are not supported. There is a broader issue here too, in my view, about

children being supported to develop positive judgements of themselves and others and learning to challenge unfairness and injustice (MoE, 1996). These are important working theories to extend in the humanitarian interests of an inclusive society.

Meanwhile, Felix's actions in *Example 2* suggest that he possibly had access to other discourses beyond the dominant ones available to Jack. Was Felix complying with or contesting dominant discourses, or doing both? Seemingly, the answer to this question is dependent on how Felix sees himself and whether his understandings and gender performances are limited by traditional narrow gender binaries. While there is increasing recognition of 'gender diversity' or 'gender fluidity' in the academic literature (see, for example, Robinson, 2014), social recognition and acceptance of gender-diverse children lag far behind. I suspect that this is because children are positioned as naïve, innocent and too young to know (yet), especially in ECE settings. Or maybe, as I suspect, teachers and parents subscribe to the view that children will outgrow such performances once they start school where there is not the same licence to explore and be creative with their identities as there is in ECE settings.

Example 3: Jack the 'real' boy co-parents the child he 'growed' and gender fluidity (a further 3 months later)

Today I photographed Jack and his peer Lucas ministering to a doll in a highchair with a cloth and a spoon. Later, at my request a teacher showed Jack the photograph and interviewed him informally about what they were doing. His narrative went something like this:

> he (Jack) was the two year old baby's dad and Lucas was his mother, but he (Jack) had 'growed' the baby named Jackson and had him at the hospital. Jack identified that Lucas had dressed Jackson (the baby) but that Jack changed his nappies, the 'poo ones'. Jack was feeding the baby and together they take him for walks around the mountain.

Jack identified that he and Lucas often played this game, despite none of the teachers ever noticing before. And he reiterated that even though he 'growed' the baby, Lucas was the 'mum'. In response to direct questioning Jack stated that he was always the dad and Lucas was always the mum.

I was initially surprised by Jack's explanation of the photograph of him playing 'family' discussed in *Example 3*. Prior to *Example 3*, it was clear to me from nearly 6 months of observations that Jack performed as a 'real' boy, despite the shift in his thinking about girls and racing cars. Up until this point, I had observed Jack in dominant masculine roles. He played 'boy games'; sat at what was identified by children as the 'boys' lunch table'; danced to popular music except obvious 'girls songs'; comfortably wore face paint except when someone accidentally called it 'make-up'; avoided toe and finger nail painting sessions involving girls and the occasional boy; and played dramatic roles confined to animals, monsters or spectators.

Examples 1 and *2* left me wondering whether, despite their young age, Jack and his peers had already arrived at fixed knowledge and attitudes about gender and sexuality norms. These attitudes and behaviours were being learned and reinforced within and beyond the ECE setting in my view.

Or were their inquiries ongoing and hence their working theories still developing?

Yet, Jack's rich description in *Example 3* points to him being able to envisage a scenario where the roles taken up by him and his male peer extend beyond traditional, gendered and normative ways of being. Here was evidence in his words of two boys doing gender differently. In the scenario he described, Jack had given birth to a child at the hospital who he was now co-parenting (in the father role) with one of his speedway gang peers. Lucas was seemingly compliant in his role as mother (that I posit Jack assigned him) despite being a boy.

Revisiting the narrative in *Example 3* and my initial interpretations, I recognise some non-gender-stereotypical actions on Jack's behalf in his role as baby Jackson's father in their dramatic play scenario. Nevertheless, dominant gender and sexualities discourses are still to the fore. Despite Jack's assertion that he 'growed' baby Jackson and 'had him at the hospital', he is still suggesting that Lucas is baby Jackson's mother and he is the father. This second reading highlighted the traditional, stereotypical family of mother, father and a child reproduced in their play despite the biological sex of the actors. As there was no hint of two dads and a baby being a possible family, we assume that Jack was constrained by the discourse of heteronormativity (Kelly, 2012).

Concluding comments

Throughout the various 'telling examples' of Jack's story, we see him and his peers 'actively involved in constructing, understanding and negotiating power and identity' (Arthur et al., 2015: 81). Despite evidence of policing and regulation, children's diverse working theories related to their performances and understandings of gender and sexualities are evident. These children are making sense of their world, especially who they are and the possibilities available to them. Their agency and relative power are visible in the examples of boys being boys in a myriad of ways. Children 'do gender' and their performances can vary depending on their ongoing working theories as well as contextual factors such as time, space/place and associates.

A number of gender discourses are at work here. Jack's story shows children (and some adults) attempting to regulate and police children's performances of gender and sexualities. While there are multiple possible readings of data depending on the theoretical framings one uses to understand gender and sexualities, among these 4-year-olds and their teachers, some gender performances stretched beyond dominant discourses, norms and stereotypes, while others perpetuated the status quo.

As Jack and his peers engaged in various gender performances related to the construction of their identities, they were acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes that combine together to form more elaborate and useful working theories about themselves and about the people in their lives. They were processing knowledge and information that supports them to make sense of new experiences during their ongoing inquiries into their lives and worlds. Jack's ongoing story confirmed for me that his working theories about gender and sexualities were developing and ongoing during his early childhood; they were not always expressed tentatively but showed speculation, reasoning and inquiry (Hedges, 2011).

Jack's gender identities, like those of other children, were multiple, partial and performed. They were based on his/their developing, ongoing, working theories and regulated to various degrees by dominant discourses of normativity that teachers did not always see, hear or challenge. This reminds me that normative discourses left unchallenged can limit children's agency and their ways of being, and there are possible negative consequences. Jack's story highlights that how peers and adults react to children's performances, and their associated working theories, are significant. All reactions will serve to reinforce what is desirable and acceptable, and what is not.

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