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Critical pedagogy in early childhood education:

Four case studies in Aotearoa New Zealand

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of

Doctor of Philosophy

At

The University of Waikato

By

RAELLA KAHUROA



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2021

Abstract

Critical pedagogy provides a rigorous critical theory for teachers and children in early childhood education. This study seeks to answer two questions. Firstly, how might teachers enact critical pedagogy in an early childhood education setting, and secondly, how can critical pedagogy support the belonging and empowerment of young children.

The critical inquiry framework in this study is framed by Paulo Freire (1970/2018). The study used an action research approach, and was undertaken as four case studies of teachers in the same kindergarten, with each teacher implementing a separate critical pedagogy inquiry.

The findings of the study showed the possibilities that exist for children and teachers through a critical pedagogy approach. Using Freirean concepts, informed by bicultural practices and supported by early childhood approaches (such as working theories, wait time, and open-ended dialogue), teachers were able to successfully implement critical pedagogy inquiries. These inquiries also led to an expansion of children's critical consciousness as they explored multiple perspectives. Praxis supported the empowerment of children as they worked with teachers to act on issues that were important to them. Belonging for children was also supported through opportunities to practise critical skills, negotiate challenges, solve problems, and collaborate for a common good.

The study found that critical pedagogy was not only possible, but also valuable for children and teachers, supporting them to interrogate and transform the world around them.

Acknowledgements

My thanks goes first and foremost to my tireless supervisors, Professor Linda Mitchell (my chief supervisor), and Margaret Carr, professor emeritus. Your wisdom, perspective, and guidance has saved me from many blind alleys, and helped to dig me out of several large

holes as well. I am deeply grateful to both of you for the time and effort you have invested in supervising my doctoral thesis, for your friendship, and for your mentorship. I am unable to repay you but will remember you and what you have done for me, for as long as I live.

I remain indebted to the remarkable teachers at the heart of this study; Jacqui, Nilma, Tina and Olivia. I am humbled by your faith and trust. Thank you for letting me follow you for months on end with a video camera, and for all the conversations, the laughter, and sharing of our lives that happened along the way. I remain inspired by your work and passion for teaching. Thank you.

I am thankful for the children of the kindergarten, whose light and life I have endeavoured to capture, in some small way, in the pages of this study. Seeing your engagement and energy gives me hope for a better world. I am also thankful to all the parents who consented to me filming their children in the kindergarten. That was also an act of faith, one that made this study possible. Again, my thanks.

To the Mai ki Waikato programme, and especially Pita, you all have my deep gratitude for all the support provided over the course of my studies. The people I have met through this programme have been a huge support to me personally and professionally, while the resources of the programme were instrumental in moving my thesis forward. To all my friends: Kia kaha ra – haere tonu!

My thanks also to Alistair, the fixer of all Word glitches, the master of EndNote, and the APA guru. Your experienced advice and really great solutions has saved me many hours, and quite possibly, the last threads of my sanity.

In many ways writing a doctorate is a lonely journey, but I have never felt alone. My office buddy Megan, you have salvaged my wellbeing many times with your positivity, good ideas, and our spirited (but completely PhD irrelevant) discussions about American politics, climate change, and our families. We have shared our lives as we have written, day after day, month after month, year after year. To the end, I believe we will both abide by Megan's motto of being "unreasonably persistent".

I am also grateful to my Heavenly Father, who has heard so many of my prayers, particularly towards the end when I was tired and found it so hard to keep writing. Thank you for blessing me with the strength to keep going, and to for helping me in a million ways to get this thesis finished.

The last word in thanks must go to my family. My parents, Simeon and Luana Cruse, and my siblings, Heidi, Nathan, John, Diana, Jaimee Lee, Benjamin and Suedette, and my best friend Krishna, thank you for all your support – not to mention your understanding.

Each of my six children has made sacrifices so that I could study, taking on more responsibility at home, and being understanding about the amount of time I needed away from them. Campion, Samuel, Simeon, Rihai, Brooklyn and Dallan - I am grateful to all of you for your support, encouragement, and occasionally, even your interest in my work. To my sweetheart Renata, there are not words to describe how grateful I am to you. You have made it possible for me to spend so much time away from home, constantly supported me, and encouraged me. When my own faith in myself waned, your faith in me carried me forward. Thank you for making this a priority in your life as well. As always, you have my heart.

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Glossary

- Aotearoa:** The Māori name for New Zealand. “Aotea” has the meaning of “white cloud” while “roa” has the meaning of “long. Together, the name “Aotearoa” is frequently related as “the land of the long, white cloud”. Writing the Māori and English names of the country together is an acknowledgement of the country’s bicultural heritage.
- Atua:** In this context, the Māori word for a deity, or god.
- Fale:** The Samoan word for house. In the kindergarten, there was an outdoor structure in the playground called the fale because it had a thatched roof, of a similar style to a traditional Samoan house.
- Iwi:** Extended kinship group, or tribe.
- Kaiwhakahaere:** The boss, director, manager or supervisor.
- Kaupapa Māori:** Māori approach, Māori customary practice, Māori principles, Māori ideology
- Kōhanga Reo:** Early education and care centres, where all teaching and learning is delivered in the Māori language. The literal translation of Kōhanga Reo is “language nest”, a metaphor that is indicative of the way the language should be protected and cared for.
- Koru:** A coiled, curled spiral motif, used in Māori design. The koru motif comes from the spiralling shoot of an unfolding fern frond.
- Mana:** A concept that encompasses prestige, control, authority, power, influence, status, charisma, and spiritual power
- Māori:** The general name given to the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Matariki:	Matariki refers to the cluster of stars known as the Pleiades in Western astronomy. Each star in the cluster has its own name. The rising of the Matariki cluster is celebrated around June-July each year as marking the start of the Māori new year.
Maunga:	Mountain. Does not have to be a mountain by geographical reckoning and can be a prominent hill. Maunga are significant to Māori, are considered ancestors, and often have a gender attributed to them.
Maungarei:	The name of the one of the local mountains in proximity to the kindergarten.
Ōhuiarangi:	The name of one of the local mountains in proximity to the kindergarten.
Pākehā:	New Zealander of European or English descent.
Papatūānuku:	Earth, the earth mother, wife of Rangi-nui (the sky father) – all living things originate from these two parents.
Piupiu:	A traditional waist-to-knee garment made of specially prepared flax. In modern times, piupiu are worn for cultural performances, and can be made from fabric.
Pōwhiri:	A ritual of encounter, the welcome ceremony on to a marae.
Pūrākau:	A myth, legend or story.
Tama-nui-te-rā:	In Māori mythology, the personification of the sun
Tangaroa:	The deity of the ocean, including fish and sea creatures. Tangaroa is one of the sons of Papatūānuku and Rangi-nui.
Tangata whenua:	Local people, the hosts, the indigenous people
Tangata tiriti:	All people who have come to Aotearoa New Zealand since the indigenous Māori

Te ao Māori: The Māori world-view – this means seeing things from a Māori perspective

Te reo Māori: The Māori language

Te Tiriti o Waitangi: The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, which records the partnership between the Crown and Māori.

Tuakana-teina: A relationship of support and teaching that takes place between an older, more experienced person (the tuakana) and a younger person (the teina) of the same gender, who is learning from the older person. Traditionally, this took place between people who were related. In Educational contexts, this term often appropriated to mean older children teaching younger children.

Whānau: Family, including extended family. This term can also include friends without kinship ties.

Whanaungatanga: Familial relationships and or a sense of kinship developed through working together, and through shared experiences, and sometimes, obligations. Whanaungatanga can include those whom one develops close friendships or reciprocal relationships with.

Chapter One: Introduction

Marta Navichoc Cotuc¹ stated, “the world is constructed of the acts of each one of us” (cited in Rogoff, 2011, p. 286). Cotuc spoke in the context of preserving the customs and practices of her people, but her words ring as true for herself and her people today, as they do in other contexts and for other peoples. The acts of each one of us embed meaning in our lives and in the world, in an intricate, endless enmeshing of action, experience, and narrative. Acknowledged or unacknowledged, these acts of individuals and collectives coalesce into the lived experiences of people, families, communities, cultures, and nations. Together we make the world we live in.

This study explores the transformative “acts” of early childhood teachers and young children mutually engaged in creating critical pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand. This study records their efforts to make – and remake – the world they live in.

This chapter outlines, firstly, the premise of this study; secondly, the impact of neoliberalism on early childhood education; thirdly, my personal context as researcher, including the connection of this study to additional research projects; fourthly, this study’s contribution to theory and practice, and lastly, the research questions and overall structure of the study.

The premise of this study

The premise of this study is embodied by the words of renowned critical pedagogy theorist Peter McLaren (2015), who wrote, “we need a rigorous critical theory so that we can better interpret, understand, and transform our everyday experiences. Enough said” (p. 27).

The interpretation, understanding and transformation of our everyday acts, not to mention the rigorous critical theory, will be addressed in the literature reviews, in Chapters Two and Three. What will be unpacked here will be the *why* aspect of this premise: why do we need this rigorous critical theory at all, and how does such a premise relate to young children?

¹ Marta is a Tz’utujil Maya from San Pedro la Laguna, Guatemala and was a colleague of Rogoff during the latter’s study of Mayan midwife practices.

In this study, young children are defined as being 2 years to 6 years of age, which was the age range of children attending the kindergarten where the data was collected.

A humanising pedagogy

The question of *why* we need a rigorous critical theory starts with the purpose of critical pedagogy. Freire (1970/2018), in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* stated at the very start of his book that humanisation was the vocation, or job, of the people. By “people”, Freire meant all people. Roberts (2016) elaborated further on what humanisation was, writing:

It involves becoming more completely what we already are or are meant to be as human beings. From a Freirean perspective, all human beings have this vocation, though each person is unique in the way he or she pursues this. But the process of humanizing ourselves does not take place in isolation from other human beings, or merely “inside our heads”; it unfolds in social contexts shaped by past and present structures, policies, beliefs, values, and practices. Humanization involves a form of work, a process of struggle, that never ends. From a Freirean perspective, we remain necessarily incomplete, unfinished, ever-evolving beings. We become more fully human, not fully human (p. 1).

Becoming more fully human is a process of constant transformation (Freire, 1970/2018), as individuals, and as part of the larger collectives to which we subscribe.

The idea of overcoming oppression is also significant, because at its heart, critical pedagogy “promotes social justice, cultivates the intellect, and expands the horizons of human possibility” (Kincheloe, 2008b, p. 45). It promotes the process of becoming more fully human through increased awareness of others, of ourselves, and of our journey as a human family.

Kincheloe (2008b) writes:

A critical pedagogical vision grounded as it is in social, cultural, cognitive, economic and political contexts understands schooling as part of a larger set of human services and community development. Any viable vision of education has to be based on larger social and cognitive visions (p. 6).

The ideas of possibility and vision encapsulate the function of critical pedagogy, positioning it as a process that promotes both rethinking and reconceptualization around learning.

A key, humanising purpose of critical pedagogy, particularly in the troubled political currents of the 2020s, includes creating democratic, engaged citizens (Giroux, 2020; Hinchey, 2004). Such citizens ask questions, engage in critique, and both seek and promote genuine civic understanding, rather than blindly obeying or perpetuating historical injustices (Hinchey, 2004). Critical pedagogy recognises that democratic practices are key to sustaining the freedoms necessary for humanisation.

Using critical approaches with young children

In considering the lofty aspirations and deep purpose of critical approaches, the question may arise whether such work is appropriate for young children. This study takes the approach that critical approaches are as valid for young children in early childhood education settings as they are for adults, high school students, and primary school children. Vasquez (2007), who has conducted extensive work with young children in the related field of critical literacy, writes:

My experience in working with young children has proven time and time again that children are in fact very capable and willing to participate in hard conversations that are meaningful to them and impact their lives (p. 6).

Vasquez (2004a) also elaborates on the concerns that educators may have over introducing mature topics such as race and gender equity into the curriculum. She shares that teachers have expressed concerns that the use of mature topics may take childhood away from children, particularly since adults frequently experience cynicism and other negative emotions when mediating these topics in their own lives. However, Vasquez (2004a) argues that this kind of work does not have to take a negative stance. Instead, by analysing an issue in different ways and taking the opportunity to theorise changes or improvement, both students and teachers can find the process of inquiry challenging, yet enjoyable (Vasquez, 2004a). Vasquez (2017) states:

Often issues of social justice and equity seem to be looked upon as heavy-handed issues. However, the discussions I have had with my

students and the children who have participated in my research tell me otherwise. The actions we took and the work we accomplished, although often serious, were very pleasurable. We enjoyed our work because the topics that we dealt with were socially significant to us (p. 177).

Vasquez points out that when adults restrict the literacies and discourses that children have access to, then the child's world becomes "bound" (Vasquez, 2017, p. 177). This situation implies that schooling should actively create access to powerful and dominant discursive practices, where spaces are created for young children to participate transformatively in the world.

Neoliberalism and ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand

While a Freirean aspiration for education is transformative practice, the reality is frequently something far different. Like many Western countries, neoliberal forces have negatively impacted education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Neoliberalism in education, in this study, is defined as the trend in education policy and decision making towards competitiveness, commodification, individualism, and managerialism (Mutch & Tatebe, 2017). Neoliberalism prioritises economic imperatives over the public perception that "democratic education is directed to the good of each person and the common good for society" (Mitchell, 2019a, p. 1).

Neoliberal influences have been particularly felt in the early childhood education (ECE) sector. Successive governments (represented by the Ministry of Education) have adopted a market-based approach. This approach means that while the government provides guidance and some support to the ECE sector, it does not provide the support services that primary and secondary schools receive, such as the payment of wages to teachers (Neuwelt-Kearns & Ritchie, 2020). This hands-off approach means the government takes no direct role in the provision and planning of general ECE services² (Mitchell, 2019b).

² The one exception to this is the New Zealand Correspondence School, which also provides ECE services. These are managed by the government, under the Ministry of Education.

Access to ongoing government funding for ECE services has made ECE an attractive investment for private investors (Neuwelt-Kearns & Ritchie, 2020). In this neoliberal model, educational organisations become businesses, parents become consumers, and children do not feature in their own right (Mitchell, 2019a).

While non-profit, community-based ECE services remain active in the sector, the percentage of private providers has risen steadily, going from 23% in 2002 to 41% by 2019 (Neuwelt-Kearns & Ritchie, 2020). Mitchell (2020) uses Ministry of Education figures to show that the rise in for-profit providers has unfortunately coincided with a decline in community-based providers.

Mitchell (2020) notes that for-profit and community-based providers receive the same funding including funding for capital works such as buildings, building modifications, and resources like vans for transportation. All of these assets purchased with public funding become the property of the for-profit business owner (Mitchell, 2020). Some ECE providers in Aotearoa New Zealand are listed on the stock exchange, which indicates a clear conflict of interest between the duty to shareholders to turn a profit, and the accountability to children and parents to render high-quality services (Mitchell, 2019a).

Under a neoliberal approach, teachers can also find themselves reduced to the role of technocrats and caregivers, who are “neither well educated nor well paid, but trained just enough to apply ‘evidence-based’ and ‘tightly defined’ programmes” (Moss, 2015, p. 231). Neuwelt-Kerns and Ritchie (2020) identify qualified teachers as a key factor in providing quality ECE experiences. They write:

Qualified teachers are able to draw on their understandings of pedagogy to create constructive learning environments involving sustained interactions, collaboration, and engagement, and as such, the observed quality of ECE providers markedly increases as the ratio of qualified teachers increases (p. 12).

Yet, despite of these important quality factors, the regulated ratio requirement for qualified, registered staff in teacher-led services can be as low as 50%, with the remaining 50% composed of staff without formal ECE teaching qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2021a). Prior to 1 January 2021, the highest funding band available only

required 80% of staff to be qualified, registered teachers, with the remaining 20% untrained (Ministry of Education, 2021a). This 80% requirement was a disincentive to ECE services that employed 100% of their staff as qualified, registered teachers, such as, the kindergarten associations.

There had been a brief flurry of commitment for having ECE staffed 100% by qualified registered teachers in the early 2000s, by the Labour government of the day (Neuwelt-Kearns & Ritchie, 2020). However the election of a National government in 2008 overturned that initiative. The return of a Labour-led party to government on 19 October 2017 has seen the introduction of a new funding band with higher funding for services that have 100% of their staff qualified. This 100% band came in to force on 1 January 2021. However the low 50% band remains in place as well (Ministry of Education, 2021a; Neuwelt-Kearns & Ritchie, 2020).

Neoliberal effects on the world-view of children

The impacts of neoliberalism are not confined to the impacts on ECE services. In a neoliberal world, an emphasis is placed on consumerism and consumption, even for young children, who are “aggressively socialized and conditioned into consumerism from an early age” (Darder, 2017b, p. 15). This conditioning is particularly prevalent through the narratives and texts of popular media that children are exposed to (Diaz et al., 2007). For example, advertising, merchandising from favourite shows, and apps and games containing ‘in-app’ purchases, are all readily accessible to many young children.

Consumer culture becomes self-replicating in this sense, manifesting as a never-ending cycle of production, purchase, and consumption that is woven into the fabric of children’s experience from their earliest years. Through such unrelenting exposure, the need to consume can become both ingrained and subconscious, unless it is disrupted and made visible. Critical approaches such as critical pedagogy and critical literacy seek to do just that. The two approaches are closely related, with Darder et al. (2017) calling critical literacy one of the pillars of critical pedagogy. Referencing the role of critical practices., Lewison et al. (2014) write:

By making a decision to use critical social practices, teachers create spaces that have the potential for students to disrupt what is considered to be normal by asking new

questions, seeing everyday issues through new lenses, demystifying naturalized views of the world, and visualizing how things might be different ... Critical literacy practices support students in gaining a greater understanding of how social and cultural forces shape their choices and their lives (p. 7). The significance of developing these “new lenses”, in order to understand the complex social and cultural forces around us, cannot be underestimated. 21st century Aotearoa New Zealand is a diverse place – a superdiverse place, in fact.

ECE as reflecting a superdiverse society

Society in Aotearoa New Zealand has changed as a result of globalisation. The global communication revolution, the rise of the knowledge economy, the fall of Soviet communism, and the transformations in everyday life through increased equality between the genders are all factors contributing to globalisation (Mitchell, 2019a).

Unsurprisingly, childhood itself has become more transnational. Within the OECD, Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the most ethnically diverse countries, with the 2018 Census (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 13 November 2020) identifying 27.4% of citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand as being born overseas. Auckland, the largest city in the country, is home to over 100 ethnicities, with more than 150 languages spoken daily (Education Review Office, 2018). It comes as no great surprise that the enrolment of children from culturally diverse contexts into early childhood services has also significantly increased (Mitchell et al., 2015). As Ritchie and Chan (2016) write:

The impacts of recent immigration policies mean that Aotearoa is now categorised as one of the few culturally and linguistically ‘superdiverse’ countries in the world (p. 290).

There are direct implications for ECE settings, where culture-bound ideas in the learning setting may not reflect the diverse realities of a child’s life (Mitchell, 2019a). Despite the infinite variety in the stories, histories, and circumstances that bring children and their families from diverse corners of the world to Aotearoa, on arrival common challenges are frequently encountered: a potentially unfamiliar language, a new set of cultural experiences, and a society replete with global diversity (He, Bettez, & Levin, 2017).

Amongst this diversity, Māori, as the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, still strive to be heard. Māori ways of being, knowing, and doing also need to find expression in children's educational settings. Attending to Māori knowledges within ECE is discussed more extensively in Chapters Two and Three.

As part of its humanising goal, critical pedagogy aims to support the negotiation of difference, including cultural difference, for children to develop constructive, positive ways of understanding the people around them – as well as understanding more about themselves.

A progressive curriculum in a neoliberal world

Critical pedagogy writers Henry Giroux and Joe Kincheloe (Giroux, 2020; Kincheloe, 2008a) have noted the negative influence of neoliberalism on curricula (ECE or otherwise). However, this is one instance where Aotearoa New Zealand has managed to circumvent neoliberalism. Mitchell (2020) writes of the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* in the context of it being a “story of hope” (p. 174). From its earliest draft, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1993, 1996, 2017) has recognised democratic participation for children and families, through (among other things) its bicultural nature, its curriculum principles of family and community (whānau tangata) holistic development (kotahitanga), relationships (ngā hononga), and empowerment (whakamana) (Mitchell, 2020), and in the latest 2017 version, an explicit mention of criticality. That said, the effectiveness of *Te Whāriki* is dependent on the way it is implemented by teachers. Where neoliberal forces in ECE prevail, *Te Whāriki* as a curriculum of hope can be diluted. *Te Whāriki*, and its connections with critical pedagogy and democratic practice, are discussed in Chapter Two.

Seeing the effects of neoliberal influence, and perceiving its influence on ECE, matters. Education has people at its heart. Neoliberalism views people as capital. The latter approach is far from the humanising perspective that Freire envisaged. Where teachers, children and their families are supplanted by priorities focused on accountability and economic imperatives, people suffer, quality suffers, and oppression becomes real, not just something written in a book.

A personal context: The road to critical pedagogy

Sharing my personal context comes from an intention to disclose my critical pedagogy journey, as well as to make my inherent biases and preferences visible to the reader. Mayo (2004, p. 10) refers to this disclosure as “a personal reflexive statement”. I hope that this statement will enable the reader to recognise for themselves the extent to which my personal beliefs and priorities have influenced my research.

My own critical learning experiences started in Form 2, aged about 13, in the mid-1980s. Two of my teachers had critically informed mindsets. They enjoyed reading short stories to the class, then encouraging us to engage in thinking about each story from different perspectives. These were challenging conversations for a class of teenagers, and I have recollections of a couple of class discussions that became quite heated. However, every opinion could be voiced, every idea could be shared, and with guidance from our teachers, we learned to listen to each other – if only a little. So my personal interest in critical pedagogy began with my participation in critical work as a student in school. I was learning to explore the world from multiple perspectives and searching for new ways to appreciate the perspectives of others. I also discovered that I found this kind of critique satisfying.

In hindsight, these experiences were likely an early form of critical literacy, experiences that sadly remained unrepeated during my high school years. I only remembered this learning again in my first year of postgraduate literacy studies, when a course on critical literacy reignited my interest. This time, I began to engage with critical work as both student and teacher. On a university course run by Terry Locke (2004, 2009; Locke & Cleary, 2010), I not only became interested in critical approaches, but also discovered the work of Janks (2010), Vasquez (2004b, 2004a, 2007, 2010) and later, Freire (1970/2018, 1998, 2004, 2005).

While this doctoral study focuses on critical pedagogy, my first forays into critical research focused on critical literacy. My Master’s thesis was a self-study of my teaching practice as I worked to implement a critical literacy approach into the centre where I taught (Kahuroa, 2013a).

What emerged from my Master's study was a personal realisation that young children enjoyed being asked about things that mattered to them, an observation that concurs with Vasquez (2017). One inquiry that the children had particularly engaged with had focused on unpacking their thinking around stickers. At the conclusion of every research activity, each child was invited to choose a sticker. The stickers on offer were chosen based on popular children's television shows or movies of the time. On this occasion, one of the boys had wanted to choose a princess sticker, but was stopped by two of the girls, who insisted he had to choose a "boy" sticker. Under their urging, he chose a socially-acceptable boy-themed sticker (Kahuroa, 2013a, 2013b).

This incident became the centre of an inquiry into what the children referred to as "boy things" and "girl things". We investigated resources in the centre, costumes from the dress up area, and different kinds of stickers, unpacking what made us see something as being either male or female. The children were highly invested in this inquiry, which we followed for several weeks. Of the eight children in the group, three developed some ability to think about the gendered sticker issue from perspectives other than their own.

When I began my doctorate study, my attention turned to critical pedagogy as a way of conducting critical inquiries with both teachers and children, including teachers using critical pedagogy inquiries in their teaching practice. Where my Master's study had been a self-study of my teaching practice in the centre where I worked, my doctoral study took place within a centre I had not worked in, with four teachers I had become friends with as part of another research project.

Revealing the researcher

To disclose my own bias as researcher, it is only fair to make visible some of the influences in my own life. I identify as a Māori woman, middle-aged, Christian, and as an early childhood teacher.

Being Māori, and teaching a bicultural curriculum, is important to me, as is my preference for using Māori words for Māori concepts and ideas, rather than the translation. For this reason, Māori words are used preferentially in this study, with an approximate translation provided in brackets the first time it is used. A glossary is also

provided, which includes, where appropriate, extended explanations of words or concepts.

My love of working with children comes in part from my own role growing up in my parents' family, as the eldest of seven children, and also from raising my own family of six children with my husband of 28 years. Being a New Zealander matters to me. I have a firm view of myself as a citizen, and as a contributing, engaged member of this country.

Having a sense of belonging is important to me. As a young child I was painfully shy, and as a result, struggled to belong to groups or with peers until early adulthood. I never attended kindergarten consistently, being too afraid to stay without my mother even though I was interested in the activities and resources my local kindergarten had available. At the time of my childhood, teachers did not actively seek to transition shy children into early education, or at least, mine did not. If I wanted to go home I could – and did.

Finding a sense of empowerment is also important to me. It took me a long time to find my own voice. Research that supports children to find their own pathways to belonging, that empowers them to find ways to express themselves and take action on their thinking, will always draw my attention.

My primary experience in the ECE sector is as a qualified ECE teacher, although I have also had roles as a head teacher and centre manager. I have worked in a privately owned centre, in corporate owned centres, and for a non-profit kindergarten. From these experiences, I oppose the approach and philosophy of for-profit ECE services, and have a strong preference for community-based services.

Neoliberal ECE from my personal experience

To preface some of the challenges of working in a neoliberal ECE environment, I share a few of my personal experiences. All of these experiences came from my time with the same company, which was a large corporate organisation of over one hundred centres.

When I worked in a corporate ECE organisation, part of the management training I received taught us to view each prospective family who walked in the door as being worth \$20,000. That number, according to the organisation, was the approximate

value of the funding the organisation would receive for that child until they went to school. To that end, managers and staff were to be proactive and vigilant in converting inquiries to enrolments. This economic way of viewing children and families was reiterated on more than one occasion.

The reality of having to have 20% of the teaching team as untrained, unqualified staff, in order to maximise funding requirements, was another issue that also had consequences for my teaching teams. Unqualified staff were still required to write complete assessment work, contribute to planning, and carry similar workloads to their trained counterparts while being paid significantly less.

For unqualified staff to learn how to work as teachers, qualified staff had to use their own time and resources to carry out training. I remember conducting such training myself, which was usually framed as professional development. While I, and the other trained teachers involved, endeavoured to do our best, piecemeal and occasional training is no substitute for undertaking a formal teaching qualification

On one occasion, I was required to use staff meeting time to conduct compulsory training on the safe use of stepladders. That training took around thirty minutes of our one-hour meeting to complete, and the centre did not even own a stepladder³.

Another missive from head office required me to remove all splinter probes from the centre's first aid kits. These measures were mandated to mitigate liability and also served to keep ACC and insurance premiums lower, and thus served the end goal of profitability.

Connection to additional research projects

This study is connected to two additional research projects. The first was a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project. TLRI projects are funded by the government "to build research capability and to make a difference to teaching and learning in New Zealand" (Teaching & Learning Research Initiative, 2021). The research project I worked on was titled, *Strengthening belonging and identity of refugee and immigrant children through early childhood* (Mitchell et al, 2020), with the data

³ Despite my critique, the staff actually found the training hilarious and "stepladders" became a recurring team joke thereafter.

collection carried out from 2018-2019. I participated in this research project as an emerging researcher.

The second research project, *Refugee families in early childhood education:*

Constructing pathways to belonging, is a Marsden Funded project. Marsden Fund grants are administered by the Royal Society Te Apārangi⁴. This project will finish in mid-2021, and as with the TLRI, I participated as an emerging researcher. A full scholarship for my doctoral study was also provided by the Marsden Fund grant.

Contribution to theory and practice

Despite the considerable body of theoretical work on critical pedagogy (for example, Darder, 2017a; Darder, 2017b; Darder et al., 2017; Freire, 1970/2018; Giroux, 2020; Hinchey, 2004; Kanpol, 1994; McLaren, 2015), including some written with ECE in mind (Christensen & Alridge, 2013) there remains a significant shortage of critically-informed research of all kinds, that is conducted in teaching spaces with children and teachers, in ECE. This shortage applies internationally, not just in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Of the research available, notable examples include a UNESCO study on dialogical critical thinking, located in Canada, France, Mexico and Australia (Daniel & Fiema, 2017) and the critical literacy work of Vivian Vasquez (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2010) in Canada and the United States of America.

In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, my Master's research in critical literacy took place with young children in ECE as a self-study (Kahuroa, 2013a). I have already mentioned the sticker inquiry. Much of my Master's study focused on introducing a text to the children, then exploring that text through a critical lens. I wrote one of the texts myself, a story about superheroes that encouraged children to context the idea of what a superhero was. Other texts included a video text, stickers, and books. Also in the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE context, Harvey and Myint (2014), explored the

⁴ More information can be found on their website, at (<https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/whatwe-do/funds-and-opportunities/marsden>).

equitable outcomes that are possible for children when they are taught in their first languages, using a framework of critical multiculturalism.

This study will contribute to the literature on critical pedagogy in ECE, with particular relevance to the Aotearoa New Zealand context, but also having applicability to the international body of research addressing critical learning approaches with young children. This study has value to teachers, as a source of illustrative possibilities for critical pedagogy work. Additionally, this study provides ideas for pedagogical strategies that can support children to think and act critically.

The research questions

This study is framed by two research questions.

1. How might teachers enact critical pedagogy in an early childhood education setting with young children in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2. How can critical pedagogy support the belonging and empowerment of young children?

The first research question is exploratory. As there are few studies of critical pedagogy in the ECE classroom, I explore what this kind of learning looks like, how it starts, how it is sustained and expanded by teachers, and how it is followed through to completion. I believe that such examples will be illustrative for teachers who may themselves be investigating critical work with young children.

The second question is more specific, and informed in part by the Marsden study I worked on. Through the Marsden research, I had become very interested in exploring belonging and empowerment. While there is acknowledgement in literature that a critical pedagogy approach is empowering, there is little mention of belonging. However, belonging is a significant question for young children who, by and large, are working out what groups they belong to (or want to belong to), and how to facilitate and sustain belonging in those groups (Tillet and Wong, 2018). This desire to belong benefits from particular attention where children are seeking access to groups that are harder for them to access, because of age, language, or for other reasons.

For children who migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand, or who are first generation New Zealanders, the question of where they belong in the world is of significant relevance to them. These questions benefit from critical investigation.

Conclusion, and structure of this study

Critical pedagogy has been put forward as a rigorous and humanising approach for teachers and young children. Against a backdrop of neoliberal influences in ECE, critical pedagogy has the potential to invoke real change, not *for* children, but *with* children. By trusting children to work on the challenging, big issues of our time, new possibilities are invited into the teaching space. The consideration of belonging and empowerment as specific matters for consideration provide additional lenses to consider critical pedagogy through.

This first chapter has provided the background to my study. The subsequent chapters unfold as follows. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature as it relates to critical pedagogy, including connections to current ECE practice, and bicultural educational practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapter Three contains a review of the literature as it frames the critical inquiry model used in this study, including the specific foci of belonging and empowerment. Chapter Four outlines the methodology, theoretical underpinnings, and methods used in this study. Chapter Five introduces the research context by explaining the context of the kindergarten. Chapters Six to Nine present the case studies, and contain the study's primary findings. In these chapters, the work of teachers and children are shared as narratives, partly to show the unfolding of the work, and partly to provide illustrative context for the practice of critical pedagogy in an ECE teaching space. Chapter Ten provides the collated findings and discussion from the four case study chapters. Chapter Eleven addresses the research questions, and provides concluding thoughts derived from the study about potential implications for policy and practice in ECE.

Chapter Two: Critical Pedagogy In The Literature

Introduction

This literature review unfolds in four sections. The first section discusses the context of critical pedagogy, including Paulo Freire as the central theorist of this study. The second section examines the set of practices that describe critical pedagogy. The third section is an analysis of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017); its context, and connection to criticality. The final section concludes the chapter.

Critical pedagogy in context

Critical pedagogy is far from a set of homogenous ideas (Freire, 1970/2018; McLaren, 2015). It has emerged from the mesh of critical theories, while simultaneously forging a trajectory of its own. Critical pedagogy has tendrils stretching through numerous bodies of critical thought, including Bakhtin, Derrida, Freire, Foucault, the Frankfurt School theorists, also Habermas, Hegel, Kant, Kristeva, Marx, Weber, and Vygotsky (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 163). Freudian-Marxist analysts such as Adorno, Benjamin, Fromm, Horkheimer, Lowenthal, and Marcuse could also be added (McLaren, 2015).

It is not just theorists identifying with critical pedagogy who make this list. From the US, Dewey, Horton, and civil rights activists Martin Luther King Jr and Malcom X are also considered influential (McLaren, 2015). In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, Bishop (2008), Durie (2010), Penetito (2009, 2010), Pihama (2010), Ritchie (1996, 2017a, 2017b), and Tuhiwai Smith (2012) are among those making the case for transformative Māori education. The perspective of the Aotearoa New Zealand theorists will be discussed in more length in Chapter Three.

All these nods to influence come with a caveat; as Monchinski (2010) notes, there is no general agreement among scholars about how far back the roots of the field could stretch.

With such an extensive and varied lineage it is no wonder that critical pedagogy is described as “an ever-evolving criticality” (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 163). However, this profusion of theory creates a challenge when it comes to explaining what critical pedagogy actually is. The next section approaches the matter of definition through the

primary theorist of this study, Paulo Freire. A brief, contextualising history of Freire is given, followed by a discussion of his work through changing contexts.

Paulo Freire: Educator, visionary, and theorist

Freire's early experiences proved influential. His preschool was "a living, free, unpretentious" experience that took place in the yard of the house where he lived, drawing with twigs under the shade of a mango tree (Gadotti, 1994, p. 2).

While his loving family meant he had a happy childhood, like many in Northeast Brazil, he also knew the meaning of hunger, poverty and misery. The Great Depression of 1929 had a huge impact on many in his country, including his own family. His father died when he was thirteen, meaning his high school studies were postponed until he was sixteen – and even then he had to resume study with classmates were aged eleven and twelve (Gadotti, 1994). These were first-hand experiences he would later draw on in his work.

The Brazil of Freire's early adult years was a period of political unrest. This was particularly true in north-east Brazil during the period of 1958-1964, where a lengthy drought and widespread poverty had created conditions for revolutionary change (Kirkendall, 2004). The government of the day had been slow to address the challenges of the Northeast, whose "peasant class" had the lowest income per capita in the whole of Latin America, as well as high rates of illiteracy (Kirkendall, 2004). Introduced into this mix of complex economic-political circumstances came Paulo Freire's new literacy training techniques.

Despite the initial success of Freire's relatively inexpensive literacy-training programme, the tide against him turned after a military coup in 1964, which viewed his empowerment of the population as potentially subversive and even communist-influenced (Kirkendall, 2004). Freire was imprisoned and interrogated. Upon release, and anticipating further interrogation, he fled first to exile in Bolivia, and then to Chile (Kirkendall, 2004). It was in Chile that he was able to test and hone his theories on literacy and education, with the support of the government and significant funding (Kirkendall, 2004).

Freire would not return to Brazil for fifteen years (Gadotti, 1994), despite numerous attempts to do so. On return, he exhibited no bitterness, and continued to work in education, write, and make visible the forms of oppression of his people .

In 1968 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published, followed in 1970 by the English language translation. By the time the 50th Anniversary Edition of the English language version was published, over one million copies had been sold (Freire, 1970/2018).

Freire has iconic status among educators, with one noting that in Latin America, Freire constitutes a “watershed”: that is before, and after, Freire (Mayo, 2004, p. 1). He remained a prolific writer, and to the end of his life held to his principles of radical humanisation and democracy (Mayo, 2004). There is both credibility and longevity to Freire’s work in critical pedagogy, and his theories remain an inspiration for many (for example, Darder, 2017b; Kincheloe, 2008b; McLaren, 2000, 2015; Peters & Besley, 2015).

Why Freire?

The primary reason for relying on Freire (1970/2018) as the primary theorist of this study is his clear description of the critical pedagogy process, as used in his Culture Circles. The Culture Circles were dynamic group learning spaces, where collective, contextualised knowledge could be constructed and explored amongst the participants (Monteiro et al., 2015). The clarity of Freire’s critical pedagogy theory reflects his real world teaching experiences.

The second reason for using Freire’s work is its perceived compatibility with existing aspects of early childhood practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Compatibilities are perceived between Freire’s generative themes and ECE’s child-led learning; between Freire’s critical dialogue, and ECE’s working theories and possibility thinking; and between Freire’s humanising, sociallyjust approach to learning, and the democratic, bicultural framing of this country’s ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). The existence of compatibilities between Freire’s work and ECE is important as these establish bridges of understanding for teachers. While such compatibilities will not explain the entirety of Freire’s pedagogy, they do provide points of reference for teachers, from which to build a more comprehensive understanding of critical pedagogy.

The third reason for using Freire's work is the adaptability of his approach. Aotearoa New Zealand in the 21st century is a different context from Freire's mid-20th century Brazil. Different again is the use of critical pedagogy work with young children as opposed to adults. Far from an unintended consequence, Freire considers adaptation to context as necessary and significant: critical pedagogy was never intended to be a cookie-cutter approach. Instead, he asks educators "to recreate and rewrite my ideas" noting that it is "impossible to import pedagogical practices without reinventing them" (cited in Macedo, 2005, p. x). This includes reinventing the practice of democracy in a person's specific historical and cultural context (Darder, 2017b). This same point is reiterated and elaborated on by Giroux (2009a), who writes of the need to acknowledge:

the specificity of the community ties, available resources, and the histories that students bring with them to the classroom as well as the diverse experiences and identities they inhabit (p. 246).

Adaptability, however, is not a licence for carte blanche reinvention. Giroux (2009b) cautions that Freire's pedagogy is a radical, profound anticolonial and postcolonial discourse, so to adapt his work without specifically considering the effects of imperialism and cultural representation is to "denude it of some of its most important political insights" (p. 79). Accordingly, specific attention is paid the Aotearoa New Zealand context, particularly its bicultural context in Chapter Three, where Freire's pedagogy as a critical inquiry framework is discussed.

With Giroux's cautionary note in mind, what follows is the reinvention of Freire's critical pedagogy framework, adapted for the kindergarten at the centre of this research, in this country, at this time.

Freire through changing contexts

The context of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2018) comes against a background of political and economic upheaval, in which literacy was used to empower a downtrodden peasant class to actively seek reflective, affirmative change for themselves. Freire used the term "oppressor" intentionally, to clearly identify the group that kept the peasant class of his country oppressed (Freire, 1970/2018). However, the context of this study is different, and requires a reinterpretation of what

words like oppression means for ECE teachers and young children in this country. As Lehrer (2020) writes:

Reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* led me to question what we wish to liberate children from; how to liberate them while acknowledging their dependence; and reminded me that 'childhood' is only one aspect of each child's multiple and complex identities (p. 99).

The idea of "liberation" that this study adopts is a liberation of perspective, where children are viewed as "less" in some way because of their age, their development, or their dependence on adults. This kind of thinking positions young children as "becoming" rather than simply "being" (Lehrer, 2020, p. 99). While such perspectives may not oppress a child in the way that the peasants of Freire's Brazil were oppressed, certain views place adult limitations on a child's world. To revisit Vasquez's (2017) earlier point, such perspectives make the world of the child "bound" (p. 177).

The view of the child

This study mitigates limiting views of children by consciously adopting the view of children as capable and able, as explained in Clark's (2017) Mosaic approach. In this approach:

- Young children are viewed as experts in their own lives, and as competent communicators of their own experiences. Children's unique perceptions and priorities about their lives are acknowledged.
- Young children are seen as skilful communicators, with the ability to express their views and experiences in many different ways. There is also a responsibility on adults to persist in their support of children. Clark (2017) writes:

...more imagination, patience and skill may be required by adults to support some children with additional needs. However the question is not whether children have any knowledge to convey but how hard we work to make sure every child has the opportunity to share their point of view (p. 21).

- Young children are positioned as the holders of rights, a view upheld by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Clark (2017) notes that

the articles the Convention fall into three categories; rights to protection from harm, rights to the provision of services from the State (for example, education and healthcare), and rights to participation. Clark (2017) draws attention to two of the articles in particular, as these pertain to listening to children. Article 12 states that children who are able to form their own views also have the right to express those views freely, in regards to all matters affecting them. Article 13 affirms children's right to freedom of expression, while recognising that multimodal options should be available for that expression, including verbally, in writing, through art, or through any other expression of the child's choice. Clark (2017) states that:

viewing young children as rights holders is linked to viewing young children as active citizens. The focus is on children's engagement in society now rather than as citizens in waiting (p. 22).

Clark (2017) outlines "an active view of childhood, which recognises the status of children now as well as in the future" (p. 21). This view also connects with *Te Whāriki's* recognition of the young child as a "global citizen" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 7).

Taking this view frames young children as meaning-makers and active participants in their own learning. In line with critical pedagogy thinking, this perspective moves away from the idea of cognitive development as the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Instead, cognitive development "consists of individuals changing their ways of understanding, perceiving, noticing, thinking, remembering, classifying, reflecting, problem setting and solving, [and] planning", where children's own perspectives become of paramount importance (Clark, 2017, p. 22).

These four ways of viewing young children positions them in humanising ways that are consistent with critical pedagogy: as capable, as trusted to know what is best for them, and as people worth listening to.

Critical pedagogy practices

Critical pedagogy provides a paradigm shift for the way we think about and implement education, including what we see as its purpose.

Even though this study positions Freire (1970/2018) as its primary theorist, Freire himself did not invent the term critical pedagogy. It is was the highly influential theorists Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux who give further definition and interpretation to critical pedagogy under that name. McLaren

(1999) writes

critical pedagogy constitutes a set of practices that uncovers the ways in which the process of schooling represses the contingency of its own selection of values and the means through which educational goals are subtended by macrostructures of power and privilege. For Freire, pedagogy has as much to do with the teachable heart as the teachable mind, and as much to do with efforts to change the world as it does with rethinking the categories that we use to analyse our current condition within history (p. 50).

In this description, McLaren describes critical pedagogy as a “contingency of its own selection of values”. The values drawn on in this study are: “banking” education (as a metaphor for transmission-based forms of education); the position of education as political; the position of education as democratic, the position of education as culturally-situated; and critical pedagogy as humanising and rooted in love.

“Banking” education

Freire (1970/2018) used the term “banking” as a metaphor for transmission-based forms of education, where knowledge is passed from teacher to student as an intellectual “deposit”. In the banking concept, students are required to take the position of being recipients of knowledge – of being empty vessels to be filled. Teachers, in a position of power, oversee the distribution of knowledge. Freire (1970/2018) believed that banking education, rather than educating for empowerment, was designed to “fit” a student for “the world the oppressors have created” (p. 76), with as little opposition or questioning as possible. He was openly dismissive of this kind of education, referring to it as “necrophilic” (p. 77), implying that banking education was a form of intellectual death.

Critical pedagogy is broadly positioned as being a practice that transforms knowledge *with* students, rather than just having them receive it (Giroux, 2020). Instead of having information “banked” into them, students learn the skills, knowledge and authority

required “to inquire and act upon what it means to live in a substantive democracy” (Giroux, 2020, p. 83), including actively campaigning for individual rights and social justice.

Education as political

The second practice is the acknowledgement that education is in a position of power. Freire (2005) maintained that education is a non-neutral, political act. Politics in this context does not denote political affiliation per se, but rather acknowledges the practices around power and status within an organisation.

Critical pedagogy practice recognises that political inscriptions are embedded within curricula and syllabi (Kincheloe, 2008a). Kincheloe (2008b) calls the rigid, conservative avoidance of education’s political aspects “the Great Denial” (p. 10). In the Great Denial, information is presented as neutral, and facts as unproblematic and uncontested. In such versions of learning, the political assumptions behind curricula are erased, the effects of power imbalance on student experience are ignored, and the injustice of being in such a system is perpetuated. Kincheloe (2008b) affirmed Freire’s position, writing that “any time teachers develop a pedagogy, they are concurrently constructing a political vision. The two acts are inseparable” (p. 9).

Critical pedagogy as democratic

The third critical pedagogy practice positions democratic practices in education as crucial. Democratic practice is a recurring subject of importance in critical pedagogy theory. Giroux (2020) writes of schools as democratic public spheres, dedicated to the self and social empowerment, where students learn the skills and knowledge needed to live in an authentic democracy. He also states this important role is under threat.

In today’s neoliberal-driven world, schools are increasingly deemed economic engines, functioning more and more in the interests of the marketplace, and less and less in the interest of democratic life (Giroux, 2020). Darder (2017b) provides a poignant illustration of Giroux’s point. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, an entire school district in New Orleans was rebuilt with charter schools⁵, where the emphasis was on

⁵ Charter schools in the United States have less rules and regulations than state schools, but also receive less public funding. They can be operated by either non-profit or for-profit organisations, and are attended by choice.

increasing performance and efficiency, reducing costs, and dismantling the democratic goals of education in favour of economic ones. “The consequence,” she notes, “has been the erosion of public education as a legitimate public space for democratic formation and genuine civic participation”, adding, “the potential of public education as a legitimate site of struggle for the forging of culturally democratic life across the nation has been overwhelmingly trampled” (Darder, 2017b, p. 19).

Democratic practice – or the lack of it - is enacted in education through the classroom. There is a need for teachers to acknowledge the role of power they hold in the classroom, and use that authority in their actions, to both relinquish their authority as the primary truth providers in the classroom, while simultaneously scaffolding the ability of students to become self-directed learners capable of generating their own knowledge through socially-conscious inquiry (Darder, 2017b).

Bishop (2008) writes that teachers can create learning contexts that will provide students with those tools that are vital for future democratically-minded citizens — the tools of planning, relationships, creativity, critical reflection, and communication (p. 5). Crucial to realising these democratic outcomes is the need to “immerse students in power-sharing relationships with their peers and their teachers from an early age” (Bishop, 2008, p. 5).

Bishop (2008) advocates preparing children to be future citizens by equipping them with the ability to engage as citizens now. However, in the primary, and secondary sectors of Aotearoa New Zealand, there is no specific focus in the curriculum for the teaching of citizenship (Milligan et al., 2020). For the ECE sector, while *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) embraces democratic practices, it also does not explicitly address the teaching or learning of citizenship, other than a reference to preparing children to be “global citizens” (p. 7).

Milligan et al (2020) suggest a framework for critical and active citizenship education that includes an understanding of what citizenship is, knowledge about the complexity of society, critical links to social issues in the real world, and support for active

responses. Approaching the idea of citizenship in this way would support a more robust, more critical approach, that in turn supports a democratically engaged society.

Education as bicultural

Culture was not particularly evident in Freire's early work, hence adaptations for culture by writers such as hooks (1993). The needs of Freire's time saw him foreground class in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2018). However, the foregrounding of culture is particularly important to this study, which takes place in a country that aspires to be bicultural.

Biculturalism refers to the partnership established between Māori and the Crown through the signing of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi). The Treaty legitimated Crown governance in Aotearoa New Zealand, while simultaneously affirming the first nation status of Māori, and established a partnership between the two groups, which remains in force today (Chan & Ritchie, 2019).

Sir Taihakurei (Eddie) Durie (reported in King, 2003) provided further clarification regarding the present-day partners to the Treaty. Māori, who are the tangata whenua (people of the land), continue to be one treaty partner. However, Durie also widened the idea of the Crown partnership to include all people who have become citizens since the treaty legitimated the governance of the Crown, referring to this group as tangata tiriti (people of the treaty) (King, 2003).

Te Whariki affirms Te Tiriti o Waitangi by being a bicultural curriculum. *Te Whāriki* is recognised as the first bicultural curriculum of Aotearoa New Zealand (Chan & Ritchie, 2019). *Te Whāriki* recognises that all children in ECE settings should be given the opportunity to learn about the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Chan & Ritchie, 2019).

In the 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2017) update, *Te Whāriki* takes on two forms; the English version, and the Kōhanga Reo curriculum, *Te Whāriki a Kōhanga Reo*, which is written in te reo Māori. The curricula are contained in the same book, back to back. Neither version is a translation of the other with both acting as parallel curricula.

Each of the principles and strands in the English version of *Te Whāriki* is also expressed in the approximate Māori equivalent. Through the curriculum, attention is specifically

paid to biculturalism, including respecting te reo Māori, respecting Māori as the indigenous people, honouring traditional stories, and paying attention to Māori ways of being. The work of Māori theorists, expanding on the need for a transformative, kaupapa Māori theory of education, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Education as rooted in love

A humanising pedagogy involves thinking and acting in conjunction with your humanity. This is perhaps where critical pedagogy diverts sharply from other forms of critical thinking. As McLaren notes (1999), “what sets Freire apart from most other leftist educators of this era of cynical reason is his unashamed stress on the importance and power of love”, considering this “the most crucial characteristic of dialogue and the constitutive force animating all pedagogies of liberation” (p. 53). In a Freirean context, “love” does not mean any kind of romantic, or even familial feeling. Darder (2017b) clarifies Freire’s meaning, writing:

If there was anything that Freire consistently sought to defend, it was the freshness, spontaneity, and presence embodied in what he called an “armed love—the fighting love of those convinced of the right and the duty to fight, to denounce, and to announce” ... a love that could be lively, forceful, and inspiring, while at the same time critical, challenging, and insistent. (p. 39).

Freire believed that it was only through this critically-focused love that teachers could find the faith, humility and strength “to establish solidarity and struggle together to transform the oppressive ideologies and practices of public education” (Darder, 2017b, p. 80).

In a Freirean mindset:

love always stipulates a political project since a love for humankind that remains disconnected from politics does a profound disservice to its object. It is possible to love only by virtue of the presence of others (McLaren, 1999, p. 53).

Above all, love of others is humanising. As humanisation is truly the vocation of the people, that vocation should start with those who dare to teach it (Freire, 1970/2018, 2005).

In advocating for critically-focused love as a humanising aspect of teaching, it must be acknowledged that such love does not always come easily – and there is no guarantee it will be reciprocated or appreciated. A powerful example comes from Mutch and Tatebe (2017), who give their account of teaching a course on social justice and diversity as part of a teacher preparation programme in Aotearoa New Zealand⁶. A group of students within the class resisted engaging with the social justice content of the course, which they found confronting. These students led others to take the same approach, with significant contempt being shown by this group to those students who participated constructively in the course, and to the teachers/authors.

The fallout from these experiences, which included low course ratings and having to “explain” to the Deputy Vice Chancellor resulted in extensive reflection and discussion for both authors, long after the course ended. Both actively sought for new ways to introduce compassion, collaboration and kindness, within their respective academic environments. Part of the action they took included the conscious decision, moving forward, to put “*heartfulness* not *hurtfulness* at the centre of our work to build a culture of care and compassion” (Mutch & Tatebe, 2017, p. 233). This was an example in action of the “armed love” (Darder, 2017b, p. 39) Freire spoke of – hard won, but real.

***Te Whāriki* through a critical pedagogy lens**

The Aotearoa New Zealand national early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) was first implemented in 1996, following extensive sector consultation (Lee, 1996). Prior to 1991, there was no national ECE curriculum. *Te Whāriki* started its journey when the Ministry of Education engaged Margaret Carr and Helen May from the University of Waikato to develop national curriculum guidelines for the ECE sector (Carr & May, 1996).

They sought as co-writers, Tilly Reedy and Tamati Reedy from the Kōhanga Reo National Trust, with the intention of creating a bicultural curriculum written in both te reo Māori and English. The four writers of the curriculum consulted regularly, ensuring

⁶ Mutch and Tatebe (2017) did not write this article using a critical pedagogy framework, but there are compatibilities due to their use of a social justice approach.

that the concepts in the framework, later known as the strands and principles, were positioned as parallel domains in te reo

Māori and English, rather than one version being a translation of the other (Lee et al., 2013). Importantly, *Te Whāriki* established a central metaphor to represent its holistic process. The early childhood curriculum has been envisaged as a whāriki, or mat, woven from the principles, strands, and goals defined in this document. The whāriki concept recognises the diversity of early childhood education in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 11).

This whāriki metaphor, introduced by Tamati Reedy, remains the central metaphor of *Te Whāriki* (Lee et al., 2013). It works to express both the needs of the individual child, as well as the ECE service the child is within. It brings together the four principles and five strands that have remained from the first draft version (Ministry of Education, 1993), through to the 2017 version (Ministry of Education, 2017). Carr and May (1996), writing at the time of *Te Whāriki's* development, stated:

The *Te Whāriki* model views the curriculum for each child as more like a 'spider web' or weaving and emphasises a model of knowledge and understanding for young children as being a tapestry of increasing complexity and richness (p. 3).

The explanation in the 1996 *Te Whāriki* reads, in part:

The whāriki concept recognises the diversity of early childhood education in New Zealand. Different programmes, philosophies, structures, and environments will contribute to the distinctive patterns of the whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 11).

As Lee (1996) wrote, using this weaving approach, "Distinctive patterns could thus emerge from each sector" (p. 20).

Te Whāriki: Infused with criticality from its beginnings

By focusing on the holistic child, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) adopts a radical position from its outset: a determination to see children within their contexts, as unique, complex, historical beings who brought their own knowledge and experiences to the classroom. This makes *Te Whāriki* a theoretical framework with universal application:

common yet individual; for everyone, yet only for one; a whāriki woven by loving hands that can cross cultures with respect, that can weave people and nations together (Koingo & Reedy, 2019, p. 39)

This approach sees the holistic child, rather than the child as an empty vessel to be filled.

When *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1993) was in draft stage, Ritchie (1996) conducted an analysis of the curriculum through a critical pedagogy lens. Despite the passage of time there is still much validity in this analysis, given that the strands, principles, theoretical underpinnings and bicultural focus have remained consistent throughout.

Ritchie's analysis drew attention to *Te Whāriki* as a bicultural curriculum that foregrounds culture, writing that critical pedagogy "focuses on the centrality of culture in the educational process" (Ritchie, 1996, p. 111). This foregrounding of culture has, if anything, been strengthened in the 2017 version, with numerous bicultural references, and explicit attention paid to both Pasifika⁷ and multicultural learning contexts.

Ritchie's (1996) early analysis also draws attention to the significant role of "socially and culturally mediated learning" (p. 113). One of the theoretical framings for *Te Whāriki* was Bronfenbrenner's (1992) model of the ecological child, which views the child as intimately connected with the variety of contexts around him/her. For a curriculum to position a child at the centre of multiple worlds of experience was to openly acknowledge that "educational process[es] are not focussed solely at the individual classroom level, but are part of the macrocosm of the wider society" (Ritchie, 1996, p. 114).

The inclusion of reflective questions in the 1996⁸ version also invited teachers to involve themselves in critique and critical reflection of their teaching practice (Ritchie, 1996). The robust reflective practice of teachers is instrumental to understanding a

⁷ The draft version of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1993) also highlighted Pasifika learning, as well as special needs learning, but both of these were removed from the official 1996 version by the Ministry of Education.

⁸ Reflective questions were also included in the 2017 version.

teacher's own ideology, values, and practices which influence their work in the classroom. Ritchie (1996) writes:

The critical educator has the responsibility of operating from a position of honesty and political clarity which focuses on creating the educational conditions which unveil ideologies and their hidden power dynamics (p. 114).

Relying on Ritchie's analysis, one could make the argument that from the beginning, *Te Whāriki* has had critical pedagogy running through its veins – not always noticed, perhaps, but nonetheless still there. However, the invisibility of critical approaches in the curriculum changes in the 2017 version. What previous versions inferred, the 2017 version states outright.

Criticality in the 2017 version

The 2017 curriculum explicitly claims critical theory as one of its approaches. This is done in the section titled “underpinning theories and approaches.” The curriculum states that:

Te Whāriki reflects research that adopts critical theoretical lenses to examine the influence of social conditions, global influences and equity of opportunity on children's learning and development. Critical theory perspectives challenge disparities, injustices, inequalities and perceived norms. The use of critical theory perspectives is reflected in the principles of *Te Whāriki* and in guidance on how to promote equitable practices with children, parents and whānau (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 62).

While this statement is clear, it is also short. The above segment constitutes the entire explanation contained in the curriculum document. However, an explicit statement is a good start, and more importantly, the stated aims of challenging disparity, injustice, inequality and perceived norms – along with ideals regarding equity – align smoothly with critical pedagogy aims and learning outcomes.

The online resources provided by the Ministry of Education to support curriculum implementation further elaborate on critical theory. This resource set is called *Te Kete Ipurangi*, which means the “online knowledge basket” (Ministry of Education, 2021b). Under the resources for *Te Whāriki* is a section titled “utilising critical theories”. This

section includes an explanation of what critical theories are, a discussion of why such theories matter, and suggestions for application in practice. The section concludes with links to four additional resources that include keynote addresses, and critical work shared by a centre (as of March 2021).

Of particular note is the explicit mention of critical pedagogies under the heading “why does this matter?” (Ministry of Education, 2021b). A portion of this section states:

Critical pedagogies maintain that management and kaiako – individually and collectively – have a key role in reducing these inequalities. Power is in their hands to question and challenge what knowledge and whose knowledge is valued through the daily enacted curriculum.

On the other hand, maintaining an uncritical or neutral stance may perpetuate practices that tend to sustain inequalities. The term “hidden curriculum” is often used to refer to practice that advantage some groups and disadvantage others yet go unchallenged (Ministry of Education, 2021b, emphasis added).

The term “critical pedagogies” (italicised) is explicitly mentioned. The accompanying explanation emphasises working with power, inequality, and inequity. These ideals are compatible with the humanising aims of critical pedagogy. Read in tandem with the statement in the curriculum document itself (Ministry of Education, 2017), the use of critical pedagogy in early childhood finds clear support from the curriculum and its accompanying online resources.

Comparing the 1996 and 2017 versions of *Te Whāriki*

This part of the literature review draws on comparison of the principles and strands of the 1996 and 2017 curriculum versions, using a critical pedagogy lens. Examples have been drawn by comparing the principles and strands.

The principles

The principles substantively remain consistent between the 1996 and 2017 versions, and collectively, are a strong foundation for critical work to rest upon. This discussion of the principles draws on an analysis by Ritchie (1996).

In the empowerment principle (Ministry of Education 1996, p. 40; 2017, p. 18), the ideas of equity, rights, and children as agents of self and self-worth emerge in both

versions, albeit in slightly different ways. These ideas are of significant importance to the democratising aspect of critical pedagogy.

The principle of holistic development (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 41; 2017, p. 19) sees a child as more than a vessel to be filled, which connects to Freire's principle of avoiding a "banking" approach to education. Instead, children are recognised as having a variety of dimensions that they bring into their learning environment.

The third principle is that of family and community (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 42; 2017, p. 20). Actively recognising the cultural identity and lived reality of children and their families supports a critical pedagogy perspective, where multiple realities are recognised by teachers who actively support these in classroom learning. Critical pedagogy likewise acknowledges that context matters.

Responsive and reciprocal relationships are emphasised within *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 43; 2017, p. 21). Teachers act as guides and mentors, supporting children to "take responsibility for their own learning within an apprenticeship model in which the teacher exercises authority without authoritarianism" (Ritchie, 1996, p. 119). This connects to the idea of critical pedagogy as democratising.

The strands of Te Whāriki

Unlike the principles, the strands underwent significant changes from the 1996 to the 2017 versions. I focus on changes or omissions that affect criticality in a significant way. Four examples have been selected as representative of changes overall.

The first observation about the changes to the strands was the reduction in the learning outcomes from over 100 to 20. While the official figure looks like a huge cull, the 2017 curriculum introduces a section called "evidence of learning and development" which accompanies each strand. Many of the previous learning outcomes find expression here, often with two or three learning outcomes condensed and combined to create one point under evidence of learning and development.

The second observation regarding changes to the strands is attendant to the first. While many of the learning outcomes still find expression, in a repurposed way, edits

and omissions have still been made. Using a critical lens, many of the edits or omissions removed wording that encouraged teachers to actively grow children's understanding. These edits or omissions also removed the specific articulations of different kinds of contexts, which children should be able to gain experience with. Four examples, which are indicative of the two observations mentioned above, follow.

Example 1:

Belonging (1996): Interest and pleasure in discovering an unfamiliar wider world where the people, images, objects, languages, sounds, smells, and tastes are different from those at home (p. 56, emphasis added).

Connecting links between the early childhood education setting and other settings that relate to the child, such as home, school, or parent's workplace (p. 56).

Knowledge about the wider world of work, such as the hospital, the supermarket, or the fire service (p. 56).

Belonging (2017): Interest and pleasure in learning about the wider, unfamiliar world (p. 32, emphasis added)

This first example shows a reduction. The 2017 version now makes a broad statement about learning about the wider world. The specific articulations of the 1996 version are subsumed into this broad statement. The underlined portion shows what has (mostly) remained consistent between the wording of the two versions. The non-lined portions show what no longer finds expression, which means that two learning outcomes from 1996, which explicitly set out valuable contexts for children, are no longer specifically articulated in the 2017 version.

While the 2017 statement is not incorrect in any way, it falls short by eliminating the specific examples. The 1996 version gives teachers a greater understanding of the kind of contexts they can help children access. With the reduction, the possibility now exists that busy teachers might not consider possibilities that were previously made explicit. This is particularly important for equity reasons where children might have limited opportunities to access the wider variety of contexts stated in the 1996 version. The

omission creates a challenge for critically focused work, because children need to experience a variety of contexts to inform their growing social theories about the world around them.

Example 2:

Belonging (1996): The capacity to discuss and negotiate rules, rights and fairness (p. 62).

Belonging (2017): Showing respect for kaupapa, rules and the rights of others (p. 32).

Example 2, with the differences between the two versions underlined, shows another challenge. Social contexts for supporting children’s understanding of what happens to them has been limited in the 2017 curriculum.

There is an identifiable difference between “discussing and negotiating rules” and “showing respect”. The 1996 version advocates for children to have an understanding of what happens to them, where discussion and negotiation with children is indicative of power-sharing and democratic practice. In the 2017 version, the phrase “showing respect” has overtones of obedience and compliance. While teachers could still interpret “respect” to include discussion, that is not a given.

This second example brings to light an additional challenge from the 2017 update: there is a lot to unpack in this version of the curriculum. Even during implementation of the 1996 curriculum challenges were identified, with two of the curriculum’s authors writing that “implementation of *Te Whāriki* is likely to be constrained by a superficial understanding of its rationale and implications for practice” (Cullen, cited in Carr & May, 1996, p. 6).

The risk for superficial understanding remains, and is potentially exacerbated by neoliberal pressures on teachers who have limited time together to unpack the curriculum’s nuances. With learning outcomes and evidence of learning development points that have been condensed, often by combining two to three learning outcomes into one evidence of learning and development point, the curriculum is in greater need than ever of unpacking, even by experienced practitioners.

Example 3:

Belonging (1996): An understanding of the rules of the early childhood setting, of the reasons for them, and of which rules will be different in other settings (p. 62).

Belonging (2017): Understanding of the reasons for rules about acceptable behaviour (p. 32).

While both versions set out the need to understand the reasons for rules, the 1996 version goes further and also sets out the need to understand how rules change according to context. Knowing that rules change from place to place is part of development a political understanding of place, and for helping children to successfully negotiate the politics – the rules - of particular places. This political context is removed from the 2017 version.

Additionally, the 2017 version uses the phrase “acceptable behaviour”. There is no universal standard for acceptable behaviour, meaning this is another phrase requiring unpacking, in order to develop shared meanings amongst teaching teams. Determining whose version of “acceptable behaviour” to use, whether families will be consulted about what acceptable behaviour means to them, and whether children have any input, all become questions of interpretation that relate to democratic practice and equity.

Example 4:

Belonging (1996): The ability to disagree and state a conflicting opinion assertively and appropriately (p. 62).

Communication (1996): Language skills for increasingly complex purposes, such as stating and asking others about intentions; expressing feelings and attitudes and asking others about feelings and attitudes; negotiating, predicting, planning, reasoning, guessing, story-telling; and using the language of probability (p. 76).

Communication (1997): Use of language to express feelings and attitudes, negotiate, create and retell stories, communicate information and solve problems (p. 42).

Example 4 shows how learning outcomes from the 1996 version that supported the use of complex dialog skills are minimised in the 2017 version. The ability to disagree and

voice a dissenting opinion does not find expression in the 2017 version, which again, harks back to the compliance thread noted in earlier examples.

The communication outcome for 2017 contains fewer examples, and also omits the phrase “language skills for increasingly complex purposes”. This phrase is not expressed in the 2017 version, but has relevance to critical work, where complex dialogue skills are actively sought. Critical analysis can draw on the language skills of predicting, reasoning, guessing, and the language of probability – none of which are explicitly mentioned in the 2017 *Te Whāriki* although they could be implied. While the 1996 version gives its examples as possibilities, starting its list with the phrase “such as”, the 2017 version gives the examples as a closed list, although some of the skills could, again, be implied.

While the same challenge of unpacking the curriculum existed with the 1996 version, learning outcomes were elaborated in considerably more detail. While this made the 1996 version longer, it also made it clearer. What is lost in the condensed learning outcomes, and evidence of learning and development points of the 2017 version, is the ability to see these ideas separately - as distinct and fully articulated learning outcomes.

***Te Whāriki* moving forward**

The comparison between the 1996 and 2017 versions of *Te Whāriki* in light of the shared examples suggests an interesting position. The 2017 version is explicit in its adoption of criticality. However, the 1996 version provided more specific indicators in the learning outcomes, for how critical approaches could be incorporated in work with children. The compliance thread running through several of the strands in the 2017 version is at odds with a curriculum that is otherwise an advocate for children’s empowerment.

However, both curricula do position children as active agents in their own lives. In the 2017 version, references to our “shared future” and the need to “position our children as 21st century citizens ... in a fast changing and globally connected world” (p. 2) show the forward-looking position this version of *Te Whāriki* (2017) adopts. Additionally, *Te Whāriki* mentions the need to address our past, present and future coupled with the statement:

As global citizens in a rapidly changing and increasingly connected world, children need to be adaptive, creative and resilient. They need to 'learn how to learn' so that they can engage with new contexts, opportunities and challenges with optimism and resourcefulness (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 7).

Overall this is a good position for moving forward, but the mixed-message delivered by the strands regarding the position of criticality in work with children remains an open question.

Criticisms of critical pedagogy

Despite advocating for critical pedagogy, it must be acknowledged that critical pedagogy is not without its challenges, or its critics.

One critique is that while critical pedagogy is designed to eliminate inequity, the language used in the theory is "esoteric, elitist, and exclusive" (Christensen & Alridge, 2013, p. 12). The theoretical, conceptual nature of the language used could potentially function to create a new kind of oppression (Darder et al., 2017).

Critical pedagogy has also come under critique from feminist scholars who note the failure of critical pedagogy to directly engage with issues of importance to women, within the context of female knowledge construction and experience (Darder et al., 2017). hooks in particular calls out the "phallogocentric paradigm of liberation" in Freire's theory, particularly in his early work, yet at the same time, she acknowledges there is much in his work that remains liberatory (hooks, 1993, p. 149).

Along similar lines, while there are critical pedagogy scholars working with racial inequalities, and on contemporary perspectives on gender, sexuality, and race, these scholars have been primarily associated with feminist, ethnic, or cultural studies (Darder et al., 2017).

Another criticism is that critical pedagogy can be "long on criticism but short on solutions" (Christensen & Alridge, 2013, p. 12). In the critical dialogue phase, there is a certain attraction in dwelling on the elaboration on the problem. A shortage of research-based studies, contrasted against the wealth of conceptual, theoretical work, exacerbates this problem.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced key ideas that explain critical pedagogy within the context of this study, drawing heavily on the ideas of Paulo Freire. These ideas examined a number of aspects of critical pedagogy education, such as it being political, bicultural, and rooted in love. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) is also discussed through a critical pedagogy lens.

The next chapter discusses the critical inquiry framework used as the basis for this study.

Chapter Three: The critical inquiry framework

Introduction

This chapter sets out the critical inquiry framework that has been adapted for this study. This framework is set out in two parts. Firstly, the orienting metaphor of this study, the cultural-economic-political-social landscape, will be explained. Secondly, the features of the critical inquiry framework, based on the work of Freire (1970/2018), will be discussed. Kaupapa Māori theory, with relation to critical pedagogy, will also be examined. The chapter will conclude by discussing the two additional foci, belonging and empowerment.

The critical landscape

A big challenge with critical pedagogy has been supporting teachers who are attempting a critical curriculum to locate “the starting line”. What counts as a critical pedagogy inquiry? What does not? During this study I started using the metaphor of “landscape” to describe the space that critical pedagogy operates in. More specifically, this metaphor was called the “cultural-political-economic landscape”, although as the research progressed, I abbreviated the lengthy name to the “critical landscape”.

The use of “landscape” as a metaphor identifies critical pedagogy as a space. The addition of the cultural-political-economic landscape spheres identifies the landscape as an intangible space. This metaphor is useful because it identifies not only *where* we are working as educators, but also *how* we can move through this space. While the metaphor of critical landscape does not explain all that critical pedagogy is, or does, it does provide an accessible starting point for teachers and other involved parties to quickly acclimatise themselves and relocate into the world of critical pedagogy, by using the known concept of physical landscapes as a starting point. The establishment of a relatable context gives teachers a solid foundation that can be used to attach the extended theory of critical pedagogy to.

Landscape as metaphor

Imagine a foreign landscape. It stretches out before you, currently unknown, and yet at the same time containing the possibility to become known, intimately and in detail,

once you begin to walk that land. The land lies silently at your feet, yet contains inherent possibilities that can be revealed as the impending journey unfolds. It awaits your first steps, however tentative, into this new world.

We know about the land itself, because we have been born onto it. We have undertaken our lives in its embrace, and have found affinity with the spaces that we have come to know through our lived experiences of walking upon it. But it is when we find ourselves in new landscapes, in foreign places, that the opportunity to reengage with the world anew emerges, as we walk on new soil through an unknown place. Perhaps we have seen pictures or read about this new landscape, but knowing it for ourselves will still require us to walk it for ourselves, learning about it one step at a time.

The idea of using space-place metaphors to identify where critical pedagogy operates is not new. The seminal work of Peter McLaren (2015), *Life in schools*, uses a variety of place-based metaphors to refer to the spheres that critical pedagogy operates within. These include the “social universe” (pp. 193, 199, 200, 214, 217), “social world” including the variants “social and political world” and “sociocultural world” (pp. 196, 205, 207, 218), cultural terrain (pp. 194, 214), and social and cultural sites (p. 204). Other critical pedagogy writers have also used place-based metaphors; Maxine Greene (1978/2018) called an entire book “*Landscapes of learning*”. I propose using the metaphor of landscape to encompass all these descriptors and act as a “locator beacon” for teachers.

Metaphor is all around us. When I learned about metaphor in high school it was as a literary device, the tool of writers. This literary-focused understanding is not uncommon (Botha, 2009). However, metaphor is also used to support the understanding of conceptual ideas: poetic use is just the beginning.

As far back as 1641 John Amos Comenius used the metaphor of light to represent learning, a metaphor that persists to this day (Yob, 2003). Another longstanding ECE metaphor is “kindergarten”, coming from the Froebel term that literally means “child’s garden”. This metaphor invokes the idea of a child-focused hands-on learning

environment where children grow through education, invoking the analogy of plants growing in a garden (Fenech et al., 2020).

The most prominent metaphor in the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE sector has already been mentioned: *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) uses the metaphor of a woven mat to imply the “weaving” of local curriculum. Recently, the metaphor of *pōwhiri* was developed to make visible the process of belonging that refugees go through when first arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand (Rameka et al., 2021). A *pōwhiri* is a traditional welcoming ceremony of the Māori people in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the process of going through the ritual of *pōwhiri* is used to explain the stages refugees move through to develop a sense of belonging in a their new country (Rameka et al., 2021).

Metaphors in education function as important cognitive devices, bridging the chasm between the familiar and unfamiliar, where “educators and learners can understand educational phenomena by relating them to something previously experienced (Botha, 2009, p. 431). In this way, metaphors can act as “basic mental constructs for organizing our knowledge of the world” (Saban, 2006, p. 311).

This idea of movement between the known and the unknown is contained in the root meanings of the word “metaphor”, which is of Greek origin and means “transfer”. “Trans” means “across”, while “phor” means “fer”, or “ferry”, thus giving the word the collective meaning of “ferry across” (Kalra & Baveja, 2012). To draw on Botha’s earlier example of a “chasm” between known experience and unknown ideas, and to combine that with idea of “ferrying across” meaning from the known to the unknown, is to create a useful image for metaphor that is, incidentally, metaphoric itself.

As Fenech et al (2020) explain, the power of metaphor “lies in the capacity of metaphor to be contextually relevant, such that it can convey new understandings in meaningful ways” (p. 198).

The purpose of metaphor suits the purpose required in this study: that of using the meaning from a known quantity (the landscape) as a bridge to the unknown, which in this instance is the unfamiliar critical pedagogy theory.

The “landscape”

Critical pedagogy signals a shift from the physical landscapes to the cultural-political - economic landscapes. The theoretical basis for these landscapes comes from the work of McLaren (2015), who calls politics, culture, and economics the “foundational principles” of critical pedagogy (p. 122). These foundational principles are forces that impact the way we live in and perceive the world.

These unseen, critical landscapes impact in seen and unseen ways on our respective realities, including the kinds of experiences we gain, and how those experiences are validated. The critical landscapes are just as real as the physical ones we can see and touch.

I argue that in the same way we can come to know an unknown landscape by physically exploring it, or as Ingold (2011) suggests, by walking that land – we can also come to know the cultural-political-economic landscapes we inhabit, by learning to “walk” them.

Critical pedagogy is often referred to as a space, but referring to it specifically as a landscape is useful in three ways.

The first perspective comes from anthropologist Tim Ingold, who argues for a “dwelling perspective” in regards to landscape (Ingold, 1993, p. 152). Ingold views the landscape as a place that is lived in, both by past generations who dwelt there, and by current generations who continue to use the land, and who, by that use, affect the ongoing evolution of the landscape. He notes that “through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it” (Ingold, 1993, p. 154). Here, the landscape is neither static nor preserved, or as Ingold (1993, p. 152) writes, “a neutral, external backdrop to human activities”. Instead, people have the opportunity to go about “engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past” (Ingold, 1993, p. 152).

This perceptual engagement can be linked to the place-based education idea of local learning, or localised curriculum. This “local” learning includes cultural understandings of the land (Penetito, 2009; Somerville et al., 2011). As Penetito (2009, p. 18) notes, “PBE [place-based education] is rooted in what is local and therefore unique to a

place". Local, place-based learning connects to the ideas Ingold mentions about the land being part of the past and present.

In critical pedagogy the critical landscapes are also inhabited worlds, created by the practices, traditions and biases of those who went before us, inherited by ourselves in the present, but also able to be shaped and changed through the interaction between us, and the landscapes we inhabit. Because of that mutual relationship, the land is more than a witness to change – it is an active participant in change.

The second perspective is one of subjective engagement with the land. Sobel (2004), from the place-based education field, writes

Another way to think about this focus on place is to understand that a “grounded” or “rooted” learner stands within the world, acting on its many elements, rather than standing outside looking in, acting in large measure as an observer, which is the typical stance expected of students in schools (p. 11).

In this perspective the pretence of objectivity is abandoned in favour of locating ourselves directly, subjectively within the landscape itself. In this way, the land becomes a centre of experience, a place that can teach us about the workings of the world, and about how our lives can fit into the spaces we occupy (Gruenewald, cited in Somerville et al., 2011, p. 2). Along this same line of reasoning, Penetito (2009) argues that one of the essential characteristics of place-based education, where engagement with the land is central, is that it is innately experiential. This idea is also affirmed by Wattchow and Brown (2011, p. xiv). Ingold (1993) writes of the physical landscape as something to be explored, noting “in the landscape of our dwelling, we *look around* (p. 166, original emphasis). It is intended that subjective experience will be a powerful teacher. This idea connects with the inquiry and exploration through direct experience that takes place within a critical landscape.

This connection with the land is requires more than a fleeting visit. Writing from the place-based education field, Wattchow and Brown (2011) elaborate:

place results from interaction between the geophysical reality of a location, cultural values and practices, and individual experience and interpretation of those experiences (p.1).

The authors' conception of place draws together three related strands of thinking: the physical location of a place, the impact of local culture and history/practice on that place, and, a person's direct experience of being there.

The third perspective to support the metaphor of the critical landscape comes from the closing passages of Ingold's (1993) essay, where he directs our attention to the overall purpose of engagement with the landscape: uncovering meaning. Ingold (1993) writes:

Meaning is there to be *discovered* in the landscape, if only we know how to attend to it. Every feature, then, is a potential clue, a key to meaning rather than a vehicle for carrying it. This discovery procedure, wherein objects in the landscape become clues to meaning, is what distinguishes the perspective of dwelling (p. 172).

This idea of meaning being discovered through engagement with a landscape is a powerful one. It suggests the need for inquiry and exploration, for personal engagement as a key part of the engagement with landscape.

Inquiry, exploration, and personal engagement are also key elements for the critical pedagogy learning process. Penetito (2009) considers spatial metaphors, recounting stories that can be interpreted as a "politics of identity" and a "politics of location". He writes:

The notion of politics suggests questions regarding contestations, power relations, and negotiation. Who I am and where I am are socially constructed phenomena but that does not deny ... their ultimate embeddedness in the materiality of the world (p. 9).

Even though I argue in favour of a metaphor, the tangible world cannot be overlooked, or even consigned to a mere reference: the tangible world remains perpetually relevant to the intangible critical landscape. As Gruenwald and Smith write, "critical issues of race, class, gender, and other aspects of culture can become abstractions unless these issues are grounded in concrete experience, experience that always takes place somewhere" (p. xxi). This point relates firmly to critical pedagogy, where the critical issues mentioned are clearly connected to the importance of concrete experience – experiences that take place in the critical landscape.

Having discussed the metaphor that situates the critical pedagogy framework, discussion will turn to the framework itself.

Describing the critical inquiry framework

The critical inquiry framework follows the process set out by Freire (1970/2018) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which four broad elements of inquiry are identified as relevant and necessary for the teaching context of this study. Freire was hesitant to outline a method, fearing overly-scripted implementation that would see critical pedagogy end up as a rigid process, rather than a progression towards genuine understanding and authentic action. Therefore, these elements are called a framework - an acknowledgement of the elements to attend to in this critical pedagogy inquiry, rather than a process to follow strictly from start to finish.

A second discussion point surrounding Freire's method was his desire for his theories to be made and remade for the context they were in. The framework uses the elements of Freire's work, but connects this to practices and approaches that make sense to ECE teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. The framework specifically attends to culture, or more specifically, to bicultural practice, referring to the country's efforts to be bicultural, as well as *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) being a bicultural curriculum.

The elements of the framework are discussed in the order that they arise in Freire's (1970/2018) work, in four parts:

1. The emergence of the critical pedagogy inquiry
2. Use of critical dialogue to explore the issue
3. Participants reaching a point of critical consciousness, where some kind of new or developing realization is reached, and
4. Undertaking praxis, or action-in-reflection.

After the elements, bicultural practice will be discussed, and the chapter will end with a discussion of two additional foci, belonging and empowerment.

1. Generative themes and problem-posing

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970/2018) started the inquiry process by inquiring amongst the people he was working with, about the issues that were most important to them. These issues, ideas and conversations would be organised

thematically and then represented to the people as generative themes, named because they were generated by the people, not by researchers or authorities.

Identifying generative themes

Generative themes emerge from people's lived experiences (Freire, 1970/2018). A generative theme is:

An issue or topic that catches the interest of students in such a way that discussion, study, and project work can be built around it. Themes may come from an incident in a particular student's life, a problem in the community, or an idea that a student latched onto from the media, the news, or a classroom activity. Writing, reading, talking, acting and reflecting are the key ways through which generative themes develop (Peterson, 2017, p. 384).

Thus identified, a generative has the potential to spark new social critique and political action (Apostolidis, 2019). Obtaining generative themes is not a prescribed set of actions, but instead follows a broad process that starts with identifying the narratives/stories/ideas of the involved group in order to understand their lived experiences, figuring out from those narratives/stories/ideas which themes emerge strongly from their work, and then re-presenting the themes back to the group by posing the theme as a problem to be solved (Freire, 1970/2018; Kincheloe, 2008b). Freire likens these themes to concentric circles, "moving from the general to the particular" (Freire, 1970/2018, p. 103).

Generative themes do not come from data, such as statistics or reports, but are always drawn from the lived experiences that people share as a result of being asked (Apostolidis, 2019). There is no one true meaning or interpretation of people's lived experiences, as this would essentialise rather than highlight the multiplicity of identities in a diverse group. Instead, generative themes created with participants enable them to be honoured as "holders and creators of knowledge through their lived experiences" (Rocha et al., 2016, p. 747).

Generative themes in the classroom

As the student experiences are brought into the classroom or group, the educator becomes a problem-poser who reframes the theme as a problem for the group to work on (Freire, 1970/2018; Kincheloe, 2008b). Freire (1970/2018) writes:

In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (p. 83).

Along similar lines, Kincheloe (2008b) adds that a school curriculum should accordingly be shaped by problems faced by teachers and students as part of their effort to live ethical and just lives. In building this problematised curriculum, the educator uses the knowledge produced through the generative themes to reframe that knowledge as a problem that can be posed to the group. Freire (1970/2018) used such questions to teach that no matter the subject, no body of knowledge was excluded from examination.

The potential of a generative theme also comes from the new conceptual possibilities that emerge from inquiring directly *with* marginalized groups, rather than simply confirming what recognised intellectuals and theorists already think on such a matter through research *on* such groups. The former is by far the more empowering process. As Apostolidis (2019) writes:

Following this course also means practicing a powerful strategy for performing critical theory in the company of those usually denied recognition as thinkers, let alone “theorists” (p. 37).

While in this instance Apostolidis is writing about migrant day labourers, the same idea of exclusion from recognition is also true for children, who are also frequently unrecognised as thinkers and theorists.

As part of his work in generative themes, Freire also wrote of historical epochs, which were generative themes that emerged strongly in response to the specific context of that time or era. In Freire’s time, continued exploitation and dehumanisation of the peasants gave rise to generative themes such as inferiority and the silence of the oppressed. These were indicative of a historical epoch of domination (Weninger,

2018). In this current time, the prevalence of grassroots movements such as #me too and Black Lives Matter suggest an historical epoch of inequality (albeit in different contexts).

In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, Kōhanga Reo (Māori language immersion early childhood settings) were developed in response to an identified decline in the learning of te reo Māori (the Māori language), the loss of cultural identity, and the passing on of culturally valued practices and beliefs (Hohepa et al., 1992; Ritchie et al., 2013). Eco-cultural discourses (Durie, 2010; Ritchie, 2017b) have highlighted the impacts of human-related climate change as another historical epoch, as we use the earth's resources with increasing rapidity.

Historical epochs do not dictate the generative theme a particular group might select. However, currents of lived experience in the wider community can highlight injustices or challenges experienced in localised settings, and emerge in teaching spaces.

Generative themes in the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE context

In an ECE context in this country, generative themes find application from following a child-led learning approach. Child-led learning is widely utilised in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. The approach undertaken in this study uses the perspective that children and their interests are “catalysts of endless possibilities” where children are valued as competent learners (Gripton, 2017, p. 14).

In such an approach, children are positioned as protagonists in their own lives who are both able and motivated to start things; attuned adults are catalysts for child-led learning, and the environment is a context full of possibility and reflective journey, and for ethical and democratic practice (Woods, 2017, p.

2). The aim of authentic child-led thinking opens up:

... new possibilities and expectations, alternative enquiries and solutions, opportunities for new understandings and new ways of seeing (Woods, 2017, p. 2).

Such an approach resonates with Freirean ideals, where problem-posing allows participants to conceive of the world in new ways, through new lenses, and with new perspectives.

Working out a child's interest involves careful consideration of the child by teachers (Gripton, 2017). This consideration includes thinking about each child within their unique social, environmental and cultural context, in order to understand where a child's interests might be located "within the boundaries of their experiences" (Gripton, 2017, p. 15).

Inquiring into children's interests includes asking children "big" questions and avoiding closed questions. As Gripton (2017) writes:

As practitioners we need to ask children questions to which we ourselves are uncertain of the answer or to which many answers exist; we can ask questions without expecting a definitive answer or sometimes an answer at all (p. 16).

Supporting children to frame big questions or reframing children's ideas back to them as questions, adopts a Freirean position.

2. Critical dialogue

Freire (1970/2018) writes that "only through communication can human life hold meaning" (p. 77). In critical pedagogy, meaning-making communication is called critical dialogue. Critical dialogue has the potential to reorient discourses about social issues, the status quo, and to uncover multiple perspectives about the world. This dialogic process is at the heart of change as participants collectively create new ways of seeing, perceiving, and acting (Jewett et al., 2010).

Identifying critical dialogue

Critical dialogue is significantly different from conversation and different from typical classroom discussion. Critical dialogue is the process whereby people come to understand the perspective of another person or group, possibly even changing their own perspective in the process (Allen, 2010). Freire (1970/2018) writes:

It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their situation in the world. Educational and political action which is not critically aware of this situation runs the risk either of "banking" or of preaching in the desert (p. 96).

Freire observes that the process of truly coming to understand others does not happen in isolation, but rather through meaningful discussion with them. This discussion is framed as a kind of dialogue that has a horizontal relationship between participants, based on “genuine two-way communication, empathy, and mutual recognition” (Vaughan, 2011, p. 50). Critical dialogue is an exchange of ideas, not a dictation from one party to the other. Freire (1970/2018) expands on the concept:

saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone – nor can she say it *for* another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their word (p. 88).

Critical dialogue is the tool used to collaboratively deconstruct, construct, and reconstruct equitable models, because it is through this critical dialogue that people collectively reflect, interpret, and change their reality (Wilson, 2010). However, such dialogue does not occur when those involved in the discussion simply agree with each other (Allen, 2010).

Critical dialogue as the process of naming the world

A process of change begins with the act of naming the world as it is encountered. Freire (1970/2018) considers the very act of naming as transformative.

To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming* ... Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world (p. 88).

Through dialogue, the named world emerges. This “naming” is not the labelling of things or even of people, but rather of structures in the critical landscape that function as barriers and prevent the realisation of human potential. The naming of structures that harm our children is important, as this naming is essential to confront acts of oppression committed by educational and social systems (Allen, 2010).

Apostolidis (2019) interprets Freire’s process of naming as being the construction of a vital analytic vocabulary, by those socially and culturally marginalised, to explain their lives. Thus, these persons are able explain their affairs with their own words, rather than to use those imposed on them or borrowed from others. Freire’s call to “name

the world” (1970/2018, p. 88) thus becomes, in the view of Apostolidis (2019), “the active creation (or genesis) of the world in a radically new manner” (p. 43).

Critical dialogue as dialectical

Freire saw the relationship between the world and the word as dialectical. In a dialectical world, critical thinking is based on seeing things interrelatedly, rather than seeing things as units functioning independently with their own internal rules (Au, 2017; Holst, 2017). Darder et al. (2017), outlines practice:

An important emphasis here is that students are encouraged to engage in the world within its complexity and fullness, in order to reveal the possibilities of new ways of constructing thought and action beyond how it currently exists. Rooted in a dialectical view of knowledge, critical pedagogy seeks to support dynamic interactive elements, rather than participate in the formation of absolute dichotomies or rigid polarizations of thought and practice (p. 11).

A Freirean dialectic, as an example, identifies the interrelationship between poverty and wealth and acknowledges that neither side can be fully explained without the other – there is an interrelationship between the two even though they are opposites. A dialectical view of knowledge avoids absolute positions and polarising thinking, and supports a fluid, relational view of the world.

Critical dialogue as humanising

Critical dialogue is also humanising, through the mode of dialogue. Indeed, humanisation not only seems to be the point of critical pedagogy, but plays a significant role in making it happen as well.

An example of humanising dialogue from practice comes from the research of Kauffman (2010), who reflects on her teaching following a university-level critical pedagogy programme. She observes instances where tensions ran high as conflicting opinions/ideas/stories were shared. Kind and patient responses to outbursts or rising tension diffuse the situation in at least two of the accounts she gives, and gives way to new critical dialogue.

Love, expressed as patience, respectfulness and kindness, is necessary as divergent opinions/ideas/stories can evoke strong, emotive responses from participants. Allen

(2010) describes this process as being “grounded in habits of the heart” (p. 176), which she further delineated as loving humanity, relating with humility, having faith in others, having hope for a better world, finally, thinking and acting critically. Thus, only as critical dialogue is infused with love can the dialogue continue to grow through the challenges of difference.

Critical dialogue and young children

The path to critical dialogue with young children in an ECE centre requires teacher support. However, there are strategies and approaches already in use in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE that can support the development of critical dialogue with young children. Dialogue approaches can engender critical dialogue. These approaches support open-ended responses from children, and allow for a more co-constructive, equitable dialogue between teachers and children. As Houen et al (2016) write, “the quality of classroom talk, or discourse, therefore is paramount to learning” (p. 69).

A number of dialogue approaches are used by teachers during the study, being approaches they used commonly in teaching. However, in this study they were employed for critical purposes. The approaches that will be discussed are authentic teacher questions, authentic prompts, wait time, possibility thinking, and working theories.

Authentic teacher questions

One example of a dialogue approach supporting critical dialogue comes from Sandretto (2011), who identifies the importance of using authentic teacher questions. Authentic teacher questions are questions that teachers do not know the answer to, thus eliciting student responses that are open and multiple. Authentic teacher questions, sometimes rendered as open-ended questions, are not themselves an overtly critical tool. However, this kind of questioning approach creates possibilities, not only for the dialogue to continue, but also for it to be developed, critiqued, and considered from different perspectives.

Authentic teacher prompts: “I wonder”

Authentic questions are not the only way to evoke dialogue with children. “I wonder” prompts can also play a role in developing critical dialogue with children. Houen et al (2019) write:

The 'I wonder. . .' formulation can be heard as an invitation, as opposed to an expectation, to respond to the teacher's own wondering about a subject. By presenting her own wondering about a subject the teacher also expresses her desire to build knowledge, thereby foregrounding possible future topics of talk (p. 158).

When teachers openly state their position as “wondering” they relinquish their expert status, presenting themselves instead as curious, and without special knowledge of the subject being discussed (Houen et al., 2019). This creates more room for children to respond, especially where the child may not be sure of their response or may want to test out a tentative answer. Thus they are encouraged to “have a go” without fear of evaluation from the teacher (Houen et al., 2016). This approach is consistent with Freire's desire for dialogic conversations that avoid banking education approaches. The literature also notes the potential value of “I wonder” sequences to interactions such as problem-solving and brainstorming – interactions that actively seek children's meaningful contributions (Houen et al., 2019).

Wait time, and slow pedagogy

Wait time is the length of time a teacher waits after asking a question or providing a prompt, or even after a student response. Wait time is particularly important in critical dialogue, where challenging questions mean students need time to think. Research has found that the standard maximum silence in typical interaction sequences is about 1 second (Houen et al., 2016; Sandretto, 2011). However, when the purpose of classroom discussion is to stimulate cognitive processes, a longer wait time is advisable. Sandretto (2011) endorsed Tobin's suggestion for 3-5 seconds, but this was in response to research involving high school students. Younger children may well need longer.

Clark (2020) takes a slightly different approach, focusing instead on the need for teachers to listen deeply to children. This need for deep listening is underpinned by another need: having time to listen (Clark, 2020). Finding this time can be difficult in a neoliberal education environment where measurement is often foregrounded. Clark (2020) writes:

When measurement is the dominant discourse, this can permeate practices and relationships within ECEC ... It can become the fastmoving

current that dictates the direction of travel. Two qualities that appear to be praised in a measurement culture are speed and visibility (p. 137).

Instead of speed and visibility, Clark, in the same writing, recommends “slow pedagogy” and “slow knowledge” as alternative forms of practice. She explains that “slow” does not refer to the tempo of the interactions or the energy involved, but rather to the slowing down of the process of arriving at meaning. There is time for knowledge to move beyond first thoughts, and for revisiting, lingering, and rethinking to take place. The idea of slow pedagogy includes children having more control of what they investigate and for how long they do so, as well as having time to follow through on their ideas. Slow pedagogy has application for both young children and teachers.

While the idea of wait time addresses a specific dynamic that happens within conversation, the idea of slow pedagogy takes a much longer view: one that acknowledges pedagogy itself as unfolding over time.

Possibility thinking

Another approach used to draw out critical dialogue comes from Giroux, who argues for a language of possibility. Giroux (2005) writes:

Students should be introduced to a language of empowerment and radical ethics that permits them to think about how community life should be constructed around a project of possibility (p. 166).

Empowering education for possibility includes questions of how we can work for the reconstruction of social imagination – an education grounded in a view of human freedom (Giroux, 2005). The language of possibility reinvents traditions and practices, not within discourses of submission and repetition, but as critique and transformation (Gale, 1992).

The language of possibility is further explained by Craft’s (2010, 2013) concept of possibility thinking. The core features of possibility thinking include investigative behaviour through problem-posing, self-directed actions, intentional action, development, being imaginative, improvising, and risk-taking (2010, 2013). Research by Craft (2013) shows that “possibility thinking involves finding and honing problems,

harnessing interlinked features that enable transformation by individuals and in collaboration” (p. 128). A portion of her research included early childhood settings.

While there are a number of compatibilities between the critical inquiry framework and possibility thinking, the key aspect that possibility thinking brings is a creative, imaginative projection forward into the future, as children conceive of a future that is possible, but not yet realised. Craft (2013) has also discussed the potential for digital mediums to be used in this kind of thinking, noting “digital cultural spaces are sites for young people’s possibility thinking and experimentation” (p. 126).

Working theories

Working theories is an approach used in the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE sector to help draw out children’s thinking about the world around them, and it remains one of the principle outcomes of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). Working theories are revealed through children’s self-narratives and interactions, as they endeavour to make meaning from their lived experiences, including thinking and theorising (Hedges & Cooper, 2016). Hedges (2014) states:

The word ‘working’ suggests that these theories are tentative and speculative. They are built from prior knowledge, in particular, possibly limited, contexts, and open to revision on the basis of new information and experience. As a creative form of knowledge, they are modified and improved in a continuous manner and may involve imaginative, inventive ideas and some sense of resourcefulness (p. 40).

Working theories, as theories in progress, are prone to revision, speculation, and testing, allowing children to revisit, edit and even reject their preliminary working theories (Hedges, 2014).

Working theories are valuable in critical contexts as they make children’s thinking visible, both to teachers, to other children, and even to families. This visibility creates opportunities to examine the working theory through the lens of critique, and to share different perspectives about an inquiry.

3. Critical consciousness

Critical consciousness is the common rendering of the Freirean term

“conscientization”, which itself comes from the Portuguese word “conscientizacao”. The concept of critical consciousness is defined as “the deepening of the attitude of awareness” (Freire, 1970/2018, p. 109).

Critical consciousness of the surrounding world is developed through recognising and understanding its inhibiting structures of power, privilege, and oppression, by analysing habits of thinking, by challenging ideology, and by contributing to social change (Liu, 2012; Vaughan, 2011).

Gaining this consciousness is particularly important for those who suffer the ill effects of power privilege and oppression, but is just as relevant for those who benefit from the same structures. Applebaum (2019), citing the context of white privilege in the United States context, writes of wilfully maintained ignorance that becomes hard to shift, because many in this group have a vested interest in not knowing. Maintaining this position, rather than becoming involved in the discomforting process of challenging long-held inequitable ideas, “results in safeguarding white moral innocence while at the same time shielding unjust systems from contestation” (Applebaum, 2019, p. 30).

Critical consciousness also addresses the limit situations that create barriers to progress. Limit situations are, simply put, the situations that limit us. It is through critical consciousness that we come to see these limits in our lives for what they are. Freire (1970/2018) writes:

Once perceived ... as obstacles to their liberation, these situations stand out in relief from the background, revealing their true nature as concrete historical dimensions of a given reality (p. 99).

Such a reality is not to be passively accepted, but instead responded to. Freire cites Pinto, who notes that “limit situations are not impassable boundaries were possibilities end, but the real boundaries where all possibilities begin” (Freire, 1970/2018, p. 99, see footnote). Pinto, and by association Freire, see the space where a limit is encountered as one of possibility, opportunity, and empowerment. As Pinto continues, this boundary space is not “the frontier which separates being from nothingness, but the frontier which separates being from being more” (Freire, 1970/2018, p. 99, see footnote).

As an example, child abuse and alcoholism were common problems among the Latin American workers that Freire and his associates worked with, but these could only be tackled once those workers gained the critical consciousness to realize that these problems were outcomes of their frustration over dehumanizing poverty, and that poverty was the limit situation they were facing (Freire, 1970/2018). Likewise, only when people are able to critically perceive limit-situations and 'demythologize' reality can they take transformative action that will (re)humanize their experience (Weninger, 2018).

4. Praxis: The transformation of the world

Freire describes praxis in two key ways. Firstly, that "human activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world" (Freire, 1970/2018, p. 125). Secondly, Freire (1970/2018) describes praxis as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (p. 126). But what does this mean? What does this mean when working with young children in ECE?

Firstly, praxis is composed of action and reflection. Praxis is the process where people reflect on their everyday lives, to critically work through the narratives, assumptions, discourses, and contradictions embedded in their respective worlds of action (Mayo, 2020). Based on the reflections that emerge from Freire's critical work, one is able to take action to work against injustice, oppression, and inequity (Mayo, 2020). Praxis is about more than being busy doing good things; the reflective component is crucial. Without reflection, actions may become rote, and simply reproduce existing oppressions rather than actively identifying and challenging the same, and then amending one's action (Mayo, 2020).

Secondly, "reflection on action must be allied to political action" (Mayo, 2020, p. 456). The goal is improve through thoughtful change. Freire (1970/2018) advocates for transformation of the world through reflective action towards systems and practices that obstruct progress towards humanisation.

Freire also writes of praxis as a unity: it must be undertaken by those who are leading, working in tandem with the oppressed (Freire, 1970/2018). Praxis cannot be undertaken on behalf of anybody else – to do so would undermine the nature of praxis, which seeks to both remove inequities such as disenfranchisement.

What can praxis look like for young children in ECE?

Praxis can take the form of action. Changes to policy and procedure (whether locally or nationally), campaigning on pressing issues such as environmental change, organising grassroots movements to combat local injustices – all of these could find legitimate expression as the action component of praxis, provided they were sufficiently supported by reflection. However, given that this work is undertaken with small children, what other kinds of “action” could be considered here, that might bring a wider range of appropriate, praxis-friendly possibilities into the child’s world?

Counternarratives are considered an expression of praxis. Counternarratives, broadly speaking function as a critique of hegemonic narratives (Peters & Lankshear, 1996). Hegemonic narratives are those dominant stories of the societal majority, held by public consciousness, and propagated through societal structures such as the media, laws and policy, literature, and education (Peters & Landshear, 1996).

A counternarrative can also be framed as a counter story, or a “little story”:

the little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledges and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated or forgotten in the telling of official narratives (Peters & Lankshear, 1996, p. 2).

To develop a counternarrative is to reflect on the world, to see where somebody’s knowledge or history has been marginalised, and to foreground a new narrative to counter the hegemonic one (Peters & Lankshear, 1996).

The creation or reinvention of texts to represent new and evolving thinking, comes from critical literacy. Janks (2010) observes:

texts are simply versions of reality, and we can, as writers, re-vision our stories. The ability to read texts critically, including our own texts, creates the conditions for transformative design (p. 159).

In this context, texts can include multimodal texts (Janks, 2010). A case could also be potentially made for creating artefacts that represent the new or evolving thinking that emerges from critical inquiry.

The Aotearoa New Zealand case for bicultural education

Among the prominent voices for transformative education in Aotearoa New Zealand are kaupapa Māori theorists. Kaupapa Māori theorists seek to reclaim the theoretical space through the writing and dissemination of their theories about themselves and their world-view. Bishop (2008) describes Kaupapa Māori theory as both a practice and philosophy for Māori conscientisation, for resistance, and for transformative praxis to advance Māori learning in schooling and education Tuhiwai Smith (2012) writes:

most discussion about Kaupapa Māori is also located in relation to critical theory, in particular to the notions of critique, resistance, struggle and emancipation (p. 187).

There are definite connections to critical pedagogy in the terminology used by both theorists, although elsewhere, Bishop (cited in Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) expresses some doubt in the ability of critical pedagogy to realize the emancipatory goals of Māori.

Kaupapa Māori theorists argue not just for change with the structures and institutions of education, but for change that makes sense to Māori. Penetito (2010) writes:

It is clear that the education system has generally failed to reduce Māori academic under-achievement and that this systemic failure is, to a considerable degree, preventable. Even when Māori have recommended remedies for this problem ... the system has continually set out to address the problem of disparity between Māori and non-Māori academic performance rather than explain the marginalization of Māori knowledge, history and custom within the system (p. 58).

Penetito (2010) asserts that the most damaging outcome of these shortcomings is the public perception, often adopted by Māori themselves, that the chronic underperformance of Māori is their own fault.

Such underperformance can be framed differently when schools, and for that matter, curriculum, are viewed as “hierarchies of knowledge and theories” where “schools simply reproduced domesticated versions of that knowledge for uncritical consumption” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 68). Along similar lines, Penetito (2010) notes that there is little in the educational system to give

Māori parents a sense that the system also belongs to them, while curriculum “describes the world that is too often not the reality experienced by Māori students” (p. 206)

Theory has not always been Māori friendly, with theories of racial deficiencies, cultural disadvantage, and inferiority having historically playing central roles in denying the access of Māori to land, language, and culture. Pihama (2010). endorses the position of Graham Hingangaroa Smith, that “Maori, as a subordinate group, must critically engage theory as a site of struggle” (p. 7)

Tuhiwai Smith (2012), also argues for “a local approach to Critical Theory” (p. 187) where Kaupapa Māori acts as “the modality through which the emancipatory goal of critical theory, in a specific historical, political and social context, is practiced” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 188). This point similarly tallies with Freire’s own request to make and remake his theories (cited in Macedo, 2005, p. x), in service of the local contexts critical pedagogy is employed in.

Considerations for a biculturally-informed critical theory

Bishop (2008) outlines several points that he considers significant in the implementation of a transformative educational programme for Māori. This programme is one where power is shared between teachers and children, where culture counts, where learning is interactive and dialogic, and where connectedness between teachers and students is fundamental to relations.

Such an approach also endorses and validates cultural perspectives about the world. Māori have traditionally valued not only the land, but the relationship between themselves and the land. Practices and philosophies about the land reflected this reciprocal relationship of interconnectedness (Ritchie, 2017b). Durie (2010) writes of the valuing of cultural knowledges – or rather, of the historical undervaluing of such knowledge.

Debate about the relevance of cultural perspectives alongside scientific and technical evidence is not new. A problem, if there is one, arises when the criteria adopted by one system of knowledge, such as science, are used to decide on the validity of another system that subscribes to different criteria (p. 239).

Ritchie (2017b) takes a similar perspective in her writings on eco-cultural literacy, positioning indigenous knowledge and practices about the land as a counternarrative to scientific knowledge, noting that Western beliefs, including industrial and technology perspectives, have largely ignored traditional ecological knowledge systems. The validation of cultural ways of knowing can reposition traditional knowledge alongside Western and scientific ways of knowing, as another way of engaging with the world. Rameka (2018) writes that individuals interpret the world through their cultural lens a process which is typically involuntary and subconscious, thus normalising one's view of the world as natural, just the way it is.

Contemporary urban environments, institutions and structures tend to reinforce Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent) cultural values and beliefs. As a minority cultural group in Pākehā-dominated urban environments, institutions and structures, Māori tend to have their cultural knowledge, values and ways of being thrown into relief in encounters with non-Māori ... For this reason, culture is often viewed as an overarching frame of being and belonging for Māori, whereas for Pākehā it tends to be viewed as just one of many definers, if it is mentioned at all (Rameka, 2018, p. 367).

Chan and Ritchie (2019) make an additional point about the land: the notion of place-connectedness. While this section has largely focused on Māori ways of being, the challenge of place-connectedness – of feeling connected to the place where you are living – has challenges for families who have come to Aotearoa New Zealand from another place, as immigrants or refugees. In ECE settings, this need must also be weighted with the need to support a bicultural curriculum. These raises social justice issues for people trying to connect both with the land, with culture, and with others.

Focus on belonging and empowerment

Belonging and empowerment have been included as specific focus points for my study. My study is connected to a larger TLRI study where belonging and empowerment were also focal points. The kindergarten at the heart of this study, was also one of the participating ECE services in the TLRI study.

The review of the literature in this section sets out how belonging and empowerment are viewed in this study, which provides another perspective by approaching these two concepts through a critical pedagogy lens.

Belonging

Given that this study identifies belonging as a key component of its overall framing, it is important to unpack more about what this concept means. Belonging is one of the five strands of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017), the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood curriculum. Aotearoa is not alone in having belonging as one of its curriculum foci; the Australian and Irish early learning curriculums similarly incorporate belonging as a prominent concept

In both versions of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017), four domains of belonging are identified. These are stated as children experiencing an environment where

- Connecting links with family and the wider world are affirmed and extended;
- Children know they have a place
- Children feel comfortable with routines, customs and events; and
- Children know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour

(Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 54, 2007, p. 3, 2017, p. 32)

This sense of belonging has also been typically phrased as a child's relationship with people, places and things (Tillett & Wong, 2018). *Te Whāriki* was revised in 2017. However, the four domains have remained consistent through both versions, even though the number of learning outcomes has been reduced from twenty-two in the 1996 version (Ministry of Education, 1996, pp. 56–62) to four in the 2017 version (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 32).

Belonging is “a complex multi-layered concept” (Lee et al., 2013), yet recent work in Australia has identified that it is very broadly defined, and even somewhat taken-for-granted as a concept (Tillett & Wong, 2018, p. 38). The literature variously discusses belonging as a “fundamental human need” (Tillett & Wong, 2018), included in Maslow's hierarchy of needs as “belongingness (Stratigos, 2016, p. 173; Stratigos et al., 2014) and identified belonging as a motivator of human behaviour, with consequences, both

positive and negative, for a person's future development (cited in Stratigos et al., 2014).

There is a school of thought that argues for a more complex, critical understanding of what belonging means. For example, Sumsion and Wong (2011) have developed a "cartography of belonging" (p. 30), which sets out dimensions and axes that demonstrate the complexity of the concept. The dimensions are listed as being emotional, social, cultural, spatial, temporal, physical, spiritual, moral/ethical, political, and legal (Sumsion & Wong, 2011 Appendix 1), with the axes listed as categorization, resistance and desire, and performativity (Sumsion & Wong, 2011, pp. 33-35). Even this brief recitation is valuable in demonstrating the complexity inherent within the concept of belonging⁹.

The implications of belonging

The way that belonging is interpreted in ECE practice has many implications for children. Tillett and Wong (2018) state,

a sense of belonging is linked to children's emerging sense of identity, to their cognitive and emotional development and to psychological health (p. 37).

For many children, entry into early childhood is their first regular contact with diversity (Stratigos, 2016; Stratigos et al., 2014), as well as being the place where children start to develop understandings of the default groups that they do, and do not, belong to (Stratigos, 2016). These recognitions lead to others: that "belonging is linked to how children come to know themselves as well as respond to others" (Stratigos, 2016, p. 269).

These significant implications mean that belonging will always need careful critical scrutiny, including understandings of whether conceptions of belonging generate rich and culturally diverse understandings. Where educators are able to underpin their

⁹ Sumsion and Wong (2011) note that the development of their cartography is ongoing, with this version representing an initial step.

pedagogical practice with critical understandings of belonging, then they are able to consider children's rights regarding belonging, the creation of inclusive and respectful relationships with children, their families, and local communities, and identify opportunities to enhance outcomes for children, support social inclusion, and contribute to a more just society (Sumsion et al., 2018).

The converse is equally true; where educators do not develop an extended critical understanding, then relationships, social inclusion, and social justice can also be negatively impacted.

Unfolding belonging in the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE context

In recent research in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, teachers from five ECE settings took part in a two-year TLRI study analysing the role of early childhood education in strengthening belonging and identity for immigrant and refugee children (Sumsion et al., 2018, p. 343).

The TLRI final report (Mitchell et al., 2020) discussed how belonging was built in the participating centres using arts-based pedagogies, digital storytelling, sensory experiences, cultural artifacts, and place-based learning. Two theoretical framings were also identified as important. The first was whanaungatanga. Whanaungatanga has the word whānau, or family, as its base word, and implies a close connection or even sense of kinship, including relationships that are developing through shared experiences and working together. The concept of whanaungatanga with regards to belonging in ECE showed how ECE services could help build a sense of kinship with children and families (Mitchell et al., 2020). The second theoretical framing was participatory democracy. Children's ability to participate democratically in their ECE communities supported them to make a difference and contribute meaningfully. Through these experiences children's sense of belonging was strengthened (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Additional research has also presented the ritual of pōwhiri as a metaphor for the process of developing belonging, particularly bicultural belonging (Rameka and Mitchell, 2020, p. 2). Pōwhiri is the ritual of encounter or welcome in te ao Māori. Describing pōwhiri, Rameka and Mitchell (2020) write:

Pōwhiri, whether physical or metaphorical is a practice of welcome, that involves sharing, hospitality, generosity, relationship development, acceptance, respect and celebration. It is a means of bringing people together, a demonstration of mana and whanaungatanga required to welcome people appropriately, with warmth and respect (p. 8).

The pōwhiri metaphor positions belonging as a process rather than an event, and identifies phases that people move through in order to develop belonging. These stages are aligned with the phases of the ritual of pōwhiri.

This recent research into belonging in the Aotearoa New Zealand setting is indicative of how belonging is being unpacked more as a concept, and how new theoretical framings can enhance practitioner understanding of what belonging is, and how to support it.

Empowerment

Empowerment was the first of the principles to be developed when *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) was written.

The theme of empowering children was established early in the curriculum development process and incorporates both the developmental and social/cultural contexts of the curriculum. This became a foundation Principle (Carr & May, 1996, p. 4).

In *Te Whāriki*, the concept of empowerment is established through the Māori concept of mana.

The concept of mana

An approximate, though simplistic translation for mana is “power” (Rameka et al., 2021, p. 6). However, mana is not a concept to be viewed in isolation. Rameka and Soutar (2019) explain:

Mana, at a basic level, can be translated as ‘authority, control, influence, prestige, power, psychic force, effectual, binding, authoritative . . . and take effect’ ... It also has a deeper meaning of spiritual power and authority ... Mana is a crucial aspect of Māori perceptions of the world and of the self, with almost all activities linked to upholding and enhancing mana. Understandings of mana are therefore critical to an understanding of the Māori person or child, and the Māori world (p. 5).

While “power” is a part of mana, the concept draws on more than ideas of power, acknowledging spiritual aspects, the relationship between the world and self, and a recognition that the majority of activities a person is involved in have a connection to mana. The explanations for mana also help demonstrate the relational nature of the concept, which draws on connections to places, people, events, things and even the realms of the past and present, as well as the spiritual and physical Rameka et al. (2021).

The phrase “mana-enhancing” is often used in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand to support the idea that all things a young child is involved with should support, grow, and enhance their personal mana. ECE services have a responsibility to assist children and their families to access the kinds of resources that will support them to direct their own lives (Rameka & Soutar, 2019).

Mana in Te Whāriki

The te reo Māori translation of each curriculum strand in *Te Whāriki* begins with the stem, mana, to signal that each strand is a source of strength for sustaining children’s lifelong learning journeys (Lee et al., 2013). The names of the curriculum strands, with the mana stem, are:

- Wellbeing – mana atua
- Belonging – mana whenua
- Contribution – mana tangata
- Communication – mana reo
- Exploration – mana aotūroa

The Māori rendering of each curriculum strand is an affirmation of the role that mana plays in guiding and supporting children in different ways crucial to their learning.

Koingo and Reedy (2019) elaborate:

Te Whāriki teaches us how to respect ourselves and ultimately to respect others. It aims to ensure that children are empowered in every way possible, particularly in the development of their mana. They are 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 build their own destiny (p. 39).

Implications of empowerment

The word empowerment exists beyond *Te Whāriki*. It has the meaning of drawing out and demonstrating a person's potential power. Rather poetically, Anme (2016) writes of people being born with splendid abilities and magnificent strengths, with empowerment being what draws out this potential "in the same way that spring water flows steadily out of a natural fountain" (p. 1)

Canning (2020) endorses the approach of empowerment being an enabling process more than something that is achieved, noting the importance of a child's support network where self-belief, confidence, and competence are nurtured. The same author notes that empowerment is an individual journey, and "not everyone may feel empowered at the same time or take the same route to finding a sense of empowerment" (Canning, 2020, p. 27).

Some scholars have taken issue with the term empowerment itself, noting that the word itself suggests that power is a kind of property, something that the teacher has and can give to students (Gore, 1992). "To empower suggests that power can be given, provided, controlled, held, conferred, taken away" (Gore, 1992, p. 57).

The intent of empowerment is compromised in contexts where the kind of power children have access to is controlled and managed by teachers. The use of the concept of *mana*, instead of empowerment, not only embraces the bicultural commitment of *Te Whāriki*, but also moves away from the idea of empowerment as a kind of property to be bestowed.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have set out the critical inquiry framework that was used in this study. While framed through the theory of Freire this framework also paid close attention to the ECE context of Aotearoa New Zealand, and was written with the young child in mind.

My main argument has focused on connecting current pedagogical practices in the ECE sector with the elements of the critical inquiry framework, in order to show how current practice can be extended and framed to support critical pedagogy learning. I have also argued for the use of the "critical landscape" metaphor to explain and situate

the space where critical pedagogy work occurs. The Aotearoa New Zealand context was also considered, particularly regarding the concepts of belonging and empowerment.

The next chapter discusses the research design and methods.

Chapter Four: Research design and methods

Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the research design and methods of this study. This chapter focuses on the methodology that underpins the data collection and analysis, including ethical considerations. After the restatement of the research questions, the research paradigm of critical theory, and methodologies of action research and case study will be explained. Thereafter, the research methods and ethics that were used will be discussed. Lastly, the use of thematic analysis, and checks for trustworthiness are outlined.

The focus of this study is to theorise the critical pedagogy practices of an early childhood centre (“the kindergarten”), as expressed through two research questions:

1. How might teachers enact critical pedagogy in an early childhood education setting with young children in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2. How can critical pedagogy support the belonging and empowerment of young children?

This focus builds on the premise discussed in the introduction, that a rigorous critical theory is both necessary and valuable for teachers and young children, in building engaged, critical citizens, and in valuing the right of each of us to become fully human.

Critical theory

This research takes place within the paradigm of critical theory (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 77; Creswell, 2013). Critical theory focuses on “empowering people to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (citing Fay, in Creswell, 2013, p. 30). As an interpretivist paradigm, critical theory strives to understand the world through its actors (Cohen et al., 2011), or as Cotuc might say, through “the acts of each one of us” (cited in Dayton & Rogoff, 2013, p. 109). In this study, those “actors” are the four case study teachers, Jacqui, Nilma, Tina, and Olivia, and the twenty-three children of the kindergarten who chose to participate in the research activities. The teachers, as participants, are discussed further in chapter five of this thesis.

Critical theory takes the ontological position that reality is rooted in struggles regarding power and identity, and that oppression exists, based on race/ethnicity, gender, class, mental capacity, or sexual preference (Cresswell, 2013). The epistemological perspective of critical theory therefore focuses on knowing that reality through studying social structures, and themes of power, oppression, freedom, and control. A key feature of this epistemology is the belief that reality can be changed “by empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (Cresswell, 2013, p. 30).

From an axiological perspective, diversity is not only valued but emphasised, with multiple perspectives being actively sought (Cresswell, 2013). The valuing of multiple perspectives is particularly important for an early childhood setting that not only has a large roll of immigrant/first generation citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand, but also prioritises the teaching of a bicultural curriculum.

Critical theory is the appropriate paradigm for this study. The focus is on empowering teachers and children to transcend the constraints they encounter in their lives. This is achieved through a close examination of their respective worlds, including teachers examining their own practice

(Cresswell, 2013), as teachers pursue increased equity and democracy in their early childhood classrooms with children.

I introduced the team to the concept of critical pedagogy, and supported the team to make connections between critical pedagogy theory and their teaching practice.

A key focus here is the uncovering of the generative themes at work in children’s lives, accompanied by the investigation of those themes (Cohen et al., 2011). Generative themes identified and explored by these teachers include:

- an exploration of critical dialogue with young children (Jacqui).
- exploration of multiple perspectives about ocean ecology (Nilma),
- the equitable transformation of power relationships in small group settings (Tina), and

- the envisioning of new possibilities for the local community and country (Olivia).

In all of these cases, the particular methodological positions centred on changes in thinking, on supporting children to work in action-oriented groups, and helping to make visible with children the conditions of their existence (Cresswell, 2013).

The goal of the study is to identify different forms of social theorising and social action, as teachers support children to comprehend and even transform through practice the social relations that make up their community (Cresswell, 2013).

This study is qualitative. The emphasis is on studying critical pedagogy as it unfolds through the social phenomena (Freebody, 2003) of the ECE setting, namely, the kindergarten. This is a study concerned with understanding the subtlety and nuance of unfolding interactions, one that respects people's knowledge about their own situations, including their ability to understand and address the issues that face them and their communities (Piggot-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008). The adoption of a qualitative position is particularly important in a study that seeks to investigate the value-laden, subjective world of the critical landscape.

Action research as methodology

Action research is described as "a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives" (Stringer, 2014, p. 1). Action research is typically conducted with those within the community being researched, rather than by external researchers (Hinchey, 2008; Kemmis et al, 2014). A key aspect of action research is that it is the participants themselves that seek change through the action research process (Kemmis et al, 2014). In this study, the participants are the teachers.

Action research as focused on improvement

The action research process seeks improvement, whether in practice or understanding, through systematic inquiry, which includes the gathering of information, analysis, and reflection (Hinchey, 2008). The "improvement" sought in this study is one of understanding how critical pedagogy can be implemented with young children. An emphasis is on understanding the teaching approaches the teachers might draw on to support critical pedagogy teaching and learning, understanding the responses of

children to this work, and understanding the way the teachers use language and interaction within a critical pedagogy framework.

Action research aims to improve practice within and for a particular context by narrowing the theory-practice gap. Action research derives knowledge from concrete action and experience, where theory develops from practice, and practice is informed by theory, thus narrowing the gap between theory and practice (Piggot-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008). All the research unfolds within a real-world context (McAteer, 2013) that brings relevance for other teachers also interested in critical pedagogy work. Just as action research is situated within experiential practice, it is also situated within the context of the participants' organisation. In this case, that organisation is the kindergarten. Working in this way provides a space for teachers to generate local knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) through developmental work and transformative practice. In this study, my understanding of critical pedagogy in early childhood education was greatly informed by seeing four different approaches to critical pedagogy implemented, in real time, by real teachers, in a real ECE setting.

Action research as cyclical

Action research is frequently referred to as cyclical (Hinchey, 2008). Kemmis et al (2014) describe the action research process as “a spiral of cycles” (p. 112) where the participant teachers plan intentional action, carry out action, reflect on the action, then replan in order to act again — and so on, and so on. The cycles of action research ideally lead to continual improvement. While the same authors make the point that research does not always strictly follow this spiral pattern, they emphasise the importance of doing so as much as possible. It is from the action research cycles that practice is enhanced through trying out practices and ideas, observing the results, evaluating these results through reflection, then replanning based on the previous reflective evaluation. The process of developmental, collaborative change also has the supports the narrowing of the gap between theory and practice, as teachers and researchers together work out how to implement written theory into educational settings (Piggot-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008).

This study used the look-think-act model proposed by Stringer (2014). Look-think-act is a “basic action research routine” (Stringer, 2014, p. 8), which sees teachers and

researchers work through a specified issue or problem. In the “look” phase, relevant information is gathered, including a description of the situation. In the “think” phase, exploration and analysis takes place, including theorising about the problem (Stringer, 2014). In the “act” phase, a course of action is undertaken and implemented, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of the actions undertaken (Stringer, 2014). This model was selected due to its compatibility with the previously observed approach of the participant teachers to implementing inquiry work in general. As intentional teachers, a look-think-act approach was already in use.

Within this research, one approximate rotation of the look-think-act model constituted one cycle. The cycles themselves are set out at the start of each teacher’s case study chapter to show the progression of each teacher’s inquiry. However, the table below sets out the four separate inquiries in relation to the look-think-act model to show the relationship of the inquiries to action research.

Table 1: Action research cycles through the "look-think-feel" model

Cycles	Model	Jacqui	Nilma*	Tina	Olivia
Cycle 1: Planning	<u>Look</u>	Looking at my practice through a critical lens			
	<u>Think</u>	What will my critical pedagogy inquiry be?			
	<u>Act</u>	Teachers either decided on a critical pedagogy inquiry (Tina, Olivia) or one emerged from their work (Jacqui, Nilma)			
Cycle 2: Implementing and exploring	<u>Look</u>	Looking at critical dialogue with young children	Looking at possibilities for cleaning the ocean	Looking at practice through an equitable participation lens	Looking at possibilities for the future of the community
	<u>Think</u>	What will this dialogue look like? How can it be implemented?	How will we clean the ocean? How will we think about the ocean? What cultural discourses can we use?	How can I create opportunities for engagement? How can I listen deeply to children no matter how they communicate?	How can I support children to realise the possible futures they are imagining?

	<u>Act</u>	Exploring critical dialogue through Godly Play	Exploring through model-making; exploring bicultural discourses	Exploring equitable participation through group work (mural; friendship seat)	Taking action on children's identified dreams (collection project, birthday party, under the bridge, Chinese Barbie)
Cycle 3: Deepening the inquiry	<u>Look</u>	The children struggled with the question of "Who is my neighbour?"		How can I help the children see this question from different perspectives?	How can we deepen our investigation and actions?
	<u>Think</u>	How to explore this?		Designed activity using a video clip	How can we make a Chinese Barbie?
	<u>Act</u>	Revisited previous learning		Worked with children to unpack equitable participation	Making/reimagining a Barbie as Chinese; children writing to the toy company about their findings

*Nilma carried out two action research cycles, not three.

Action research was used in the work of each teacher to propel the inquiry forward.

The use of "think" and "act" features of the model ensured that teachers were acting intentionally, and not carrying out action for the sake of action.

Action research as collaborative and democratising

Action research also supports the collaborative nature of this study (Cohen et al., 2011), with the four participant teachers working to research their own practice, while I worked as the researcher. We worked collectively on the overall approach to critical pedagogy in the kindergarten, and also in pairs to enable each teacher to explore a different aspect of practice of importance to them. Action research does not mean that all the teachers needed to do the same thing (Cohen et al., 2011). Accordingly, each teacher was able to theorise about their own practice and values, while also testing their theories in their teaching practice (Cohen et al., 2011).

Teachers contributed to the design of the research in terms of setting their own inquiry topics. The pace of that inquiry, and the way the teacher unpacked that inquiry with young children, was also at their discretion. The voices of the teachers feature most strongly in the case study chapters, where the findings are related as stories told

through their dialogue and their teaching. This approach creates multiple perspectives on critical pedagogy.

Regarding my role, I designed the research structure, supported the teachers during the action research cycles, and conducted the analysis and interpretation of the data. I often discussed what I believed I was seeing with teachers, and regularly checked back with them to ensure I had interpreted their work in a way that was consistent with their own thinking. I also recorded and transcribed the data (Cohen et al., 2011), which was primarily collected through video and audio recordings. I kept track of our movement through the action research cycles (Cohen et al., 2011), and ensured ethical procedures were followed.

Conducting research with teacher participants, within the organisation they worked in (the kindergarten), also supports the acknowledgement of multiple perspectives within the research (Piggot-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008). These multiple perspectives were reflected through the input of the participants as teacher researchers as well as myself as the researcher.

The collaborative nature of this approach also meant that action research was both democratic, and democratising (McAteer, 2013), in the sense of creating a space for teachers to be positioned within the research as authorities on their context and on teaching. As Miskovic and Hoop (2006) state:

... where trained researchers and community stakeholders collaborate in all phases of research, the process becomes democratized, done “with the community, not to it (p. 270).

Cohen et al. (2011) explain that in ceding power to participants through democratic participation, action research is positioned as an empowering process. Democratic practice is hugely important to the kindergarten teaching team, where the teachers actively seek authentic participation with children and their families. Knowing this about the team, I was similarly invested in having a research approach that afforded the same kind of democratic opportunities to the teachers so that the research was done with them, not to them.

Action research as critical participatory action research

The approach used in this study is critical participatory action research (Kemmis et al, 2014). This action research approach embodies all of the elements of action research previously mentioned, but takes one crucial position regarding participation. The assumption in this approach is that participants reject the notion of being impartial, objective observers. Instead, they proactively claim the position of being actively involved as participants that interrogate the conduct and consequences of their practices, the conditions of their practices, and the equity of those practices (Kemmis et al, 2014). As the authors write, “far from being ‘disinterested’, participants are profoundly interested in their practices” (p. 6), including understanding how those practices affect others, and whether those practices are fair. This constant critical involvement leads participants to interrogate their practices through a critical lens as part of the research process.

In critical participatory action research, the aim is to explore social realities in order to discover whether social or educational practices have such untoward consequences. It does so by opening communicative space ... in which people can reflect together on the character, conduct and consequences of their practices. What is to be transformed in critical participatory action research is not only activities and their immediate outcomes ... but the social formation in which the practice occurs — the discourses ... that orient and inform it, the things that are done ... and the patterns of social relationships between those involved and affected. (Kemmis et al, 2014, p. 16).

Teachers adopted this kind of criticality through their reflections.

The challenges of implementing a critical participatory action research approach

Despite the many ways that critical participatory action research supports the work of this study, its implementation did pose some challenges.

There can be a perceived power imbalance between a researcher and teacher participants. Potentially this was a barrier to us working openly together. I wanted the teachers to tell me if they thought an aspect of the research was not working, to suggest improvements and to make recommendations.

In practice, my concerns about a potential power imbalance did not yield any major problems. Throughout work on the TLRI named in the introductory chapter of this study, the participant teachers and I had become accustomed to each other in researcher/teacher-researcher roles. We also had developed warm reciprocal friendships that supported our ability to work effectively together, due to shared understandings of our roles: me as the researcher, and the teachers as the teaching experts. We often reflected together, where my main role was to listen and ask the occasional question. I was also mindful of the teachers' time, and checked back with them regularly about how the research was going from their perspective.

A second point that helped was the teachers' prior experiences as teacher-researchers, having worked recently on the previously mentioned TLRI project. However, even with that history, of which I had been a part, I did not want to take their collaboration for granted. The teachers' experiences with research might have helped in offsetting some of the power imbalance that might have been perceived between us, but I also had to be vigilant in checking back with them about each step in the research, and in ensuring they were comfortable and happy with how the study was proceeding. This aspect required constant maintenance throughout the time of data collection, and beyond. I made a point of returning at regular intervals to touch base with the teachers and let them know how my write up was proceeding.

I also acknowledge that the nature of a doctorate, which is the work of one person, is at odds with the goal of action research, which is to work and theorise together. The teachers and I discussed this aspect during a preparatory stage of the study, and decided we would write together after my thesis was completed. The plan was for each teacher to select something she wanted to write about from the data she generated, to reflect her role as partner, and to provide the opportunity for published work that would bear our names, and not just mine. One such article has already been written, with more planned (Kahuroa et al., 2021). Within the study itself, teachers were invited to share their teaching philosophy. For those teachers who elected to do so, these philosophies were located at the start of their case study chapter.

Critical pedagogy and action research

McAteer (2013) describes action research as “a methodology, a way of understanding and generating knowledge about the complexities of practice” (p. 2). It is this generative approach, focused on understanding and working with the complexities of the classroom, that makes action research a good fit for this study, as critical pedagogy (the critical theory approach underpinning this study), itself aims to unfold the complexities of the world with its participants (Kincheloe, 2008b).

There are compatibilities between critical pedagogy and action research, particularly participatory action research. This compatibility is not coincidental. As Wamba (2011) notes,

Both critical pedagogy and action research grew out of a critique of traditional empirical research and traditional pedagogy. They share common values including community, collaboration, reflexivity, dialogue, critique, risk taking, and advocating for change (p. 173).

Wamba is not alone in making this observation, with other authors drawing similar conclusions that likewise identify similar commonalities between the two approaches (Chapman, 2019; McAteer, 2013; Miskovic & Hoop, 2006).

There are also existing precedents where research embraced these compatibilities and used participatory action research to explore critical pedagogy in a variety of contexts (Chapman, 2019; Miskovic & Hoop, 2006; Price & Mencke, 2013; Wamba, 2011). Four research studies are recounted here to illustrate how participatory action research and critical pedagogy can work together.

Chapman (2019) was a doctoral supervisor and instructor based in Canada working at the postgraduate level. He taught a doctoral-level field research course on implementing a critical pedagogy approach to participatory action research in field research. Chapman highlights the potential of the two approaches to work together, with particular emphasis placed on discussing theoretical compatibilities.

Miskovic and Hoop (2006), write from the United States context, working with an urban university’s research centre and its community partners, in this case, youth outreach programmes. The results were mixed, and highlighted the difficulty of engaging youth (in this case around 14 years on average) as coresearchers.

Price and Mencke (2013) write from the United States context. They report on the Leadership Development and Transitions Camp, which is run for Native American teenagers aged 13-17 years. A critical pedagogy/participatory action research approach helped the camp's leaders to work with the native community in designing a local, relevant curriculum. The approach resulted in a long-standing relationship with the native community, and increased attendance at school.

Wamba (2011), writing from the United States context, was a professor in a post-graduate course for school administrators. He worked on implementing a critical pedagogy curriculum in his class, and used participatory action research to study the process he and the class went through.

One of the strengths of action research, supported by these examples, is its ability to draw together practice and theory, viewing these as inextricable connections, and as participating in a continual conversational relationship (McAteer, 2013). This practice-theory relationship is crucial to this study, which aims to understand the implementation of a highly conceptual body of theory into the teaching and learning experiences of the kindergarten.

This kind of adaptation is far from seamless. It requires reflective attention in order to realise teaching practice that is the literal "theorising of practice in context" (McAteer, 2013, p. 3). Action research involves teachers theorising about their own practices and values, testing their own assumptions in real life teaching spaces, and critically analysing their work (Cohen et al., 2011). Going through this process provides a pathway for teachers to negotiate the adaptation of critical pedagogy into their ECE teaching space.

The use of case study in this thesis

While all four teachers in this study participated in this study, their pursuit of individual inquiries resulted in four different stories about critical pedagogy. A case study approach has been employed to build four different but connected pictures of critical pedagogy teaching with young children by following four teachers (Jacqui, Nilma, Tina and Olivia) who work in the same kindergarten. In this study, the work of the teachers

forms four case studies mentioned in the title of this thesis, while the kindergarten itself is the setting.

Case study sits inside the action research approach, and is primarily to both focus on the work of each teacher, and to also allow cross-case analysis. Case study theory will be discussed next, with relation to this study.

Case study theory

Case studies have been utilised as a research method in many disciplines, such as counselling, law, anthropology, medicine and education, and within these disciplines a range of data gathering methods have been used (Cohen et al., 2011). As Stake (1995) identifies, a case is a functioning specific; it has working parts and researchers choose to study the case for a variety of reasons.

Case study supports extensive investigation of a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The phenomenon here is critical pedagogy in an early childhood setting, as expressed through the lens of each teacher's practice in the real world context of the kindergarten where they work.

This case study deals with a technically distinctive situation with multiple variables of interest (Yin, 2018). The case study teachers work in a busy kindergarten. They have a variety of responsibilities in addition to the research project. Teacher interactions with children through a critical pedagogy lens form of the basis of this research. These interactions vary from child to child, while also being impacted a teacher or child's frame of mind that day, and the general circumstances and happenings within the kindergarten itself.

Framing this case study is the prior development of theoretical propositions (Yin, 2018), which include the theory being examined, critical pedagogy, but also the methodology for examination, an action research framework. The action research framework itself guided selection and timeframes for data collection, and analysis.

The "case"

Yin (2018) states that two different steps need to be considered in identifying the case for study: defining the case, and bounding the case, or defining the boundaries of a case.

The cases in this research are defined as each of the four teacher-researchers participating in the study, thus making this an instance of multiple cases. The framing of their participation is their implementation of a critical pedagogy curriculum, occurring through their teaching interactions with children at their kindergarten.

The boundaries of the case studies are determined by two factors. The first is geography. The location of all four case studies is confined to the one kindergarten.

The second factor creating a boundary relates to time. I had a limited amount of time to gather data the centre, about four months or two kindergarten terms. The time limitation was necessary in order to work with the kindergarten's schedule. Table 1 (below) sets out each of the dates I recorded data at the kindergarten between teachers and children, and states which teachers were recorded on each occasion. This data remains securely labelled and stored in the database for this study.

Table 2: Dates of data collection with teachers at the kindergarten

Date	Teacher(s)
3 May	Jacqui, Nilma, Olivia, Tina
7 May	Jacqui, Olivia
14 May	Nilma, Olivia, Tina
7 June	Jacqui, Olivia
13 June	Jacqui, Tina
14 June	Olivia
21 June	Tina
3 July	Olivia,
15 July	Olivia
2 August	Olivia, Tina
13 August	Jacqui
22 August	Olivia, Tina
23 August	Nilma, Tina
27 August	Olivia, Jacqui, Nilma
28 August	Tina
6 September	Jacqui
10 September	Jacqui, Nilma
17 September	Jacqui, Nilma, Tina
24 September	Olivia, Jacqui, Tina
25 September	Nilma

The table shows the containment of the data collection within the defined time period of four months. While data was collected regularly during this period, no data for this study was collected outside of this time.

The advantages of case study for this research

Case studies recognise the complexity of social truths, being able to represent the complexity of discrepancy or conflict, and even provide some support to alternative interpretations of the data (Cohen et al., 2011). Case study also typically contains data descriptive and rich enough to allow for individual reinterpretation, or at least, an individual reader's interpretation (Cohen et al., 2011). This is a significant benefit given the complexity and diversity of educational environments, and readers of the study, whose purposes and uses for the data may differ from those employed here (Cohen et al., 2011).

Another benefit is the orientation of case study to taking action, as case study begins in an environment of action, and continues that way, feeding forward to staff development, individual teacher use, institutional feedback, even educational policy – depending on the study (Cohen et al., 2011). Further, case study data is presented in a more accessible format than other kinds of research report (Cohen et al., 2011). This includes more accessible language, with the subsequent capability of serving different audiences, potentially making the research process itself accessible to readers. Cohen et al (2011) raise the point that case study could therefore contribute towards the democratisation of decision making, and even knowledge itself, and at their best, allow readers to determine the implications of the case study for themselves.

These benefits were desired in this study as I aimed to write the teacher stories in chapters as accounts or “stories” of sorts, to increase their accessibility to other teachers by demonstrating what is possible, with a wealth of detail that would be illustrative for those reading the study. Such an approach is also consistent with the desire of prominent critical pedagogues to avoid scripted, a priori methods, devoid of context (Giroux, 2009a; Macedo, 2005).

The role of the case study researcher

Stake (1995) discusses the different roles that a case study researcher can play, with varying kinds of emphasis according to the researcher. These researcher roles can include that of teacher, advocate, evaluator, biographer, and interpreter (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995), notes that “of all the roles, the role of interpreter, and gatherer of interpretations, is central” (p. 99).

Stake notes that when he writes a case study he makes himself visible in the telling. He writes:

It is always important for me to make myself visible to the reader so as to establish the interactivity between researcher and phenomena. I try to provide lots of incontestable description but still remind that these views are my views (Stake, 1995, pp. 140, in the case notes).

I am present in this, my research study, primarily as the interpreter of the data. During the data collection period, I had more of a biographer role as I quietly stood back and captured the critical pedagogy teaching and learning episodes.

Selection of the cases

Stake points out that “case study is not sampling research” (Stake, 1995, p. 4). The point of studying a case is not to understand other cases, but rather to understand this one case (Stake, 1995). Stake’s (1995) primary criterion is to maximise what we can learn, and given that time and access to field locations are usually limited, he accordingly recommends selecting cases which are both accessible and hospitable.

The teachers at the kindergarten met all these requirements. Access to the location where the teachers worked was gained through the prior TLRI research. The time I had spent in the kindergarten during this prior research, and in preparation for this research, had helped me, the teachers, the children, and the parents become used to each other. I had become “part of the furniture” (Clarkin-Phillips, 2016, p. 121).

I approached each teacher individually to discuss their participation in this study and all agreed. Although there are five teachers at the kindergarten, only four participated in the case study as the fifth teacher had only recently started working there. We agreed

that her time would be better spent getting to know the children and their families rather than participating in the study at that point.

Generalisation – a pathway to analysis through case study

Stake notes that “case studies are undertaken to make the case understandable”, and this includes generalisation, the generally accepted pathway of analysis for case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). This approach comes with a necessary qualification:

Single cases are not as strong a base for generalizing to a population of cases as other research designs. But people can learn much that is general from single cases. They do that partly because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one in, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations (Stake, 1995, p. 85).

Stake’s (1995) description of generalisation bears more than a passing resemblance to working theories (Peters & Davis, 2012), which likewise are cumulative, come from our observations of the world¹⁰, and are subject to refinement as we continue to learn.

According to Stake (1995), researchers have two strategic ways to uncover new meanings: through direct interpretation of instances, and also through an aggregation of instances. The focus remains on the instance, “trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully – analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 75).

This process of interpretation is not about describing the world, or even describing the case itself in full: instead it is a sense-making journey to

understand certain observations of the case through paying close attention, and thinking deeply. This is a deeply subjective process, but as Stake (1995) continues, “I defend it because I know no better way to make sense of the complexities of my case” (p. 77).

¹⁰ In the case of working theories, these are typically built by our direct observation or experience of the world, rather than through the experience of someone else, like a researcher writing a case study.

Data gathering methods

The methods for gathering data are discussed in this section. This case study relies on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). Data is primarily collected through video and audio recordings, providing observational data collected through recording the teachers' interactions with children for unbroken periods of time. This primacy accords with Cohen et al (2011), who note that observation lies at the heart of many case studies.

While recorded observation is the primary form of data, there are multiple data samples for each teacher, captured regularly over a four-month period, showing (predominantly) unbroken periods of interaction. Such data builds complex, layered pictures of practice over time for each teacher.

The second largest source of data is reflective discussions with teachers, usually occurring after each video recorded observational period, but sometimes also recorded before, depending on the demands of the particular day. These discussions were audio recorded. Some additional data comes from photographs, usually of children's work, and copies of documentation prepared by the teachers to support their in-classroom work, such as learning stories.

Video data

Video data is crucial to a detailed case study collection (Cohen et al., 2011). Video captures non-verbal actions and interactions as well as verbal exchanges, and is an excellent medium for capturing evolving situations and interactions, including details an observer may miss (Cohen et al., 2011). The ability to view and review data supports research with young children.

Video footage of children's play interactions may be a particularly powerful catalyst for reflection as it enables unlimited repeated viewings to deepen understandings (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 398). The main benefit of video is the ability to review and check data. However, all visual media are not neutral; whether consciously or not they give messages, and are interpreted in different ways (Cohen et al., 2011).

Capturing video data

In this study, I recorded the majority of the video data live. I used a digital video camera that had a Bluetooth microphone that allowed sound, particularly dialogue by teachers and children, to be captured by the microphone and sent back to the receiver on the camera, without me having to be too close to the participants. This was a less obtrusive arrangement for both the children and teachers. The microphone, which attached to participants by way of a clip, was usually worn by the teacher and clipped to the front of her shirt. Occasionally the microphone was placed in the centre of the group, for example on a table the participants were seated around, in order to capture everyone's comments.

The microphone was not particularly large, approximately 7 cm in length and 1.5 cm in circumference. A small but bright LED light indicated when it was on. These factors are significant, because they meant the microphone was easily visible to children participating in the group. The microphone was never hidden, although over time the children became used to it and largely ignored it. At the start of the research I had discussed the operation of the microphone and video with the children, and continued to answer any questions as they arose, although these questions did subside over time.

I did not interact significantly with the teacher or children during filming, and apart from occasional glances at the camera (as if to confirm I was still there) the children largely ignored me during these times. Variations of this same process were repeated time after time, with each teacher, during the data collection period.

The process of arranging to collect data

The procedure for recording video material followed a similar process each time. The teachers and I identified when their next critical inquiry teaching would take place, and I would arrange with them to come on those days to film them carrying out the work. In this way, the selection of data to film was intentional and planned.

On arrival at the kindergarten, I would confirm the filming for that day with the teachers. Once I began filming a teacher at work on a particular activity, I would film from the start to finish of that episode. I would only pause the camera if the teacher needed to leave the activity to attend to something elsewhere in the kindergarten, or if

a child became distressed. I only turned the camera off once due to a child being distressed, and kept it off until he was settled again.

The activity sequences for each teacher were normally quite extended. As the research progressed I settled into the routine of filming one teacher during the morning session, and one during the afternoon session to avoid having to rush anyone. I would also leave the kindergarten for an hour in the middle of the day to give everyone a break, as I acknowledged it can be hard to have an observer continually on hand.

Each time I visited the kindergarten to collect data, I would also arrange the next session of data collection, based on where their individual critical inquiries were at, including the scheduling of particular activities they had designed to advance their inquiries.

Data collection could take place up to two days each week, but was usually just one day. There were also a few weeks where I did not collect data at all, for example, because the kindergarten was particularly busy that week, or on one occasion because I was doing a preliminary analysis of the data to gauge the progress of the different inquiries. No data was collected during the term breaks.

Audio material

I also audio recorded reflective discussions I had with the teachers. These recordings were normally made after the videoing of the teaching episodes, and was part of the action research cycle of reflectively evaluating an action that has been taken. The audio recordings were not interviews, and both the teacher and I contributed to these, unlike the teaching videos, which featured only the teacher and children. These audio discussions were ranged from a few minutes to fifteen minutes in duration, and were all transcribed. While the reflective phase of action research is often completed through written reflections, for this research audio recorded reflections were a more expedient way to respect the working lives of the teachers, while also capturing ideas and feedback in close temporal proximity to the actual activity.

Photographs

Photographs and were used here to support and supplement other sources of data and text (Cohen et al., 2011). The primary purpose of taking such photographs was to

capture images of children's work. Examples included in this study is the clay model depicting Aotearoa New Zealand's birthday party (Figure 5), and the ocean-cleaning robot (Figure 1). Pictures of this work are worth, as the old saying goes, a thousand words. There are 14 pictures in total.

While the video camera I used spontaneously captured still photographs as part of its normal operation, none of these are used in this study as most capture the images of children and teachers. The photos have been kept with the data as it has been helpful to review of these in order to understand the positions of people in a group, or identify participants. Only photos of children's work is shared, in accordance with ethical consents.

Documentation

Some additional planning documentation was also drawn on in this study. Planning documentation was always prepared by the teachers, and supported my contextual understanding of teachers' thinking, particularly in terms of how each inquiry was unfolding, and their thought processes around their work. Other documentation included the kindergarten's philosophy, and learning stories. Some of Olivia's work used learning stories to tell part of the ongoing narrative of her inquiry. This documentation was recorded as pdfs and stored digitally in the study database.

Data storage and labelling

Once each session of data collection finished, I checked the data, and then download it for labelling and secure storage in my electronic research database at the earliest opportunity. As soon as the data was securely stored I would wipe records from the camera to ensure the children and teacher's data was kept secure.

Each piece of data was given a unique identifier and stored in a secure database. While it is preferable for a case study to have its database accessible for independent review (Yin, 2018), this is not possible with video data of young children for ethical reasons (see ethics below). The unique identifier references are not used in the study itself because they reference data sources the reader does not have access too. However, the system does exist for the purposes of organisation and storage of data.

Ethics

This section will discuss the processes undertaken to secure consent from teachers as participants, parents and caregivers on behalf of children, and assent from children themselves. Ethical consent was gained from the Ethics Committee in the Division of Education, at the University of Waikato. The ethics documents prepared as part of that process are attached as appendices. The forms are comprised of the following:

- Appendix 1: General information sheet
- Appendix 2: Participant teacher information sheet
- Appendix 3: Participant teacher consent form
- Appendix 4: Parent information letter
- Appendix 5: Data collection consent form
- Appendix 6: Cantonese translation of parent consent form
- Appendix 7: Data release form

The ECE setting where the data was collected was also required to be known by a pseudonym. Accordingly, I refer to this setting as “the kindergarten” throughout this study.

Securing the teachers as participants in my study

The kindergarten agreed to participate in my study over a year before data collection commenced. I had discussed the possibility with Jacqui, the kaiwhakahaere of the kindergarten during a training meeting for the TLRI project on 14 March 2018. We continued to discuss my data collection during my visits to the kindergarten during the following year, as I assisted in collecting data for the TLRI project. This time also allowed me to form relationships with the other teachers in the kindergarten, and gauge their willingness to be involved in the doctoral study. These conversations occurred gradually over the course of 2018, and by the time 2019 started, the teachers were comfortable participating in my study. We had mutually agreed I would start data collection in May 2019, which was the start of Term 2 of the academic year.

Obtaining consent from teachers

Towards the end of Term 1, 2019 I discussed the formal consent process for my study with the four teachers, and they agreed verbally to participate. I gave them the a

general information sheet and teacher participant information sheets about the study (Appendices 1 and 2) and consent forms for becoming a teacher participant (Appendix 2) towards the end of term one, and these were returned prior to the study commencing at the start of Term 2. Although there was a fifth teacher at the kindergarten, she started work there at the same time I started data collection. I discussed the study with her so she knew what I was doing, but we mutually agreed that her focus should be on settling in to her new job.

The four teachers who consented to be involved were experienced teacher researchers, and at that point in time had participated previously in two TLRI research projects and a master's study. They were familiar with consent forms and had no particular concerns about my study that required discussion.

Because I was in a position of power as a researcher (Mutch, 2013), it was important to me that the teachers felt my respect for them and their work, and this was why I would spend downtime in the kindergarten as well after filming, helping out, chatting with the teachers and sharing a laugh. This additional time was in no way difficult as I felt at home in the kindergarten, and enjoyed these times as an opportunity to connect with as the teachers as peers and friends, outside of the research project.

The strength of the relationships with the teachers at the kindergarten underpinned this work. I had known the team for about a year before my data collection started, and this time had given us the opportunity to develop relationships of trust. It takes a lot of trust to let someone video your teaching work, week after week, for months. I am deeply appreciative to the kindergarten team for trusting me enough to let me do that.

Securing consent from parents and caregivers

In order to inform parents about my study, and seek consent for their children to participate, I obtained permission from Jacqui to attend one of the parent evenings, held towards the end of Term 1 on Thursday, 4 April 2019, about a week before the term ended. Again, due to the power researchers have (Mutch, 2013), it was important to me to be transparent, and for parents to have an opportunity to meet me directly and ask questions they might have. During the last quarter of the evening I gave a fifteen-minute presentation on my study, then answered questions from the parents, which were focused on the security of their children's data. The meeting was well-

attended, and parents were provided with a parent information letter (Appendix 4) and data collection consent form (Appendix 5). Most wanted to take this form away with them.

For the next week, I spent time at the kindergarten, meeting parents who had not attended the meeting and talking with them about the study, as well as following up with the parents who had been there. I continued to answer parent questions during this time, and this also gave parents a chance to get to know me. When the term recommenced on April 29th, I continued to follow up with parents, being as clear as I could that parents had no obligation to participate.

By the time data collection started on 3 May 2019, I had consent for 49 children at the kindergarten to participate, out of a roll of approximately 68. 23 children ended up participating in my study. Only three families refused participation completely. I made a list of who was able to participate which I kept on me during data collection to ensure only those I had consent for were filmed.

Olivia, one of the teachers participating in the study, mentioned the high proportion of Cantonese-speaking families, and suggested that getting the consent forms translated into Chinese would be really helpful for these families. I had the parent information letter and the data collection consent forms translated into Chinese (Appendix 6), and Olivia, who speaks Cantonese, approached these families directly on my behalf. Nine more consent forms were obtained from using translated documents.

Part of my ethical approval included making copies of all children's data available for the families of participant children. When data collection had finished, I prepared packets of information for each child who had participated. These contained a digital copy of their data, a learning story I had written setting out their child's participation, and a brief summary of observations I had made to date. The learning story contained video-captured photos of them participating during the study. None of these learning stories were used in my data analysis, they were for the child and their family, as a way of remembering their involvement in the study.

In December 2019, I joined the kindergarten's Christmas party, and personally gave families the packet containing their child's data, along with my thanks. At the same

time, parents signed a data release form (Appendix 7), agreeing to keep the data secure and not post any of it on the internet. This last part was a recognition that the data provided to families was not solely of their child. It contained other children and the teachers, whose privacy needed to be respected by keeping all data off social media.

Pseudonyms

In the consent form, parents had the option on the consent form they signed (Appendix 5) to nominate a pseudonym for themselves, their child, or both. Most parents opted to have their child known by their first name. In using children's first names it was acknowledged that by the time the research was written up, the children involved would have gone to school. Also, without the children's last names or photographs of their faces (which would not be included in the thesis), it would be difficult to identify a specific child. Two parents opted for pseudonyms, and selected the alternate names to be used for their children.

Additionally, in one of the inquiries one of the participant children named his older sister as part of his "dream": He wanted to create a Barbie doll that looked like her. The sister did not attend the kindergarten or participate in any of the group work so consent was not sought. However, since she is referred to during the research, a pseudonym is used instead of her name to protect her identity.

Gaining assent from children

Prior to data collection, I had spent time in the kindergarten playing with the children, getting to know them, and giving them an opportunity to get used to me as well. Once data collection started, I made sure to have time in each visit to spend with the children, with no data collection attached, so we could just enjoy having fun together¹¹. Over time I made a number of young friends who would look forward to me finishing my work so I could come and play with them.

During the first few sessions of data collection, either the teacher or I would explain that I was there to do work for my school, and would video some of their activities with their teacher. I also explained how the recording equipment worked a

¹¹ This play time always took place in the kindergarten and in the vicinity of the teachers. I never had sole supervision of children.

few times as the children were very interested in that. These conversations stopped after a few months as children's questions were answered, and they became used to me being in the kindergarten.

Children were deemed to have given their consent if they joined an activity where data was being collected. I was always open about the filming process and never hid myself from the children, although as filming got underway I stood back to avoid getting in anyone's way. The children generally liked the camera, occasionally playing to it or staring at it. Children who wished to leave or finish their participation in an activity could do so at any time, and did. There was only one child who did not want to participate in filmed activities at kindergarten; his family had refused consent on his behalf.

Data Analysis

This study uses thematic analysis, which builds its thematic categories from data (Mutch, 2013). Themes here are identified as broad units of information, containing several codes, and amalgamated to form a common idea – the theme (Mutch, 2013).

The data in this study was analysed through the transcripts of the teaching and learning episodes. No specific categories were determined in advance. Instead I had an area of interest, which was the implementation of critical pedagogy. When something of interest arose in the data it was assigned a colour, with that colour remaining consistent for all the transcripts.

When all of the transcripts had been coded, the highlighted responses were grouped by colour into tables. Each table was then analysed to find the wording of that particular theme. In some instances, themes were broken down further into sub groups. This was particularly true for the data related to critical dialogue, which had many different kinds of categories, and was best expressed through different points under a generalised theme heading.

Data reduction

This study depended on recording the critical pedagogy work that took place between teachers and children. In the early stages of the data collection process it became apparent that without careful attention, I would end up with a vast amount of data that I would be unable to process as a sole researcher.

In order to address this problem, I focused on each teacher's inquiry question as the basis for this deciding what to record, or what to omit. I restricted data collection by asking each teacher when they would next be working on their inquiry topic, then coming back at that time to record just that work. This approach not only resulted in less data, but also ensured that the data collected was part of the chronological narrative for that teacher's inquiry. Despite less data being collected, the transcriptions of that data were still quite lengthy. This next section explains how these transcriptions were managed.

For the transcriptions of the data collected, the dialogue selected for use in the teacher's case depended on its relevance to the teacher's inquiry topic, and to the critical framework itself. This happened with Jacqui's work in the second episode of "the man who got half dead on the road". The majority of that twenty-minute discussion is recorded in Jacqui's chapter, with the only omissions being small sections of filler conversation that were not relevant to the topic. Similarly, the majority of the transcriptions in the other teachers' work shows the majority of the discussion that took place. Things that were omitted from the transcripts were non-relevant communication, such as teachers checking with other teachers, interruptions, and casual conversation that had no perceived relevance to the teacher's inquiry or to critical pedagogy work.

The length of the transcriptions was also reduced because the relevance of the activity to the teacher's inquiry typically lay in the discussion rather than the activity. Therefore, only the discussion would be transcribed even though the entire episode, consisting of discussion and activity, would be filmed. Tina's work on Papatūānuku in the first part of her inquiry was an example of this, where the interest was in what the group was discussing and sharing, and not so much in them actually using the green blocks to build a prototype of the maunga Ōhūiarangi.

The reason I continued to film the activity, even though it was mostly the discussion section used, was because I did not know in advance what could be relevant in that data so would film the whole episode. It was only after all the data was collected that the discussion components were identified as the most relevant to the teachers' inquiries, and transcribed accordingly. The rationale of filming all parts of a teacher's

activity did prove relevant in one instance: with Derek's work as project manager during Tina's inquiry to hear all voices. During the discussion phase Tina had supported Derek's gestural conversation; during the activity phase this support of his gestural conversation was extended to include Derek's peers as well, thus showing the relevance of the activity, as well as the discussion, to Tina's inquiry question.

Data saturation

During data collection, particularly towards the end, I found I was recording similar instances of data. This realisation showed me that the data was becoming saturated as I was not getting much in the way of new information (Saunders et al., 2018). This happened with Jacqui, who conducted two additional episodes of Godly Play that were not recounted in detail. This also happened with Nilma, who conducted several re-enactments of *Timo and the Kingfish*. Due to their similarities with previous episodes of data, these similar instances were not transcribed, and only mentioned briefly in the relevant teacher's case study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study is supported through the use of member checks, the positionality of the researcher, and thick, rich descriptions of the data (Holley & Harris, 2019; Mutch, 2013).

Member checks

Member checks were used regularly throughout the research to share data and preliminary interpretations with the case study teachers. These member checks with participants provided opportunities to assess whether my thinking was plausible and, whether my analysis of the teachers' work accurately represented their reality (Holley & Harris, 2019; Mutch, 2013).

There were four formal member checks during the study.

Sharing of preliminary data after cycle 1 of data collection (30 May, 2019)

I met with the teachers and shared video clips of the data, along with a preliminary analysis of that data. We discussed the data, and the teachers shared their thoughts. The teachers were unable to commit to another session like this due to constraints on

their time. However, this first session was helpful to me in terms of understanding more about their thinking processes regarding the data and study.

From this session I saw that the teachers were able to clearly articulate the reasons for their teaching decisions, and were able to give each other constructive, non-confrontational feedback. The teachers also gave detailed, specific observations of what they saw in the data. I took this into account in future discussions with them, particularly the regular, informal discussions conducted with each teacher after each activity. Informal member checks are explained further below.

Sharing of early analysis after cycle 2 (30 August, 2019)

As the teachers were unable to meet in person again, I prepared a short written document (2-3 pages) sharing my thinking, as well as observations made up to that point. The first page of this document included a diagrammatic model showing connections between the teaching observed, and critical pedagogy theory.

The teachers were interested in my analysis and did not add to it or correct it, but said they were using that analysis to understand more about the critical pedagogy approach. However, one specific piece of feedback provided at this time was that the diagrammatic model was hard to understand. I simplified my approach after this point, resulting in my abandonment of the model and instead developing the critical landscape metaphor.

Sharing of preliminary findings after the conclusion of data collection (12 December, 2019)

At the conclusion of the data collection period I prepared a first draft of each teacher's case study chapter. These chapters were printed and given to each teacher separately for review just before the Christmas break. Although I invited each teacher, separately, to review the work, and stated that I would be happy to correct, clarify or alter any data that they felt represented them inaccurately, no such corrections were received.

Data copies were also provided for the participant children and their families. I provided each of the children who had chosen to participate in the study with a learning story I had written, to document their participation. These stories included

observations of activities the children had participated in, and photos. They were not long, but intended to become part of children's record in the study, should they wish to review their participation in the future. No feedback was received from these stories.

Parents of the participant children were also provided with a summary of my preliminary findings, and copies of all videos where their child was a participant. Parents signed the data release form (Appendix 7) before the data was released. No specific feedback was received from this information, other than parents generally expressing they were glad to have this for their children to look back on.

Sharing of each teacher's case study chapter, in final draft form (January 2021)

There were significant redrafts of each teacher's case study chapter between December 2019 and January 2021. By January 2021 I was confident that each chapter had reached its final form. I sent these chapters to the four teachers and asked for specific feedback, including corrections.

I met with Tina in person to discuss her chapter, and she supplied several clarifications that were duly included. These clarifications were focused on elaborating the exact circumstances of how the activities used in her inquiry arose.

I corresponded with Olivia and Jacqui by email. Both provided clarifications and changes they wished to have made, which were also incorporated into their respective chapters. Olivia's changes were to her dialogue. Because she spoke English as a second language, she wished to "correct" some of her English. I supported her right to have her voice expressed as she wished, and made the corrections she requested. None of the corrections changed the substance of what she was saying. Jacqui's requested changes were minor and focused on elaboration of her reasons for making some of her decisions. Nilma acknowledged receipt of her chapter, but did not provide any clarifications.

In addition to the formal member checks, I consistently checked informally with each teacher after each instance of collecting data. These informal member checks us to share our preliminary observations of the work that had just been filmed. These conversations gave me confidence that I was interpreting the teachers' data in a way that was consistent with their thinking.

The dates for these checks coincide with the dates in Table 1.

Positionality of the researcher

The positionality of the researcher has also been shared in this study, in the introductory chapter, in order to make visible my assumptions, world-view biases that could affect the investigation (Mutch, 2013). Providing this information gives the reader a better understanding and interpretation of the findings I have related (Holley & Harris, 2019). I shared my positionality in the introduction, rather than here, so that a reader could know my assumptions and world-views from the outset, as part of framing the whole study.

Adequate engagement in data collection

Adequate engagement in data collection, with the aim of seeking data saturation, was another way that trustworthiness was supported (Holley & Harris, 2019; Mutch, 2013). By the time I reached the end of my four months of data collection, common themes were emerging from the data across the work of all four teachers, negative cases had been identified (instances of critical pedagogy work that fell flat), and I was observing multiple examples of similar practice over time. This last point meant that I was adding to existing themes and categories rather than creating new ones (Holley & Harris, 2019). These factors indicated that I had sufficient data.

Rich, thick descriptions

Trustworthiness was also supported through the use of rich, thick descriptions of the data, particularly in the case study chapters (Mutch, 2013). In particular, the dialogue of the children and teacher participants is shared in this study.

Wherever possible, the words of the participants themselves are used to show how the interactions unfolded, and how critical pedagogy was built through dialogue.

Additional detail is provided with detailed descriptions of the setting itself, particularly through the contextualising chapter setting out the context of the kindergarten in Chapter Five.

The purpose of providing such descriptions and information is to support the reader to identify similarities and differences between the context of this study and other contexts. This purpose was intended from the start of the study, which is why the

findings are related as illustrative chapters full of rich, thick contextualising description. This level of detail allows the reader to determine for themselves if the approach or findings could be transferred to different contexts (Mutch, 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter established the research design and methods. The paradigm of critical theory was discussed, while participatory action research was used to support the inquiry aspect of the study. Case study was established as the most appropriate way to illustrate context of the data.

The methods of the study were also discussed, in order to make clear how the data for the study was gathered, and what kind of data was relied on to write the case studies. Ethical considerations were discussed to show that the data of all participants was obtained with consent and assent, as appropriate. Data analysis was also discussed, in order to make clear how the findings of the study were reached. Data trustworthiness is explained to show that attention has been paid, in a qualitative context, in showing how the data was developed and evaluated.

Having established the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study, the next chapter sets out the context of the kindergarten.

Chapter Five: The Context Of The Kindergarten

Introduction

Chapter Five sets out the context of the kindergarten as a preface to the four case study chapters themselves. This discussion of context explains the philosophy of the kindergarten, its curricula and pedagogical influences, and unique aspects of its programme, to the extent that these features are present in the case studies.

This discussion of the kindergarten context explains the philosophy of the kindergarten, its curricula and pedagogical influences, and unique aspects of its programme, to the extent that these features are present in the case study chapters.

The kindergarten is a faith-based ECE setting that is located in a middle-class Auckland suburb, and has been operating since 1973. The kindergarten started its life as a playgroup in the local church hall before moving along with the attached church to the current site around 29 years ago (Jacqui, personal communication, July 3, 2019). Since then, it has grown to become a kindergarten that caters for both sessional and school-day attendance.

There are typically between 60-70 children on the roll at any one time, with children attending one of the three session times offered: the morning session (8.45 am- 12.00 pm), the afternoon session (12.30 pm – 3.30 pm) and the school day session (8.45 am – 3.30 pm). Data for this study has been collected from all sessions.

Many of the children at the kindergarten come from a multiplicity of ethnicities, as shown in the table 2.

Table 3: Ethnic group classifications at the kindergarten, as self-selected by families, mid-2019

Ethnic Group Classification	Number of children
Māori	1
Tongan	1
Cook Island Māori	1

Samoan	1
Southeast Asian	1
Indian	4
Chinese	24
Other Asian	8
Middle Eastern	1
African	1
Other Ethnicity	2
Other European	4
NZ European/Pākehā	18
Total	67

The dominant ethnic group in the centre is Chinese, making up approximately 61% of families. Children from NZ European/Pākehā families are the second largest group with the remainder of children coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. According to the kindergarten team, this data is representative of the mix of families that typically attend.

Within the case studies, which follow in Chapters Six to Nine, children are not identified as belonging to a particular culture, unless that identification is directly relevant to the analysis of the data. Examples include where a child was learning English as an additional language, impacting his ability to contribute in group settings (see Chapter Eight), or where children made observations about themselves as Chinese, while trying to create a Chinese Barbie doll for a peer (see Chapter Nine).

The teaching team

The journeys of four teachers are followed as they use a pedagogical approach based on the critical theory paradigm as a lens for both interpreting and taking social action in their early childhood setting (Cresswell, 2013). The pedagogical approach employed

here is the Freirean approach to critical pedagogy, which follows the critical theory interest in the pursuit of humanity's emancipation (Chapman, 2019).

The kindergarten has five full-time teachers, an office manager, and a teaching assistant who provides support during teaching sessions and with non-contact time¹². At the time of data collection, all five teachers were qualified and registered teachers under Aotearoa New Zealand's formal teacher registration body, the Education Council. Four of the teachers were participants in this study; Jacqui, Nilma, Tina, and Olivia. All four participant teachers wanted their data to speak for itself. In accordance with their wishes, limited personal information beyond the use of their first names is given.

The kindergarten has a policy of hiring teachers that reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of their community, and this applies to the current teachers. Two of the four case study teachers, Olivia and Nilma, speak English as an additional language. Their additional language capacity allows them to support some of the children they teach in that child's first language. This means they can also communicate more easily with parents and families who speak the same language.

The four teachers participating in this study have worked together for some years, with few changes to their team. Jacqui is the kaiwhakahaere (supervisor or centre manager) of the kindergarten, Olivia runs The Studio (explained later in this chapter), and Tina and Nilma are teachers.

A faith-owned and faith-based kindergarten

The kindergarten sits in the midst of a Christian ministry, which owns the surrounding land. The ministry owns the kindergarten's buildings and land, a counselling service, and other buildings for different congregations. The kindergarten is managed by a governance board which includes both church and kindergarten representatives. A similar operating structure is used for all other services located on this site (Jacqui, personal communication, July 3, 2019).

¹² Non-contact time is used for teachers to complete assessment and planning work in the office.

The financial relationship between the Christian ministry and the kindergarten is described as autonomous, but reciprocal. The kindergarten pays the Christian ministry rent for the building, but otherwise is financially separate. This means the kindergarten is community owned, and operated as a not-for profit ECE service (Jacqui, personal communication, July 3, 2019).

The kindergarten's faith-based approach supports Christian values and morals, rather than observing faith-specific elements of worship. Because of this approach, the kindergarten has a multi-denominational feel to it. Children from a variety of religions have attended the kindergarten, including a number from the Muslim faith. Where faith-based differences have existed or arisen, consultation between teachers and families has enabled respectful solutions to be found (Jacqui, personal communication, Jun 19, 2019).

The kindergarten as a learning environment

This section starts with a brief outline of the kindergarten's philosophy, then continues by referencing the different curricula influences that the kindergarten has drawn on to create its programme. This outline is followed by an overview of the kindergarten's approach to programme planning.

The kindergarten's philosophy values

All early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand are required by the Ministry of Education to have a philosophy statement (Ministry of Education, 2020). The purpose of such a philosophy is to share with stakeholders what is special about that ECE service, and what the service wants to achieve (Ministry of Education, 2020). A philosophy typically includes justification for the way teaching happens in that particular context, including drawing together the beliefs, ideals, practices and values that guiding practice (Gould & Matapo, 2016).

The kindergarten's philosophy is underpinned by six core values: respect, responsibility, collaboration, wonder, openness and beauty. These values, and the accompanying philosophy statement, which expresses the six values in paragraph form, were developed after extensive consultation with parents in 2008, with subsequent annual reviews (Jacqui, personal communication, June 7, 2019). To contextualise the

philosophical approach of the kindergarten, a brief overview of each of the six philosophy values is given here.

- Respect: respect for ourselves, for each other, for our environment, and for the work we are doing.
- Responsibility: responsibility for each other, fairness, and making our own decisions.
- Collaboration: working together for our common wellbeing.
- Wonder: thinking and speculating curiously, and being filled with admiration, amazement and awe.
- Openness: curiosity about new ideas and experiences, and being receptive to new things.
- Beauty: The accompanying statement for beauty encourages people to embrace the beauty of life in all its little, wonderful moments.

Beauty is an unusual choice for a philosophy statement, so I have elaborated a little more on this value than the others. The kindergarten is a beautiful environment. A row of bottles filled with coloured water reflects different shades of light around the room. Plants and visually engaging activities, known as provocations, engage the eyes as much as the hands and mind. Once while playing in the family corner I heard Tina ask a group of children who were just leaving the area to “make it beautiful” for the next group. The children returned, and tidied everything within moments. When I asked Tina about this, she explained it was part of the kindergarten’s commitment to respecting their resources, and to ensuring an area was ready for the next people who might want to play there.

Curriculum and pedagogy influences

While the kindergarten’s philosophy reflects its foregrounded values, there are three curriculum and pedagogy influences underlying that philosophy: *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017), Reggio Emilia, a pedagogy originating from Italy, and Enviroschools, an Aotearoa New Zealand education programme focused on caring for our natural environment and the Earth’s resources. These curricula and pedagogy influences are viewed by the teaching team as complementary to each other. The curriculum and philosophies have been carefully integrated into the kindergarten, over time, to ensure that the three can work together, within the context of the community, to support the holistic learning of young children.

Te Whāriki

Te Whāriki, as the national curriculum, impacts every area of life at the kindergarten. Planning documentation and learning stories reference *Te Whāriki*, and any additional pedagogy approaches that the team seeks to add have also been evaluated as compatible with the curriculum. The team also has a conscious, mindful commitment to bicultural practice. Māori ways of being, including the language, stories, imagery and concepts, are incorporated by each teacher into their work. This applies whether there are any children identifying as Māori at the kindergarten or not, as biculturalism is deemed important for families who have immigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand, to help them connect to this land.

Reggio Emilia

The Reggio philosophy foregrounds the idea of education as a

...shared experience in a democratic society and of schools as part of that society whose citizens take responsibility for all their children (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006, p. 2)

This pedagogy is a unique philosophy of practice and theory that comes from a very specific historical, cultural and political context (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006). The name references the province in Italy, where the approach was conceived within the Emilia Romagna region as part of post-World War II educational reforms, a movement that pre-empted even state and national legislation at the time.

Communities, parents and educators in post-fascist Italy embraced socialist principles to position the role that democratic early childhood education could play in bringing about social change and better opportunities for children ... They were determined to raise children to be critical thinkers and the guardians of democracy (Lindsay, 2015, p. 7).

This safeguarding is evident in the key tenets of the approach:

- focus on attention to social reform, particularly equity and access;
- the idea of children's democratic rights as citizens, including their ability to right to democratic participation in their learning;
- strong partnerships with the community;

- the conception of children as both capable and competent co-constructors of knowledge;
- educators as co-learners and researchers with children; the role of the environment as a teacher;
- an emphasis on aesthetics; and
- a holistic, project-based methodology which foregrounds children’s many symbolic languages and learning styles (Lindsay, 2015).

A Reggio Emilia school pays attention to technical practices, organisation, and structure – but it also puts these “in their place” and recognises that school is “first and foremost a public space and a site for ethical and political practice” (Lindsay, 2015, p. 4).

Jacqui described the kindergarten as “Reggio Emilia influenced”, noting that Reggio had emerged from a very specific context, one far removed from the Aotearoa New Zealand experience. Accordingly, rather than seeking to transplant the approach into the kindergarten, she and the teachers worked over time to adapt and integrate aspects of practice that had resonance with them, and with *Te Whāriki*. Reggio influence is particularly evident in the kindergarten through its commitment to democratic practices, its use of robust critical work, use of provocations, and the use of inquiry-based learning.

Enviroschools

Enviroschools is a national environmental sustainability programme that is action-oriented, culturally responsive, and holistic in its learning approach (Enviroschools, 2020). Enviroschools was started by a Hamilton City Council initiative, in conjunction with the University of Waikato and three participant schools (Eames & Mardon, 2020). The Enviroschools initiative took up the challenge from the Earth Summit 1992 to think globally and act locally (Eames & Mardon, 2020)¹³.

¹³ Enviroschools is currently run by charitable trust the Toimata Foundation (previously known as the Enviroschools Foundation), and has support from Ministry for the Environment, the Department of Conservation, corporate partner Mother Earth, and founding partner Te Mauri Tau, an educational, environmental and health-based organisation.

The kaupapa or philosophy of Enviroschools is underpinned by five main principles:

- Empowered students: children participate meaningfully in the life of their early childhood centre, with their unique perspectives and knowledge valued. Children are supported to undertake action for real change.
- Learning for sustainability: supports learning that encourages children’s empowerment, decision-making, and action and sustainable outcomes.
- Māori perspectives: honours the status of Māori as tangata whenua (the people of the land), and the value of indigenous knowledge and wisdom in guiding action and learning.
- Respect for the diversity of people and cultures: acknowledges the unique perspectives and contributions of different individuals and groups, emphasising the need for participatory decision-making.
- Sustainable communities: emphasises action that nurtures both people and nature, currently and in the future, for the healthy maintenance and viability of our environment, culture, society, and economy (Enviroschools, 2020).

The kindergarten has been involved with Enviroschools for some years.

Kindergarten initiatives, such as the community orchard, followed the Enviroschools approach of taking action through implementing projects that create sustainable, equitable change. Enviroschools is an underpinning philosophy of the kindergarten, and has underpins the work of the Outdoor Explorers programme, the community orchard, the kindergarten’s gardens, and their commitment to environmental learning.

Layout of the kindergarten

Like many early childhood facilities, the kindergarten consists of both indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as an enclosed conservatory that allows for open doors in warm, fine weather, or closed doors if it is cold or rainy. The indoor playroom is spacious, with high ceilings and windows that allow the light to flow in. Despite being open plan the room is subtly divided into different spaces or “rooms” through the

arrangement of furniture, providing numerous play spaces where children can work either singly, in small groups, or alongside teachers.

The inside playroom has a mat area, where the children meet collectively three times daily. The first meeting, or mat time, is to start the day, the second time, at 12 pm, is just prior to lunch, and the last is at the close of the children's day, around 3 pm, when the children from the afternoon session are collected by their families.

The layout of the room includes a series of tables that contain a variety of activities: provocations based on current inquiries, puzzles, and construction resources. There is a family play area, with dolls, a small table and chairs, and a small dining hutch containing an array of kitchen and play-food items. Close to this is a readily accessible art area, with a painting easel, drawing, and collage items, plus other tools such as scissors and tape. Clay is usually available as well.

A seating area tucked in the corner with ready access to an array of books serves as a welcoming library. The playroom also contains a children's bathroom, an area with lunch tables and a kitchen (the latter only accessible to staff), and doors leading to the staff offices, although these remain visible to children and parents through large windows.

The conservatory area includes the entrance, where parents sign children in, a large construction area, and a few tables for quiet activities as well.

Outside, there is a carpentry table, a play gym, a water play area, sandpit, and swing set. There are also a couple of roofed structures for children to play under. The outdoor area has grass areas rather than artificial turf, vegetable gardens in two different areas, and a variety of well-grown trees. In the area of ground in front of the kindergarten (part of the land owned by the church) is a community orchard that was a kindergarten initiative.

The studio

As the studio is not a typical aspect of an Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood environment, it is worthwhile to elaborate more on the role this area plays in the kindergarten's programme. The studio is located towards the front of the building, near the entrance and the large floor-to-ceiling windows that provide plenty of light. In

this space, children have room to conduct inquiries at length using arts-based pedagogies with Olivia, who is the studio teacher. None of the other teachers work in this space with children. A studio approach is consistent with a Reggio Emilia approach, which advocates for a dedicated art studio space and the guidance of a specialised art teacher, whose job is to bring out the thinking of children through arts-based approaches.

The studio contains special art materials, and is the only part of the playroom that is not continually accessible to children. Tucked into a corner of the room, it is framed on the other two sides by a long, low shelf on one side and an open cube-style display shelf on the other. A small wooden gate, propped between the intersection of these two pieces of furniture, is the access point. The gate is not locked (or even permanently fixed), but provides a boundary that children in the kindergarten invariably respect. Studio access is by invitation only, to provide both a space for uninterrupted inquiry, and for ongoing projects to remain undisturbed.

As Jacqui notes, “really that space is about relationships, it’s about children developing relationships with the things that they’re drawing and exploring” (Jacqui, personal communication, June 7, 2019). Continuing the same conversation, Olivia adds

Yeah, I think they express themselves by using different mediums, as Jacqui says, you know, relationship between the place, the people, and I think, the materials, those are quite important here too ... They use, you know, different materials to share their ideas and thinking and then you think back to a bit more then come back again and share their ideas with the others. It’s about their theory, their story, but can be, you know, they come back and reconstruct their idea as well. So I quite like that area. This is like their discussion area as well. So we use the art as a tool for the children to express themselves, but as Jacqui says art is not the product maybe, it’s about the processing. It’s a kind of language, in Reggio Emilia (Olivia, personal communication, June 7, 2019).

Work in the studio is not so much about producing a piece of art, but rather about thinking deeply, and then representing one’s thinking through art. The studio has been running for around six years.

Displays - Everything comes from somewhere

There are numerous child-made artefacts and pictures on display throughout the kindergarten, shown exhibition-style on attractive shelving or framed on walls. While in one respect this is another aspect of how the philosophy value of beauty is evident, at a deeper level this also reflects the kindergarten's pedagogy. Jacqui (personal communication, June 7, 2019) revealed that nothing that is displayed in the kindergarten is simply for decoration: nearly everything present in the environment comes from work with the children, and is usually the result of extended learning. Two examples of this are the rainbow tree, and the papier-mâché cats.

The rainbow tree is a prominent feature of the playroom, currently found arching over the lunch tables with ribbons trailing from the branches. This tree was not just created, but instead came from an extended inquiry with children that began with shadows, then wondering about how trees move, to theorising about trees, to collaboratively writing a story entitled "The Magic Rainbow Forrest". This inquiry eventually resulted in the children wanting to make a magic rainbow tree, and then designing and making one – the same tree that now stands in the kindergarten. Although its location moves from time to time, during data collection the tree was located near the lunch area.

There were also a number of papier-mâché cats displayed around the kindergarten. Colloquially dubbed the "Māori cats", all featured piupiu, the flax skirt that has come to symbolise cultural Māori dress (Jacqui, personal communication, June 28, 2019). The papier-mâché cats evolved from the children's observation of a stray ginger cat, who had adopted the kindergarten as his new home, and a story the children subsequently read as part of learning about cats called "My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes" (Sutton & Dodd, 2006). This story has a simple story line, where a different cat is presented for countries such as It was from this story that the children noted there was no Aotearoa New Zealand cat, an interesting point given that the writer and illustrator are New Zealanders themselves. The children took it upon themselves to create Aoteroa New Zealand cats out of papier-mâché, calling these cats their "Māori cats" (Jacqui, personal communication, June 28, 2019).

These two examples are only a few from the numerous stories that are explain the richness and complexity of children's inquiry in the kindergarten. From the philosophy

down to the objects in the room, nothing in this environment is transplanted or random – all the creations in this kindergarten have a story of how they came to be there, creating an environment full of embedded meaning, and rich with the history of the children who have gone before.

Programme features

There are three additional programme features that require brief explanation: Toddler Rock, Godly Play, and Outdoor Explorers.

Toddler Rock

Toddler Rock is an outreach programme run by the church ministry in the building next door to the kindergarten. The outreach aspect was the provision of an inexpensive place for parents (typically mothers) to bring their young children, enabling them to meet other parents and socialise together.

The kindergarten, due to its proximity to the venue, also attends. Toddler Rock takes place weekly during term time, for an hour on Tuesday mornings. Two of the teachers would take the younger children to this session, which included music, dance, and free play with a variety of toys. The music and dance section of the programme was not religious in nature but rather drew on music commonly used in the early childhood sector.

While the younger children were thus occupied, the older children would have an extended mat time with the remaining two teachers. During the time I was at the kindergarten, this was the time that Godly Play took place.

Godly Play

Godly Play (Berryman, 1991) uses parables and other Bible stories as the basis for the open-ended exploration of religious ideas. Godly Play is not a regular feature of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and is part of the unique character of the kindergarten's faith-based learning. Titles for bible stories, and significantly any "moral of the story" are not given, providing children with the opportunity to make up their own minds about what they experience.

Godly Play, at the time of data collection, was being conducted on a weekly basis with the older children on Tuesday mornings, while the younger children went to Toddler Rock next door at the local church. Godly Play will be explained in more detail in Jacqui's case study chapter, as this play is particularly relevant to her work.

Outdoor Explorers

Outdoor Explorers was created to provide children with consistent, meaningful opportunities to develop their own connections with the land of their community. Outdoor Explorers explorations came from discussions with the children about interactions with their world. Through these discussions the teachers came to realise that many of the children were busy travelling from destination to destination, having little contact with the land itself.

Twice a week, two teachers take a different group of ten children to explore the land around the local estuary on foot – a process that manager Jacqui refers to as getting to know the land through your feet. The groups go out regardless of the weather, with different kinds of weather and seasons providing rich material for observation and learning.

Walks with the children have revealed their awareness of the tides, their identification of landmarks such as area under the bridge, the tree with scarves in it, and place where chestnuts can be gathered. Children observe the colours of nature in detail, as when working with Tina on determining the different shades of green for their Ōhūiarangi model. They wade through the mud flats at low tide, note changes to the graffiti under the bridge, and even observed when a homeless person moved in there.

Conclusion: A critical pedagogy combination

This chapter has offered a detailed picture of the kindergarten, providing the context of the study. A key reason I had wanted to undertake research at the kindergarten, was that my time had shown the teachers to be using a large number of critical pedagogy ideas. They were highly engaged in the idea of children as democratic citizens, and provided numerous opportunities for children to both discover and use their own power to enact change. A lot of critical work was also taking place, as teachers encouraged children to observe, make comparisons, and offer critique on a wide

variety subjects. The teachers also used inquiry-based learning, resulting in extended, thoughtful, deep engagement with a topic. Jacqui as the pedagogical leader had also expressed the key idea early in our friendship that education was political. She sought to combat that political nature by advocating for a programme that actively refuted neoliberal ideas of individualism, consumerism, and monoculturalism.

For all these reasons, the kindergarten had many features of critical pedagogy already in place. The term critical pedagogy itself was new to the teachers, but they were interested in learning about it. I hoped to bring their strong theoretical knowledge and robust teaching practices together, through our work, to create a sustained and intentional critical pedagogy programme.

The critical pedagogy programme, told through the work of the four teachers, comprises the next chapters. Each teacher's inquiry is related as a case study, in order to preserve the narrative and context of her work.

Chapter Six is Jacqui's case study, called "*We need to wonder about things*".

Nilma's case study, titled *Cleaning Tangaroa's ocean*, is Chapter Seven.

Chapter Eight is Tina's case study, titled *Hearing all voices in a conversation*.

Lastly, Olivia's case study, called *Dreaming about this place* comprises Chapter Nine.

Chapter Six: “We need to wonder about things”-

Jacqui’s inquiry

A little background

Jacqui has a long history with the kindergarten, having taught there for around twenty years. She started as a teacher and eventually became the kindergarten’s kaiwhakahaere (supervisor) (Jacqui, personal communication, June 7 2019). She led the kindergarten’s move to becoming a Reggio Emilia inspired kindergarten, and continues to lead curriculum and practice in the kindergarten today.

Criticality is a thread that runs through Jacqui’s life. In one of our many discussions, she told me about the uncle whose visits she looked forward to because of the energetic debates they had together. “Uncle” was a family friend of her mother’s, an Englishman who really liked to debate issues – although sometimes her father felt these debates were more like arguments. Her parents encouraged questioning of the world around them, and were advocates for their children. Critical dialogue became as much a part of her DNA as her long summers on the coastal beaches.

Inquiring with Jacqui

Jacqui’s critical pedagogy inquiry focused on a specific aspect of the critical inquiry framework: critical dialogue with young children. Considering critical dialogue, Freire (1970/2018) writes:

Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education (p. 92).

Critical dialogue is a fundamental component of Freirean critical pedagogy, but a challenging one. What could this kind of dialogue look like with young children? Investigating what this dialogue could look like in practice, in seeing how such dialogue supported children’s critical thinking, was the key focus of Jacqui’s critical pedagogy work. This investigation was both teacher-focused and child-focused. The data followed

the work of the teacher closely, but at the same time, critical dialogue was worked out in real time with children.

Godly Play

This investigation into critical dialogue, particularly in cycles two and three of Jacqui's investigation, was explored through the Godly Play approach. Jacqui adapted Godly Play from the work of Episcopalian pastor and

Montessori-trained educator Jerome Berryman (1991). Jacqui explained, "he [Berryman] felt that children were underestimated, and that they were told what to think instead of being asked what they thought about stories" (Jacqui, personal communication, 13Aug19). Instead, Berryman advocated for a more open-ended, imaginative use of religious stories in educational settings, believing that Godly play provided opportunities for children to think about existential questions.

Godly Play in the kindergarten follows this idea of thinking about Bible stories in open ways. Religious language is kept to a minimum, and stories from the bible are shared in broad terms using a few simple props to support the narrative. Significantly, no "moral" is given for the story related, as is often the case when adults share religious stories with children. Regarding this point, Jacqui observes:

You're not encouraged to wonder at church, you're told what to think. And children, particularly in children's ministries, are told what to think (Jacqui, personal communication, 13Aug19).

By contrast, Godly Play takes the approach of actively wondering. Children and teachers consider possibilities and potential meaning together. Jacqui is clear about her intent:

I kind of want our kids to grow up wondering why things are the way they are, and I don't know, just because things are doesn't mean they always have to be. We need to wonder about things. (Jacqui, personal communication, 13Aug19).

Godly Play does not provide ready-made answers. Instead, children are encouraged to conduct their own sense-making – or not - about what they experience.

Godly play in and of itself is not critical pedagogy. However, the open-ended nature of Godly Play, particularly in Jacqui's application of it, invited wondering, critique, and the investigation of religious ideas. This approach is similar to the work of Ziv (2016).

Ziv worked in teacher education in Israel and was concerned about the traditional religious narratives that accompanied the compulsory teaching of Israel's national holidays. These narratives enforced hegemonic beliefs of male dominance, solutions involving war and violence, and enmity towards other nations. Ziv advocated for new narratives, informed by critical feminist perspectives, which encouraged new thinking around peace building and social equality.

While the work of Ziv in Israel, and Jacqui in this study are quite different, they both bring criticality into a religious space in a way that continues to respect religious belief, while still inviting new interpretations and critiques of underlying narratives. I believe this is a valuable and unexplored space in critical pedagogy.

However, there are two components of Godly Play in the kindergarten adaptation that support the critical dialogue component of critical pedagogy itself. The first aspect is the openness and wonder with which the storytelling process is conducted. Even though Godly play uses scripture as its source material¹⁴, the use of openness and wonder generates opportunities for personal interpretation, and for considering possibilities and alternatives, in line with critical pedagogy approaches. Both openness and wonder are central aspects of the kindergarten's philosophy.

The second component of interest is the critical dialogue used to unpack the ideas in the stories. Ideas from the story are problematised into question form by Jacqui, and children are encouraged to look deeply into the stories from different perspectives – to consider the existential questions Berryman mentioned. In the process, children learned to listen to the ideas of others, even when those ideas were significantly

¹⁴ Godly play uses a wide range of Old testament and New testament stories, but in this particular term the focus was on parables, as Jacqui liked to do the parables together. Godly Play typically has a calendar of storytelling that follows the Liturgical year.

different to their own. They practiced articulating their thinking by both figuring out what they wanted to say, and by giving reasons for their thinking.

Action research in Jacqui's work

Jacqui's work evolved within three investigative action research cycles. The first cycle was a broad capture of Jacqui's use of critical dialogue with children, and the examples have no particular relationship to each other.

The second cycle focused on critical dialogue with children during the weekly Godly Play sessions. Four episodes of Godly Play took place in this cycle,

including the first instance of The Good Samaritan (which the children subsequently renamed). Critical dialogue did not always take place in these sessions.

The third cycle was a revisiting of the third Samaritan parable. The first session had raised questions that the children had refused to engage with. After some discussion, Jacqui agreed to relaunch this parable and see if the children would be prepared to discuss its ideas in more depth.

Cycle One: Critical dialogue in an early childhood classroom

Challenging thinking

Jacqui was taking mat time, where the group was discussing an upcoming visit to a local maunga (mountain), called Maungarei. This was the kindergarten's second attempt to visit the maunga. The first trip was summarily cancelled when the entire kindergarten arrived by bus at the foot of Maungarei, only to be told by a security guard that the maunga was closed. Non-native trees were being removed that day by helicopter, and the environment was hazardous enough to warrant closure. On that day Jacqui had quickly redirected the bus to another local maunga, Ōhūiarangi. However, the children had remained interested in visiting Maungarei, so another trip had been organised¹⁵ and was only a few days away when this discussion took place.

¹⁵ That trip was successful. Jacqui had called the local city council to make sure no other mountain-closing activities were scheduled for that day.

Jacqui: ...We're going to Maungarei this time, we're going to see if he will let us come. Do you think he'll let us come this time?¹⁶

Children: (chorus) Yes.

Jacqui: And climb up on him? Will we be able to do rollie-pollies on Ōhuia- [she corrects herself] on Maungarei?

Child: No! He's, he's, he's too high up.

Jacqui: Is he?

Ava: Yeah, and he's too angry!

Jacqui: Is he? Is he, why do you think he's angry.

Child: I was, I was see-

Ava: 'Cause he's a boy!

Jacqui: Hang on, Reuben's a boy, is Reuben angry?

Reuben: No (laughs)

Jacqui: Micah's a boy, is Micah angry?

Micah: No (laughs)

Jacqui: (reaches out and lightly touches Calvin, who is next to her) You're a boy, are you angry? (no obvious response from Calvin. After a pause, she turns to Z__). You're a boy, are you angry?

Z__: (laughing) No!

Jacqui: What about you E_ Blue cat? [E_ is dressed in a blue cat-like costume] Are you angry?
No? What about you Alexander? Are you angry?
Alexander shakes his head.
Mm-mmm. I wonder if boys are angry.

Ava: Um, only the mountain is angry, because um, because he want to be alone.

Jacqui: Oh, I see. So Maungarei really would prefer to be alone, that's why we couldn't go last time.

This was one of the first pieces of data that I captured of Jacqui's teaching, and it was where the idea for recording her work with critical dialogue came from.

Jacqui seized on a moment of opportunity in response to Ava's comment, and spontaneously directed the conversation towards exploring Ava's "angry boy mountain" theory. Rather than confront Ava over her idea, or tell her what to think, Jacqui instead asked the opinion of each boy present in the group. This approach was not only democratic – every boy got to weigh in on the matter – but it also provided evidence for the group to consider the merits of Ava's theory.

¹⁶ In the Māori worldview, mountains are frequently considered ancestors, and have genders. The children had attributed Maungarei was male, a position the teachers had accepted while they tried to find out more about Maungarei from the local iwi (tribe).

Additionally, this approach gave Ava time to think over her idea. While her initial statement about an angry boy mountain was not refused by the group, it was not validated either. However, because Ava was also not forced into the position of having to defend her thinking, she was able to review her theory and amend it. The amended theory was more acceptable to the group, and after this the conversation returned to the upcoming trip.

The work with Ava showed how critical dialogue provided children with opportunities, through discussion, to disrupt their perceptions about the world. Consistent with a working theories approach, this disruption did not have to result in a changing of opinion (Peters & Davis, 2011), even though Ava did change her thinking here. This example with Ava also shows how young children can become competent, active meaning-makers, and explorers of their own environments (Clark et al., 2005) – in this case, a social environment with opportunities for the disruption of gendered discourses.

After this I began to follow Jacqui's teaching, which mostly took place with larger groups of the children at mat times, to capture more examples of critical dialogue with children.

Drawing on democratic practice to expand the children's knowledge base

While "boys are angry" discussion was a clear, short example of critical dialogue, the next example, discussing an upcoming Matariki celebration showed some of the challenges in establishing critical dialogue with young children. Māori use the name Matariki to describe the entire Pleiades star cluster, with the central star in the group also known individually as Matariki (Matamua, 2017). The Matariki celebration takes place during June-July of each year, and recognises the rising of the cluster in the early morning, traditionally a sign for planning to take place. In the Māori cosmology, all of the stars in the cluster have names, and nature-based areas of responsibility (see Matamua, 2017).

Jacqui and Olivia were working with a large group of four-year olds. The group started with a song that taught the names of the Matariki stars, sung to the tune of *Macarena* (Perdigones & Mange, 1993). After this hearty rendition, Jacqui reminded the children that all the Matariki stars had "jobs" – an area of nature that they looked after. For

example, Tupu-ā-nuku cared for plants. Jacqui went through each of the stars in turn, with the children recalling the relevant special job for each star. Jacqui then moved on to the next part of the conversation.

- Jacqui: So we were wondering – we’ve been pretending to be stars when we dance. What would you look after, if you were a star looking after something?
There are a flurry of responses, and Jacqui reminds them of the need to talk to her one at a time.
- Ava: The wolves and the foxes
Micah: Looking after the snow
Reuben: The sea
Jacqui: And how would you do that Reuben?
Reuben is uncertain.
- Quinnly: I want to look after all the falling stuff from the sky.
Jacqui: So you would like to be Waipunarangi – maybe you could help Micah look after the snow. So you want to look after rain-
Quinnly: Hazels [hail] and snow.

The responses continued, with penguins, originally suggested by Chloe, proving to be particularly popular – several of the other children in the group also stated they would help to look after penguins. Jacqui made sure every child in the group had an opportunity to respond, even though the group was quite large, with close to twenty children. She had taken a similar approach in the previous maunga sequence, where every boy present was given the opportunity to respond to the “boys are angry” idea.

Ensuring everybody has the opportunity to have input requires patience, both from the teacher and from the children who must wait. Ava, who spoke first, had another idea but is asked to wait until everyone else had a first chance to speak. Then, as promised, it was her turn again.

With everyone having had their say, Jacqui moved to her next question.

- Jacqui: Why do you think these things need us to look after them? Anybody got any ideas? Well Thomas, why do you think that the clouds of rain and the snow and the snowy mountains need us to look after them?
Thomas: Cause they need it, need it, need it, need it
Jacqui: Cause they need it. Anybody else got any ideas-
Chloe?
Chloe: Cause the mountains get sad
Jacqui: Okay. Summer?
Summer: So the penguins can play in the snow

Jacqui: We've got lots of talk about snow today.

Jacqui started this sequence with a question that had the potential for critical discussion. Why does the environment need us? It is a good question, and is well prefaced by the prior discussion, which positioned children with reasonable content knowledge for a meaningful contribution. However, on this occasion the children did not particularly engage with the topic, and there was no movement beyond some preliminary observations about "needing".

This raises an interesting point about critical dialogue with children: even though teachers might provide opportunities, children do not always take those up. However, having regular opportunities to engage in critical discussion vastly increases the chances of critical work happening. It makes sense that not every critical opportunity will work out, or even be refused.

Critical dialogue with teachers

Towards the start of the data collection, I was able to record a few snippets of Jacqui working directly with one of her teachers.

To set the scene a little, Jacqui had found one of the teachers looking at that teacher's planning board, and stopped to talk with her about it. While I did not return to this particular thread in subsequent data¹⁷, these original recordings find expression here as part of a broader discussion of what critical dialogue with Jacqui looks like for teachers.

Jacqui: So that's what do you think they'll do, what are you wondering? What are you- what are you- where's the uncertainty that you're wanting to find our more to understand? What are you wondering about the children's ideas? Or wondering about any of these things?

There is a long pause as the teacher thinks.

Jacqui: 'Cause it's the wondering that questions, that drives us forward.

Teacher: So yeah, I'm wondering that we can make some prototypes with them. Can we? So then, we can [move] like that.

Jacqui: Like a prototype.

The conversation continues a little more, discussing possibilities.

Jacqui: Write yourself some of those wonderings.

¹⁷ This was a very interesting thread, but the collection of these few snippets indicated that this kind of data collection could quickly become overly intrusive for the teaching team, so was not resumed.

The teacher returned a short period of time later and added two sticky notes to her planning wall.

In an addition to this conversation, a short time later Jacqui continues to encourage the teacher to “write your wonderings”, and also to seek the wonderings of other members of the teaching team. “That way,” Jacqui says, “We’re getting lots of different voices coming in to this.”

Jacqui encouraged the teacher here to “wonder”, suggesting this process included embracing uncertainty. It is interesting that Jacqui brings wondering into this professional conversation as there are numerous examples throughout the teachers’ work of teachers inviting children to “wonder” with them, typically initiated by the phrase “I wonder”.

In response to these snippets, Jacqui said,

I wonder with them [with teachers] to encourage and support them to wonder with the children ... that if we want our values to be more than words on a wall we have to be intentional about how we support our teams to ‘live in them’. Discussing it with teachers in this way has been my intentional strategy to ensure that wonder is one of those values that is foregrounded in our work with this community of teachers and learners (Jacqui, personal communication, 8 March 2021).

While this is only one example, it does raise the possibility that the teachers use the same tools for their work with each other, as they do with children. There is certainly encouragement in this segment for teachers to adopt the same mindset of questioning and openness to possibility that they use with children.

Cycle Two: Critical dialogue through Godly Play

Until this point Jacqui’s use of critical dialogue had been observed in a general way. Then Jacqui conducted a Godly Play session. I observed her use of critical dialogue in this work. These Godly play sessions became the focus of Jacqui’s work on critical dialogue with children.

During this cycle, four episodes of Godly play were observed, all of which were based on parables from the New Testament in the Bible. The first parable will be recounted in

more detail to provide an idea of how this play unfolds, while the second and third parables will only be recounted briefly.

The fourth parable will be discussed more fully, as it is the prefacing encounter to the third cycle of data. Even though this fourth parable is the last to be discussed in this section, it was actually the second to take place in the chronology; however its importance to the last cycle means it is the final piece of data for this section.

The first Godly Play session: The parable of the good shepherd

Everything about this activity was different from a typical mat time at the kindergarten. Inside, Jacqui set up the room. She lowered the blinds to create a soft light, and set out cushions in a circle. Lastly, she placed a large gold box next to her on the floor. She was ready.

While Jacqui set up the room, Olivia waited out in the foyer with the older children. Olivia stood by the door, encouraging the children to become calm as part of the preparation for entry. When Jacqui gave her the signal, Olivia began calling the children one by one to enter the room, where Jacqui welcomed them and invited them to sit on one of the cushions.

Once the group is assembled, Jacqui typically invited children to take some deep, calming breaths as part of relaxing into this special time. Then she introduced the box. The box was coloured gold, and was the same size and shape as a shoebox. The lid was firmly shut.

Jacqui: [This is] a special gold box. It must be a very special story. Gold is precious, isn't it? And this story is very precious, perhaps it is even more precious than gold. Hmm.

Quinnly: Is it treasure?

Jacqui: could be treasure. It has a lid on it. Sometimes things with lids on are hard to open. I think it might be a parable. A parable is a kind of story. Sometimes parables are hard to open. Sometimes you can try and try and they still don't open for you. And then, sometimes they do. It looks a bit like a present, doesn't it?

Parables are a bit like presents. They were given to us long, long ago, before you were born. But you don't have to go and buy one. They are here, ready, waiting for you. I wonder if it will open today.

The use of the word “parable” is significant, because this is one of the few religious words used in this storytelling. The word became a crucial piece of meta-language that signalled to the children the need to think about these stories differently from picture books. In subsequent sessions, Jacqui prefaced every session of Godly Play with a preamble similar to this one that both set the scene for the story, and also signalled to the children that the story might be difficult to understand.

In the next part of Godly Play, Jacqui opened the gold box. One piece at a time, she brought out the props for the telling of the story. The revelation of each item was a process of wondering, as the children were invited to consider the variety of options each prop piece could be. In this instance, Jacqui withdrew a large piece of green felt and placed it askew on the ground.

Jacqui: Let me see, what is this. Something green.
Quinnly: Grass!
Jacqui: It could be grass. Maybe it’s like one of those
leaves in the pond that the frog sits on.
Children: A lily pad
Jacqui: Maybe. Or maybe it’s a tree
Ava: It looks like a mountain
Jacqui: Maybe it’s a mountain. Maybe it’s a leaf off a really
enormous tree.
Quinnly: It could be grass.
Child: It could be a robot pig.
Jacqui: Maybe it’s a robot.

No idea is discounted – even the robot pig was a possibility. This process was repeated for each item until all the items for the stage setting of the story were present. This “wondering” is an important part of the process and is always playful. Even though the props ultimately represent specific things for each story, wondering about them encourages children to think openly about what is presented. This is a transition from the literal to the symbolic that encourages the children to begin theorising and sense-making with abstract symbols.

When the props are assembled and the initial wondering is done, Jacqui told the story itself. On this occasion it was the parable of the good shepherd, although Jacqui purposefully did not give names to any of the parables. This parable was originally told by Jesus Christ, and is recorded in the New Testament of the Bible (John 10: 1-15, King James Version). Jacqui’s retelling of the story is summarised:

The good shepherd cares for his sheep and leads them to the cool, clear water and the good, green grass. He defends them against wolves, and against the dark and dangerous places sheep can fall into. These places are represented by three black ovals which the children call "holes".

When the good shepherd loses a sheep he searches for that sheep and brings it safely back to the sheepfold, and then celebrates the sheep's return with his friends. The work of the good shepherd is contrasted with the work of the ordinary shepherd (in the scriptural account, known as the "hireling" or hired person). The ordinary shepherd is not particularly attentive, and sometimes the sheep come to harm under his care.

Wondering: An invitation to inquire

After the story itself is told, Jacqui invited the children to wonder about its ideas with her.

Jacqui: I wonder, I wonder if these sheep have names?
Child: I don't know
Jacqui: I wonder. I wonder where this place could really be?
Child: It's a garden.
Ara: Maybe it's a farm.
Quinnly: Maybe it's a field.
Child: Maybe it's a barn.
Jacqui: I wonder if you have ever found the good grass.
Quinnly: I haven't found the grass.
Child: I've never found the good grass.
Ara: I've never found three holes.
Jacqui: You've never found the dark and dangerous places? You've never been in a scary place?
Children: No.
Child: I found a teeny, tiny hole.
Jacqui: You found a teeny, tiny hole. Is it a dark and dangerous place?
Child: Yeah.
Child: Used to live in there.
Ava: If it was down at the beach, a crab might live in there.
Jacqui: Oh! I wonder if you have ever heard the good shepherd calling your name?
Children: No.
Jacqui: I wonder. I wonder what this whole thing really means.

The children's responses to Jacqui's questions are quite humorous to read back like this, but were rendered completely seriously at the time. Here, the children were working literally, while Jacqui was working metaphorically. However, she refrained from explaining the story, or telling the children what the "moral" was. As with her approach to working theories, there is no rush for children to find meaning in that moment or have their knowledge supplanted by the teacher.

Jacqui concluded the session of Godly Play by recapping the main beats of the story, packing up the story props into the gold box as she does so. She suggested the children could draw a picture about this if they wished. When she placed the lid back on the gold box, Godly Play came to an end.

Reflecting after this Godly Play session, Jacqui said,

So what he [Jerome Berryman] wanted was for children to be encouraged to hear scripture through the lens of what does it mean for me now? And that was what he wanted. So when I went to this thing on Godly Play, I kind of didn't want to go. And this lady kept saying to me, you need to go, you need to go, and when I went it was one of those a-ha moments, I thought, this fits us perfectly. And so we started. Then Olivia and Tina went as well to one, and we all really loved it. The first time I went I got more out of it than I got out of Church in like ten years. The wondering, for me, is perfect. And you're not encouraged to wonder in church, you're told what to think. And children are particularly, in children's ministries, are often told what to think. This is the learning. And scripture has so many layers, there's many learnings (Jacqui, personal communication, 13 August 2019).

Jacqui also recounted how children would often come back to her, in the hours and days that followed Godly Play, and talk with her about a story that was shared. However, none of these conversations were captured in the data.

The second and third Godly Play sessions: the parable of the great pearl and the parable of the sower

There were two additional sessions of Godly Play during this cycle. One told the story of the pearl of great price, or the great pearl, and the other told the story of the sower casting his seeds. Like the first parable, both of these were also told by Jesus Christ, and are recorded in the New Testament of the Bible.

The *parable of the great pearl* is a brief one, which talks of a merchant who specialised in beautiful pearls. When he found a pearl of great price – the great pearl – he went and sold everything he had in order to buy that pearl (Matthew 13: 45-46, Holy Bible, King James version).

The *parable of the sower* is a longer story, telling of a man who sowed seeds by hand in a field. Seeds fell on different kinds of ground: by the wayside, where birds quickly ate them; on stony places where they were unable to take root; and among thorns, which choked them. Only the seeds that fell on the fertile earth were able to take root and grow into fruit-bearing plants (Matthew 13:4-8. Holy Bible, King James version).

Both stories unfold in a similar fashion to the parable of the shepherd, with the children waiting to be invited into the room, taking their seats one at a time, then engaging in open-ended wondering about the props and the telling of the story itself, followed lastly by discussion about what the parable might mean. All these sessions averaged 18-20 minutes each. The phrase “I wonder” was used regularly to invite children to think broadly about the props and ideas in the story.

After Godly Play was concluded Jacqui always invited the children to draw or create something that might represent their thinking. Art-based meaning-making is a feature of Godly Play in Berryman’s (1991), although it is an optional part of the kindergarten’s adapted approach. Quinnly frequently drew pictures after Godly Play. He and I had a brief conversation about the picture he did after the parable of the sower.

Quinnly: This is a big bird, the biggest bird that’s in the whole world. That’s an eagle.
Raella: An eagle? They are really big birds. So what’s your bird doing today?
Quinnly: Eating the seeds on the ground where he put them
Raella: So what do you think about today’s parable?
Quinnly: Very interesting. I didn’t know we were going to have one of those.

Quinnly conducts his own emergent sense-making through drawing elements that are particularly interesting to him. He names one element he has drawn as “an eagle” (Jacqui used the generic term “birds” in the story), and comments on its size. He also describes the parable as interesting, although he does not elaborate on why.

The final story in this cycle is the story of the Good Samaritan.

The fourth Godly Play session: The Good Samaritan (first retelling)

“Good morning, good morning!” Jacqui greeted the group cheerfully after they had assembled in the usual manner. “Are you feeling ready for a story this morning?” An air of expectation settled over the group as Jacqui continued, “I wonder what will be in our story today.” From the shelf next to her she extracts the gold-coloured box, gently strokes the lid, and begins her Godly Play preamble.

Jacqui: Parables sometimes are a little bit hard to open, aren't they? You can try and try, and you can even be ready-“
Hannah: You have to try hard
Jacqui: You *have* to try hard. And sometimes when you try hard, it still won't open. But that's okay, 'cause you can come back to it, and you can try again.”

These words turn out to be prophetic, because not only is this a parable that will prove “hard to open”, it is also the one that the group would return to later in the term, to “try again”. However, by prefacing the story with indicators for potential challenge, Jacqui helps to prepare the group for possible difficulty in finding their own meaning in the story. “One day,” she encourages, “It will open for you.”

The parable is told in broad terms by Jacqui, with the support of the props.

Jacqui: There once was a man who was travelling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho,” she begins, as she gets out the figure of a man and walks him along the road. “It was a long way. And on his journey thieves came out and they attacked him. And they took all of this things, and they beat him, and then they left him on the side of the road, badly hurt, half dead.
Ava: Half dead?
Jacqui: Mmm. That means really badly hurt.

The children were highly interested in the man who was attacked and left half-dead. Jacqui continued the story, relating how a priest, and then a Levite, both people of status in the society of that time, passed by the injured man and ignored his plight. It was a Samaritan, someone of perceived lower social status, who ultimately came and helped the injured, half-dead man.

Wondering: An invitation to investigate social morality

With the story portion told, Jacqui turned to helping the children unpack some of its ideas.

Jacqui: Now I wonder – I wonder. Who is this man’s neighbour?
Long pause.
Jacqui: (brings out a figure – the Priest) Could it be this one?
Another long pause follows.
Hannah: No.
Quinnly is also shaking his head.
Jacqui: No? (pause) He couldn’t be the neighbour? Why? (long pause)
Hannah: Because (pause) he (she points at the figure, and there is a long pause) don’t like to be her friend.
Jacqui: Because he doesn’t want to be his friend?
Hannah: Yeah.

This first piece of dialogue outlines a theme the children kept returning to: the social benefit of friendship, and who qualifies for it. Even though this was the first conversation the children were having about this parable, the challenge of unpacking the actions of its various characters was already evident. Two of the children who chose to respond here took the position that the Priest, who did not help the injured man, did not qualify to be that man’s neighbour. When Jacqui brought out the figure of the Levite, the children had a similar reaction, insisting that the Levite was not the injured man’s neighbour either.

Jacqui: You think this could be the man’s neighbour? You don’t- Reuben? Why don’t you think this one could be his neighbour?
Reuben: Cause he wasn’t his friend.
Jacqui: He wasn’t his friend either?
Quinnly: I think it’s his neighbour.

Quinnly did provide a counter-argument here, but no discussion was had as to why he thought this and Quinnly did not elaborate on his thinking. Jacqui continued the discussion, this time about the robbers.

Jacqui: I wonder (she brings out the figures of the robbers) if these men could be his neighbour.
Hannah: (shaking her head) No.
Quinnly: No.
Several other children join in with “no”.

Jacqui: No? They're not his neighbour? Why aren't they his neighbour?
Ara: Cause them took her things.
Child: And they attacked him.

The children were emphatic in their refusal: the robbers were definitely not the "neighbours" to the injured man. This was an understandable position given that the robbers were responsible for the man's injuries to start with. Jacqui did not leave the discussion there though. After a brief discussion about whether the Samaritan could be the man's neighbour (a resounding "yes"), she asked a new question.

Jacqui: Okay, now I've got a tricky question for you. I wonder who the neighbours to these people [are] She holds up the robbers.
Ava: No one.
Quinnly: No one, they're stealing.
Jacqui: No one is their neighbour?
Ava: Because- because- because- they um, because they hurt people.
Ara: And steal people's things.
Jacqui: And steal people's things. So they can't have a neighbour?
Quinnly: Stole up all treasures
Jacqui: So nobody will love them?
The children pause for a moment.
Quinnly: No
Ara: No.
Ava: Because they are thieves.

The consensus from the group was unequivocal. The robbers could not have neighbours because their actions were wrong. The pause after Jacqui's question "So nobody will love them" is significant. In the video, the concentration on the faces of the children was evident, and it takes a moment of hard thinking before they respond. The idea of being unloved is a big one. However, after the pause the children's adherence to their unequivocal position continued. No one would love the robbers because they were bad.

Jacqui had one more difficult question for the group.

Jacqui: I wonder if this story would be different if it was children, about children. Do you think it would be?
Reuben: Yes
A few other children chorus yes; one child shakes her head.

Jacqui: How do you think it would be different?
 Ava: Because there would be children, not adults.
 Jacqui: What would the children do?
 Ava: The same as the adults did, but just [to go]
 Jacqui: Do you think the children would've walked
 past the man?
 Ava: No, some- no, no.
 Ara: How did the man?
 Jacqui: So if this man were a child what would have
 happened?
 Ava: [unable to decipher]
 Jacqui: Would he? (long pause) What did you think
 Reuben?
 Reuben: The child would help him.
 Jacqui: The child would help him.
 Reuben nods, and Jacqui nods back at him.
 Ara: Find a parent.

The context has shifted again, from the abstract characters in the story to the very specific realm of children that is immediately relatable to this group who were children themselves. While there is a little disagreement here, there is some consensus that if this story was about children more help would have been given, although this idea is not explored fully enough to be conclusive.

The group had been talking for a while now, and some were beginning to get restless. Likely sensing that the collective enthusiasm for the story had run its course, Jacqui summed up by posing a series of reflective wonderings. "Mmm. I wonder," she began, letting that phrase hang for a long moment. "I wonder if it would've been different for the man." She begins to pack the props away. "Or, if it might've been different for the two robbers." She holds the two robber figures out for the children to look at one last time. "I wonder who will be their neighbour and love them."

Everything was put back in the box, and with the finality of the lid closing, the children were invited to consider the story through drawing if they wanted – or they could simply go and play.

Cycle Three: Revisiting the Good Samaritan

I reflected on this episode, and found myself thinking about the children's belief that the robbers did not deserve neighbours. I bought this up with Jacqui. We thought that

revisiting this particular issue of “who is the robbers’ neighbour” could be both valuable and interesting.

Jacqui spent some time considering the best way to relaunch the discussion, before deciding to re-present the story again during another of the weekly Godly Play sessions. This approach meant that the majority of the same children would be present, with their previous knowledge of the story to draw on during the discussion.

The next part of the chapter follows, in close detail, the dialogue Jacqui used to gradually unpack the complexity of the “neighbour” idea with the children. While unspooling the dialogue is a lengthy process it is also revelatory, demonstrating how critical dialogue can be used to explore complex ideas about morality, justice, compassion and empathy.

The Good Samaritan – or, “the man who got half-dead on the road” – (second retelling)

The children gathered in the normal way with Olivia in the foyer before joining Jacqui in the main room one by one. Jacqui set the scene for the morning’s session. “Today we’re going to do it a little bit differently. This is a parable that we have heard before.” The group began to wonder which parable it could be, making a few guesses based on the stories they had heard before. As she prepared to open the box, Jacqui reminded them, “Sometimes they’re a bit hard to open, eh. This one, when we got it out, was a bit hard to open. We found it a bit hard to work it out. Didn’t we?”

As it turns out, the children remembered the parable so clearly that they guessed almost right away when Jacqui took out the brown cloth. It was Reuben who called out, “The- the- the man who got half-dead on the road!” From here on, this is what this parable is known by. Out of the four parables observed, this was the only one the children gave a name too. Then again, this is the only one that was revisited, likely a relevant fact in its naming.

There was little need for Jacqui to retell the story, as the children were eager to recount it themselves. They remembered the main beats of the story clearly and were able to retell it with minimal help. It did not even take long to get to the question Jacqui wanted to explore – and she was not even the one who brought it up first.

The initial position: “Robbers don’t have neighbours because they are bad”

Jacqui worked towards the question of who were the robbers’ neighbours by starting with the question of who might be the neighbour of the priest.

- Jacqui: So then we got to this bit, where we said, who is the neighbour to this man? Is this man his neighbour?
Jacqui has placed the priest next to the injured man.
- Children: (chorus) No.
- Ava: No, the robbers don’t have neighbours because they have been bad.
- Jacqui: Okay, so that was the interesting thing for me, did you feel like this guy was his neighbour?
- Ava: No because the robbers don’t have neighbours because they are bad.

Ava could not have provided a clearer segue to the topic if it had been written for her. The current perception of the neighbours showed similarity to the last session, with the robbers perceived simply as bad. They were doing bad things, therefore they did not qualify for social benefits such as neighbours.

Clarification: What does a neighbour do?

Jacqui was quick to follow up on Ava’s opening.

- Jacqui: Yeah, that’s what you said. You said these guys (she places the robber figures on the mat) don’t have any neighbours. The neighbour thing is really hard to understand isn’t it, what does it mean?
- Ava: They two are neighbours!
- Jacqui: (gesturing to robbers) They are neighbours to each other?
- Ava: Yes!
- Jacqui: So what does a neighbour do?
- Ava: Just ... pops in.
- Child: Talks to each other.
- Jacqui: I wonder what a neighbour does?
- Ava: Talk to each other.
- Jacqui: Talk to each other? Neighbours talk to each other.
- Micah: They eats each other
- Jacqui: They ...?
- Micah: Eats each other.
- Jacqui: Eat each other? Do they?
Micah laughs.
- Jacqui: That would be funny. You’d have no neighbours left if you ate them.

Jacqui worked on the concept of neighbour with the children and received three responses, including a rather playful one from Micah. Even though the responses are vague and there is more information Jacqui could provide about what a neighbour is in this context, she does not do this. Her approach here is consistent with the working theories approach observed in the kindergarten amongst all the teachers, where children are not “told” answers but encouraged to think for themselves.

Also worth noting is Ava’s point that the robbers are neighbours to each other. This is the first time (of a few occasions) where the children make an effort to provide the robbers with a morally negotiated form of company. Morally-negotiated in this context means that the children recognised a need of some kind (here, the idea that everyone should be loved by someone), but given the robbers’ compromised behaviour, the group also makes adjustments to the kinds of social benefits the robbers are entitled too.

Context One: Who could love the robbers?

Jacqui continued the discussion.

Jacqui: (continued from previous) I wonder, if this one (she picks up the priest) is a neighbour to these ones [the robbers].

A number of children respond “no”.

Jacqui: I wonder why.

Child: Because, they have been bad.

Jacqui: Hmm. So bad people have no neighbours, nobody loves them. Nobody looks after them.

Child: No.

Child: Only their mum and dad.

Jacqui: So their mum and dad still love them.

Ava: (gesturing with her hand for emphasis) Yeah, cause their mum and dad are robbers too.

Jacqui: Are they? I wonder why.

Summer: And aunties, uncles.

Jacqui: And all their aunties and uncles? They love them or they’re robbers too?

Summer: They are robbers too

Jacqui: They are all robbers too. I wonder why they became robbers?

Ava: Because they mum and dad were robbers

Jacqui: So they copied their mum and dad

Summer: And uncles

Jacqui: And uncles. They copied all of their family

Summer: Yup

Jacqui: And became robbers too.

Summer: Yup.

The children also decided that the robbers' parents could love them, a point that is quickly expanded to include the robbers' extended families. Possibly Jacqui's powerful statement of "nobody loves them" has impacted the children's thinking. Now, the children have identified somebody to love the robbers – their family. This is the second sign of the initial flat good/bad position gaining an element of dimension. It is reasonable that Jacqui's statement about having no one to love, with quick additions of people who could love the robbers, has helped to reposition the robbers as people, rather than as bad guys. However, the group quickly adds that the parents, uncles and aunties are also robbers.

Jacqui: I wonder if anybody if anybody ever really was their
neighbour.
Child: Never, ever, ever
Child: Ever

The end of this particular sequence finished with the flat depiction resurfacing, an emphatic rejection of the robbers as having neighbours notwithstanding the immediately preceding conversation. Despite their previous concessions, the children returned to their original position, which suggested that their thinking on the neighbour issue was still in flux.

Context Two: Who is our neighbour at kindergarten?

Jacqui took a different approach with a new questioning sequence.

Jacqui: I was thinking about kindy and some of the people
we find it hard to be neighbours to.
Ava: I wanna be neighbours with Reuben
Reuben: I wanna be neighbours with E__ and Micah
Ava: And me
Jacqui: You wanna be neighbours with each other?
There is a long pause.
Jacqui: I wonder if Alexander feels like he's got a neighbour?
(to Alexander) do you have a neighbour at kindy? A
friend?
Alexander shakes his head.
Jacqui: A neighbour is kind of like, what? A friend? Who
helps you?
Summer: Like a mate?
Jacqui: Like a ...?
Summer: Mate

Jacqui: Like a mate. That's a nice word. I wonder if Alexander feels like he has a mate at kindy.
 Amelia: I have.
 Jacqui: I wonder if Calvin feels like he has a mate at kindy.
 (long pause) Calvin, who are you friends with at kindy? Who will be kind and look after you?
 Child: Raella.
 Jacqui: Raella will.
 Long silence.
 Ava: (to Raella) You are friends with Calvin.

With this new questioning approach, Jacqui encouraged the children to think locally, about their own situation at kindergarten. What Jacqui's wondering achieves in this part of the dialogue is to provide a different context, outside of the story but close to their experience, from which to consider the idea of neighbour. The children are quick to show their understanding of "neighbour" from their own perspective, however when Jacqui mentioned two children who were still finding friends, the answers offered are rationalisations. Alexander clearly responds nonverbally that he did not have a friend, although this gesture went unseen at the time. And while I am indeed Calvin's friend, Jacqui clearly meant a friend who was Calvin's age, and within the kindergarten, rather than a visitor like myself.

Context Three: Who will be Jacqui's neighbour?

Jacqui continued her wondering questions, this time using herself as the reference point.

Jacqui: I wonder if I- if I'm in a grumpy mood and I'm not very nice, I wonder if anyone will be my neighbour.
 Hannah: Me!
 Jacqui: No-one will be my neighbour – Hannah will be my neighbour.
 Micah: Me!
 Jacqui: You will be my neighbour?
 Most of the children raise their hands and call out "Me!"
 Jacqui: Hmm. I wonder if that will help me feel better and be kinder? Do you think having a neighbour will help me?
 Many of the children answer yes.
 Child: We can all live in the same house.

Ava: And eat lollies¹⁸.
 Summer: And eat cupcakes
 Child: (And ice-cream)
 Child: And jelly.
 Child: And marshmallows.
 Child: And cake.
 Jacqui: I wonder if these – I wonder if these people, the robbers, had anybody that lived in the same house as them, that ate jelly and lollies and ice-cream with them.
 Summer: No.
 Reuben: Definitely not.
 Summer: Only if they was nice.
 Jacqui: Only if they were nice?
Summer nods.

Jacqui has taken the children from thinking about neighbours for the fictional robbers, to thinking about neighbours for their kindergarten friends, and now to considering who could be a neighbour for Jacqui herself. This context is also familiar, local and meaningful for children. Jacqui, in her role as teacher, has established friendships with the children. She matters to them, hence their quick offers of help.

Jacqui again used wondering to consider whether the robbers would have anyone to enjoy fun, yummy things with. Summer started by responding “no” but then softened her stance slightly by adding “only if they was nice”, thereby offering a third instance of moral negotiation. (This qualifier also suggests that robbers would be eligible for the parties if they were nice, despite still being robbers, but I am not certain Summer intended this outcome.)

Context Four: The robbers as babies

Jacqui continued the discussion by providing a new context for the children to consider.

Jacqui: I wonder if they- when they were babies, were they nice.
 Several children chorus “yup” or “yes”.
 Jacqui: So why did they become not so nice?
 Summer: Because they’re – because they are robbers.
 Ara: And none of them are thieves.
 Jacqui: What made them become robbers?
 Summer: I don’t know.
 Ara: Their family are robbers

¹⁸ Jacqui repeats most of the children’s ideas as they say them – a common habit for teachers – but in the interests of brevity, and because nothing additional is added through the repetitions, I have edited out the duplicates for this segment only.

Ava: Turn into robbers?
 Jacqui: I wonder why.
 Ara: Maybe a bad guy.
 Jacqui: But why did they become bad guys?
 Ara: (shrugs) I don't know.
 Summer: I don't do that
 Jacqui: You don't do that (touches her chin in a "thinking" gesture).

Jacqui's use of the word "nice" was a repetition of Summer's previous statement, which led to this context for exploration: the robbers as babies. Most of the children in this group were familiar with babies and baby narratives, such as innocence, and there was widespread agreement that the robbers were indeed "nice" as babies. However, when Jacqui asked what changed for the robbers, the children struggled to answer this question, including Summer's outright admission that she did not know, Ara saying they were a family of robbers, and Ava wondering if they turned into robbers.

These incomplete theories do not explain why the robbers took the eventual path of thuggery, despite being (presumably) nice enough as children. However, this is one of the most interesting parts of the conversation. The children have run to the limits of their theories about the moral world. They show a clear understanding of right and wrong in their original interpretation of the parable, but when brought to the point where that morality cannot explain why the robbers have become robbers, their explanations – and their certainty – both fade. It is in this moment of their uncertainty that the critical consciousness of a more complex world begins to emerge.

Context Five: The children as bad guys

Jacqui moves to yet another context – the children themselves.

Jacqui: Do you think you will grow up and become a bad guy?
 Several children chorus "no".
 Jacqui: Why won't you?
 Summer: Because I play with people.
 Jacqui: Because you play with people. So you won't grow up and become a bad guy because you play with people and people are your neighbour. Maybe.
 Summer nods.
 Jacqui: What about you Ara? Do you think you will grow up and be a bad guy?
 Ara: No.
 Jacqui: Why won't you grow up and be a bad guy?

Ara: Cause I don't want to.
 Jacqui: Cause you don't want to.
 Ava: Because we don't want to go in jail.
 Jacqui: Do you think they wanted to grow up and be bad guys?
 Several of the children chorus "yeah" or "yes".
 Child: They wanted to go in jail
 Jacqui: So right from the time they were little like you and E__, or younger, like you and E__-
 Child: They have to.
 Jacqui: They wanted to grow up and be bad guys.

As young children, this group are only a few years older than the babies from the previous example. Would they grow up to be bad? Their emphatic answer is "no" but when asked by Jacqui to explain why they think this, the children again struggle to reconcile the contrast between themselves as children and the robbers as children. While three of the children share narratives that ascribe to their choices as a reason (they play with people, they do not want to bad or go to jail), there are some who also think that the bad guys did want to go to jail when they grew up.

Context Six: Are there bad guys at kindergarten?

Jacqui continues to push the group to consider the issue from different angles, moving next to their kindergarten – could there be any "bad guys" there? While initially shocked to think that could be the case, the children eventually identify a member of their kindergarten community who is still working out how to be a good friend, and because of that challenge, has very few friends of his own – in fact, just two.

Jacqui: Okay, I have a question for you. Who is Z__'s neighbour?
 There is a pause.
 Ava: Quinnly.
 A few other children repeat "Quinnly".
 Jacqui: Who is the person who helps Z__ at kindy?
 A few children say "Quinnly" again, but not Ava, who appears to be thinking.
 Jacqui: There is somebody else who helps Z__, too.
 Another pause. Jacqui is looking meaningfully at Ava.
 Ava: (quietly) Ava.
 Jacqui: Ava helps Z__. So Ava is Z__'s neighbour.
 Child: I'm Alexander's neighbour.
 Jacqui: Ava, when you are Z__'s neighbour, what do you do?
 Ava: Mmm
 Child: Help him?

Ava: Help him?
 Jacqui: There's something you do that I have noticed.
 Child: Talk to each other.
 Ava: (excitedly) Cuddle him!
 Jacqui: Cuddle him. (Long pause) I wonder if anybody
 cuddled these two? (she gestures to the two
 robber figures)
 Many of the children loudly respond "no!"
 Ava: Only their parents!

This sequence was something of an "a-ha" moment for Ava. There was a glow of recognition in her eyes when she realised that *she* was the person who helped and cared for Z. It was her. She was the Good Samaritan for him.

Jacqui returned again to whether the robbers could be cuddled, and is once again told "no" by the group, although Ava, somewhat emphatically, states that their parents could cuddle them, a fourth moral negotiation.

Context Seven: The man under the bridge

Jacqui raised another local example. Near to the kindergarten, there was a person living underneath the bridge. The children were aware of him, having become interested in him and his wellbeing during their own walks under the bridge. Jacqui asked the children to consider who his neighbour might be.

Jacqui: There's somebody near us, under the bridge. I
 wonder if he has someone who gives him cuddles.
 Child: Yes
 Jacqui: You think he does? (to Ara) What do you think? Do
 you think that the man under the bridge has anyone who
 gives him cuddles?
 Ara: (shaking her head) No.
 Jacqui: Who will be kind to him?
 Ara: (softly) No. We met him before.
 Jacqui: We met him before, didn't we? Were we kind to
 him?
 Ara: Yip.
 Jacqui: What did we do?
 Summer: (to Ara) When did you meet him?
 Ara: (to Summer) We just went Outdoor Explorers and
 we sawed him.
 Jacqui: Yeah, we did see him.

While brief, this part of the discussion continues to connect the "neighbour" idea to local contexts the children can relate to, and think about. Ara, who in other work has

shown particular interest in the man under the bridge, is invited to talk about her experiences with him here.

Context Eight: Back to the parable – the Priest

Jacqui then moved back to the parable. Even though the group as a whole was (mostly) listening, this part of the conversation just has Ava's voice in it.

- Jacqui: (she points back to the story figures, particularly the Priest). What about this guy? These were the two bad guys, you said (points at the robbers, who are next to the Priest.) What about this guy? Was this a good guy or a bad guy? next guy
- Ava: (moves to the figures) He (points to Priest) neighbour to that one (points to a different figure).
- Jacqui: So they're neighbours ... were these guys good guys or bad guys?
- Several children answer "good guys".
- Jacqui: What made them good guys?
- Ava: They're not very good cause they didn't help the man.
- Jacqui: So they aren't bad, but they aren't good. (long pause) What would you say?
- Ava: Yeah, they're like- they're like, naughty. Like, not bad, not good, not good.
- Jacqui: So naughty isn't bad, it's different.
- Ava: Mmm. Kinda bad.

Ava continued to wrestle with the complex world she had encountered at the boundary of her current moral reasoning. This particular moment represented a shift in her thinking. Up until this point, she had joined the group consensus, expressed non-dimensional ideas, or ventured morally-negotiated ideas. However, in this instance she made a new connection by recognizing that a character within the story takes a position that is neither good nor bad. She used the best words she had access to, to try and explain this new position. She seemed to see them as more bad than good, noting they did not help when the opportunity arose, but they were not bad either – settling eventually on a description of not-bad-not-good.

Context Nine: Are we kind all the time?

In the continuing group narrative, Jacqui returned again to the idea of kindness.

- Jacqui: Hmm. (long pause) I wonder if- are you kind everyday, all day. You think?
- Ava: Mmmm Mm-hmm!
- Jacqui: Everyday, all day, you're kind.

Ava: Mm-hmm.

Jacqui: You're kind to your sister, you're kind to your mummy, you're kind to everybody. (long pause, no perceptive response from Ava). What about you Reuben, you're kind to everyone all day long?
 Reuben likely nods here, although he can't quite be seen on the video, the teacher's reaction to him suggests this is what happened.

Jacqui: What about you E__?
 He nods.

Jacqui: What about you Elsa? Are you kind to everyone all the time?
 She nods.

Jacqui: What about you, Micah? Are you kind to everybody all the time?

Micah: Not to my sister. Cause she always doesn't play with me.

Jacqui: So sometimes you're not kind.
 Ava starts to speak.

Jacqui: Hold on. Sometimes Micah feels like he's not kind. Does that make you a bad person? Are you bad?
 Micah shakes his head – no.

Jacqui: Hmm. Sometimes- sometimes I'm not kind either.

Until Micah, nobody else was willing to admit that sometimes they could be unkind. After Micah, the tenor of the conversations changed as the children admitted instances where they were not kind. This demonstrated a significant shift; the group moved from seeing kindness as a flat concept (we have to be kind all the time in order to qualify as kind) to seeing kindness as *one* of the things we can be. Attendant to this realization was another possibility, although it was implied more than stated: we can also be occasionally unkind without being a bad person.

The discussion ends

In the last section of the conversation, attention was starting to wander. The discussion had been going for an energetic, engaged twenty-five minutes by this point.

Jacqui: Does he? (pause) I wonder- I wonder if these guys [the priest and Levite] were feeling perhaps not very kind?
 Summer: I think they would- they just talk the first man, who had the thieves.
 Jacqui: What- what do you think they should've done?
 Summer: Maybe-
 Ara: Help him.
 Summer: Help him.

Jacqui: They should have helped him?
 Child: Yeah.
 Jacqui: I wonder why they didn't?
 Ara: Because them don't want to touch the blood.
 Jacqui: They didn't want to touch the blood. Why do you think they didn't want to touch the blood?
 Ara: Because maybe them need to wash their hands.
 Jacqui: Maybe they need to wash their hands.
 Ava: And they don't like washing those hands?
 Jacqui: Maybe they don't!
 Jacqui: ... So you think they didn't want to stop and help cause they didn't want to get their hands dirty.

The discussion ended shortly after this piece. In this final section, the children considered what action could have been taken. They have been able to view the story from a variety of perspectives now, finishing with an overview of the Priest and Levite's inaction and coming to a consensus that a failure to act was not "right". Adults have words like negligence and avoidance to describe the course of action the Priest and Levite took (or neglected to take), however the fact that the children could see that a moral failing of some kind took place is significant, even if they could not quite articulate what that failing was.

The group had become restless, and Jacqui, sensing it was time to finish, asked if anybody else had any wonderings as she began to pack up the visual aides. "I wonder if they were mean because they were unhappy," she muses. "I wonder if he didn't stop because he didn't want to get his hands dirty." With help from the children, all the pieces are quickly back in the box. "Thank you," Jacqui finished. "You guys are so organized today."

Reflections and conclusions on Jacqui's critical pedagogy inquiry

Jacqui and I spent some time after this Godly Play session reflecting on her work with the children. Most of these reflections emerged in the hour just afterwards, although we continued reflecting a week later when I had completed the transcript of the session.

One observation that Jacqui made was about the power of revisiting this kind of work. She said,

I found it quite fascinating. So I was rereading it, thinking about that aspect of it, and wondering how we go deeper again. And the other thing is, Olivia and I really liked going back, revisiting it. How much they remembered, and how they were prepared to unpack it some more (Jacqui, personal communication, 24 September 2019).

Jacqui and I felt that the revisiting of this story was particularly important. Because the children were already familiar with the story on the second occasion, they were able to move quickly into a detailed discussion of the parable's moral complexities.

A second idea that Jacqui and I discussed was whether the children's thinking had shifted or not. The group never wholly subscribed to the idea that the robbers deserved having neighbours, friends, or love because of their bad choices. As Jacqui noted,

I quite liked the idea that they [the robbers] chose [to be robbers]. That was interesting, and I'd quite like to come back to that again with them, and think about how sometimes choices are framed by our situations (Jacqui, personal communication, 24 September 2019).

The children had approached new thinking but frequently had taken the position of negotiated moral outcomes rather than adopting new positions outright. However, this partial thinking was still significant as it showed an ability to acknowledge another position, and to think of a solution that was at least partly acceptable to the group, even if that new position was not wholly embraced.

One particular instance that Jacqui and I thought demonstrated the children's shifting thinking was Ava's discussion of the priest and Levite as bad-good or good-bad.

Raella: ... The robbers were the bad guys, and then they started to think maybe the robbers have families. I was very interested in Ava's conception of the priest and the Levite as not good and not bad. and
Jacqui: Yeah. Bad-good or good-bad.
Raella: Goody-baddies, it was something like that. She could acknowledge that they hadn't done something right, but they hadn't really done something wrong either, like they hadn't beaten him and left him on the road but they hadn't helped him either, so what does that make it? It's the start of moral reasoning.

Jacqui: Yeah. They actually go really deep, don't they (Jacqui, personal communication, 24 September 2019).

Ava did more than acknowledge a new position here; she actually labelled the actions of two characters in the parable whose actions were problematic because they were neither fully good nor fully bad. Until this point, the group thinking had been adhering to either good or bad positions. Ava relinquished that thinking here and identified a new position that was partway between both. In more colloquial terms, Ava found a grey area. The world became a more dimensional place for her in this moment.

Reflecting more generally, I had wondered both if critical dialogue was a realistic expectation for early childhood and if so, what it could even look like. Jacqui's work had provided illustrative examples of how critical dialogue could be used successfully with young children, in challenging discussions about the social, moral world around them.

Chapter Seven: Cleaning Tangaroa's Ocean - Nilma's Inquiry

A little background

When I started following Nilma, she and the children were working on a project that had evolved from Seaweed. Seaweed is an initiative run by the New Zealand Association of Environmental Education, that promotes environmentally-focused engagement with marine environments (see <https://www.seaweed.org.nz>). During Seaweed, the children had participated in a community initiative to clean the local estuary. In the kindergarten, the children had talked about all the rubbish they found on the shore, and they expressed concern about this rubbish washing into the ocean and being carried out to sea.

This line of thinking eventually led to theorising about how the deeper areas of the ocean can get clean. For example, how is rubbish removed from this place “that is too deep even for Mums and Dads to get”? (Nilma, personal communication, 29 April 2019).

From here, the idea of creating machines to clean the oceans emerged. Supported by Nilma, the children devised ways to keep the oceans and rivers clean, something that further aligns to the kindergarten's commitment to Enviroschools. In imagining possibilities, one child drew a picture of about a “rainbow octopus girl robot – eats the rubbish and turns it into diamonds and building blocks for people to have houses and jewellery” (Nilma, personal communication, 29 April 2019). Another child drew a design of a “robot and fishing net to collect rubbish” (Nilma, personal communication, 29 April 2019). Lauren and Reuben collectively designed “a robot with electric gate to catch rubbish – 300 kilometres long with 1500 hands” (Nilma, personal communication, 29 April 2019). It is these possibilities, posed in response to the serious problem of ocean pollution, which Nilma pursues further with the children.

Nilma had supported the children to draw and talk about plans for these different machines, and on our first day of filming they had begun to build prototypes of the different models.

Action research in Nilma's work

Nilma's critical inquiry began with work on ocean pollution, and it developed to include both scientific and bicultural perspectives on ocean ecology. While framed by critical pedagogy, Nilma's inquiry also drew on eco-cultural literacies, and possibility thinking.

I followed Nilma's work for around eight weeks, with three of those weeks coming at the start of the second school term (full term ran from 29 April - 5

July 2019), and the remainder taking place in the third school term (22 July – 27 September 2019). The gap in the middle was due to Nilma taking extended leave to be with her daughter and very first grandchild.

Nilma's work is recounted through two broad action research cycles. Nilma had an understanding at the outset of what she wished to explore with children, so that aspect, combined with her departure shortly thereafter, meant the first cycle for her was quite short.

The second cycle was the exploration of her inquiry, where Nilma used bicultural and science perspectives to deepen children's thinking about the ocean, and ocean conservation.

Discussion had begun for a third action research cycle, which included seeking children's perspectives and the cultural perspectives of families, when the data collection period ended. Some preliminary work exploring children's personal perspectives and experiences had started towards the end of the second cycle.

Cycle One: A playing out of possibility thinking: The ocean-cleaning robot

As part of the possibility theorising with Nilma, different children (sometimes working in pairs) had come up with the idea of creating machines that could clean the ocean. In their consideration of this serious problem, anything was possible as they explored solutions. The children's responses, one of which is developed here, shows the playing out of possibility through project work. The children had followed up their initial ideas

by drawing plans for their machines. Cycle one follows the work of Nilma, in helping a small group build a prototype of the machine designed by Lauren and Reuben.

It was Tuesday afternoon in the kindergarten, a great time for projects. The kindergarten was a little quieter with a group of children and two teachers having already headed out on the Outdoor Explorers programme. Nilma had collected a box of recycled materials, and also brought the design previously drawn by Lauren and Reuben to the sheltered nook where the woodwork table sat. The children's picture served as a reference point for the group throughout the interaction.

Summer and Lauren joined Nilma. Lauren was the co-creator of the reference picture. (The other author, Reuben, was with Outdoor Explorers.) Other children rotated in and out of the activity as it progressed. The small group began by discussing the picture. Lauren explains, with Nilma's responses encouraging further information from Lauren.

- Lauren: (pointing) That's the tummy
Nilma: Mmm-hmm
Lauren: And that's the battery, and these are two buttons.
Nilma: Yes, and why are going to- what are we going to use this [the robot's appendages], what for?
Lauren: To collect the rubbish.
Nilma: Collect the rubbish? From where do we collect the rubbish?
Lauren: Ummm....
Nilma: From the ...
Lauren: It picks it up with all of its legs.

While Lauren does not respond to all Nilma's prompts, she does provide an explanation that sets the scene for the activity. Nilma and the children continued by discussing the robot's legs in detail, including counting them – Lauren counted eighteen legs in total - and recalling other details, such as how big the robot was going to be. Lauren demonstrated with a huge star jump, arms and legs stretched wide. "This big!" she said.

Lauren started this conversation in a position of power. This power came from her sense of ownership of the project, and also the insider knowledge she had of the design's particulars. She answered all of Nilma's questions with ease and enthusiasm. She was not talking over the other participants in the group, who at this point were not

talking at all. Lauren simply knew more about the project than they did, which are understandable since she helped to create it.

However, Nilma actively sought to draw other participants into the conversation – after all, it was a group project. Nilma’s focus turned next to Summer.

Nilma: (to Summer) ... Do you have any questions to ask?
Summer: Mmm.
Nilma: What [do] you want to know more? She [Lauren] knows everything (Nilma points to Lauren).
Summer: I wanna know ... 'bout this. (she points to something on the picture)
Nilma: (to Lauren) She wants to know what are these.
Lauren: I make on one of this
Nilma: They are the eyes. You said he should have four-
Lauren: These are the eyes
Nilma: yeah, four eyes. And a big mouth. And where are the buttons, which one’s the buttons?
Lauren taps the paper to indicate.
Yeah, these two.

Nilma’s question provides Summer with an entry point into the conversation. I knew from previous work that, Summer was an enthusiastic participant who sought high levels of involvement from a wide variety of activities. However, in the start of this interaction, she had to assume the role of observer.

Nilma asked Summer if she had questions about the project, then encouraged Summer to address those questions directly to Lauren. This exchange is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the opening Summer receives from Nilma not only provides a pathway for her involvement, it also gives her an opportunity to obtain more information about the project. Thus, Summer is repositioned from someone who does not know, to someone who now has an opportunity to know. The relevance of Nilma’s subtle repositioning for Summer’s participation has a positive effect, because hereafter Summer’s involvement in the project increases significantly.

The second reason Nilma’s redirection to Lauren is significant is because although Nilma is seeking to involve Summer, she does so in a way that still ensures Lauren retains a sense of ownership of her own work. Through talking together about the project, the children are able to establish a more equitable working relationship, where both have opportunities to contribute.

The next section of this conversation shows Summer's increasing participation, and Nilma extending the topic.

Nilma: What [will] happen when they press the buttons?
Lauren: Well, what happens is the arms catch up all the rubbish-
Summer: Which one is the arms?
Nilma: Yeah. These all are the arms.
Lauren: All of these.
Nilma: Because deep in the sea, lots of rubbish t
here.
Summer: What's the legs? What's the legs?
Nilma: Why do we collect the rubbish in the sea?
Lauren: So the animals don't get eat it and get tangled in it.
Nilma: Yeah, why do we collect the rubbish, if... you leave the
rubbish in the water what happens to the fish? Can you
remember?
Summer: And the crabs.
Nilma: Yeah and the crabs. What happens? Can you remember,
Summer?
Summer: They will die.
Nilma: Yeah. They were dying. How do they die?
Summer: Ah, I don't know.
Lauren: By getting tangled!
Nilma: Yeah, they get tangled with all the plastic rubbish!

Summer continues the strategy of asking questions without further prompting from Nilma. While not all of Summer's questions get answered, her increased participation is evident. Also of relevance is that the first question-answer exchange in this sequence is conducted between the two children themselves, without any intervention or support from Nilma. This exchange shows Summer taking up the role of active participant and Lauren, through her responses, as accepting and supporting that role.

Also of interest is Summer's statement "I don't know". "Not knowing" is okay at the kindergarten. Her statement is made simply and matter-of-factly. There is no embarrassment about not knowing, neither judgement or requirement to know from others in the group.

Later in this same sequence, the conversation moved to more mutually accessible territory as the group discussed the effects of pollution on the sea creatures. Both children had knowledge to draw on here, further supporting their ability to contribute.

While so far it is the interaction that has been discussed, the point of the activity, of course, was to create a prototype of the ocean-cleaning robot. At

the same time the two children are working out an equitable working relationship, they are also working on making a big idea a reality.

Nilma prompts her group to discuss the details of the robot they are building – eyes, mouth, buttons, and arms. Drawing attention to these features encourages the children to look at the details of their creation. Nilma also asks the children about the reason for creating the robot. While the children do not use the word pollution, they do describe the effects of pollution, and talk about sea creatures that get tangled in the rubbish humans let wash into the sea.

While the net effect of this work is not overtly critical, it is positioning: Nilma is laying groundwork here by locating her group within the ecological space in which they will continue to work. Her use of possibility thinking to generate ocean-cleaning solutions moves invokes transformative thinking and actions. Like Tina, Nilma’s work with the children in this instance also pays attention to equity within group interactions.

Figure 1: The ocean-cleaning robot prototype, built by the group



Cycle Two: Introducing and exploring two perspectives on respecting the ocean

In Nilma's second action research cycle, the focus on cleaning the ocean continued, but now with a more critical focus. Two distinct perspectives on respect for the ocean had emerged, one scientific, the other was bicultural. These multiple perspectives were explored both concurrently and singly, over several different activities. Nilma discussed her approach to the term's work with me.

What last term we did, we collected rubbish to clean the ocean, so this time I connected that with the Māori perspective, with Tangaroa and stories ... Now they're making the robot to help

Tangaroa look after his children, so just connected a little bit to [help the children] see from that perspective ... They learned from that story, they learned from ... the Māori customs, and what their culture does when they go fishing (Nilma, personal communication, 10 September 2019).

Nilma was intentional about the introduction of a bicultural perspective and her purpose for introducing one: to connect this perspective with children, if only "a little bit". She had selected a storybook that foregrounded respect for Tangaroa, the atua or deity of the sea, as a key idea.

That's why I got the storybooks, the storybooks can [have a big] impact ... on the children, on the way we have conversations. So the children and I got that one page [in the storybook] and let them talk about it, and that's how they learn lots, and come with lots of ideas about Tangaroa and those things. After that they started to talk about rubbish, and collect that (Nilma, personal communication, 10 September 2019).

By using a storybook in this way, to support understanding of a new perspective, aspects of a critical literacy approach were also incorporated into Nilma's inquiry.

Floating, sinking and magic: Thomas and Emma's discussions

Thomas was a young man with a plan – a robot plan. Like Lauren from the earlier example he had also designed an ocean-cleaning robot, and in this activity he built his prototype using resources from the open-play area. He initially gathered with Nilma

and a small group of children, but that group quickly dwindled, leaving just himself, Nilma, and Emma another of the children at the kindergarten.

There were a variety of open-ended materials in this area: slices of wood, cardboard boxes, pieces of cut pipe, and to one side, the block shelf containing the kindergarten's building block set. There were empty cable reels the diameter of dinner plates, and comfy cushions for children to nest on. With partitions on either side of the area, and an open space at the front for people to move past, the open-play nook was cosy and inviting.

Thomas was particularly interested in whether the materials he selected for his robot would float or sink, as floating (not sinking) was an important element of his design. He used these scientific concepts continually to assess the suitability of his selected building materials. Emma started out as part of the floating/sinking discussion, but quickly found something she wanted to talk about more: Tangaroa, the atua or deity of the sea. Thomas and Emma are similar ages, and both are confident participators. This sequence shows the unfolding of their dual perspectives over a thirty minute time period.

Nilma again used a reference document to both prompt children's recollections, and to encourage discussion about the robot itself. Here, the reference document was a learning story from Thomas's profile book. Nilma helped Thomas find the page in the book with the robot story on it, and they spent a few minutes reacquainting themselves with it. Emma also joined in.

- Nilma: ... What do you think? What are the things [that] float in the water?
- Thomas: Um, rubbish. Rubbish float.
- Nilma: Rubbish floats in the water, right. What else floats in the water? (she turns to Emma) What other things float in the water?
- Emma: Um, plastic.
- Nilma: Plastics. And what else you-
- Emma: Tyres.
- Nilma: Tyres, in the water? (to Thomas) That's a good idea!
- Thomas: Water balloons
- Nilma: Water balloons, that's good, we can use the water balloons, tyres, we can use tyres-
- Emma: No, no, float!
- Nilma: Huh?
- Emma: Float!

Nilma: Ah, float. What else floats in the water, Emma? Because he wants to make a robot that floats in the water.
 Thomas: I know! Wood!
 Nilma: Huh? Wood?
 Thomas: Yeah.
 Nilma: Do you think wood floats on the water? Yeah, okay we can use some wood.

The scientific aspect of the activity is firmly established here. Even though the project is primarily Thomas's, both he and Emma are able to participate equitably at this point due to more general nature of the sinking/floating discussion.

Nilma had also planned to support the children's scientific knowledge at a later point by conducting a sinking/floating experiment outside in the water trough, something Emma reminds her about during this conversation.

Emma: You said we would do a experiment tomorrow, just yesterday.
 Nilma: Yeah, we [are] going to do experiment, to see what other things float in the water.
 Emma: I'm just reminding you.
 Nilma: Ah, thank you, thank you for reminding me.

This exchange provides an additional insight into the power relationship between Nilma and Emma. Nilma, as teacher, is in the position typically considered more powerful. Freire in particular talks about the perceived role of "expert" that teachers have traditionally taken on in classrooms, a role that Freire associates dismissively with the perils of banking education (Berryman, 1991). However, the role of "teacher as authority" is minimised at the kindergarten. Emma's reminder here is respectful but confident. She is neither deferential, nor aggressive in her request: this strikes me as an exchange among equals. Nilma shows her support for Emma's reminder through her own reply; she lets Emma know that she remembers her promise, and expresses appreciation for the reminder. This small exchange lends weight to Freire's idea of teacher-student and student-teacher (Kanpol, 1994, p. 33) as equitable learning relationships happen outside of content exploration as much as within it.

Nine minutes and forty seconds into the activity, the second perspective emerges: the perspective of Tangaroa, atua of the sea. By this point, Thomas is busily engaged in building a prototype of his robot, while Emma is snuggled next to Nilma on the cushions.

Nilma: What do you think? (with Emma) If we make a robot, and go and collect the water in the deep sea, do you think that Tangaroa will be happy?
Emma agrees that He will be.
 Nilma: Do you think he will think his children are safe in the water?
 Emma: Yeah ... (long pause). Yeah.
 Nilma: Yeah.
 Thomas: (comes over with a piece of wood) I've a soft one, feel.
He holds out the piece of wood and both Emma and Nilma touch it.
 Nilma: Will it float? Do you think it will float?
 Thomas: Yeah.
 Nilma: Okay, you can use that. (pause) Emma. I wonder how Tangaroa collects the rubbish in the deep water?
 Emma: Can use arms (she pauses to demonstrate) to pick it up.
 Nilma: Does he have arms?
 Emma: Yeah.
 Nilma: Does he dive into the water and clean them [the water]?
 Emma: Yeah.
 Nilma: How will he look after his children?
 Emma: He will get- let the children eat the rubbish.

Nilma and Emma began to talk about Tangaroa, with Nilma using a series of questions to unpack Emma's current thinking about Tangaroa. While these questions initially start out as closed, as the discussion progresses there are two open-ended questions, one using the "I wonder" prefix, and the other using "how". Both of these see Emma give longer responses that hint at her current theories about Tangaroa. Thomas is not forgotten either; while he is largely busy building his prototype next to Emma and Nilma, he returns to Nilma and asks her opinion, something that continues throughout.

From this point onward, Nilma essentially manages two separate conversations: one with Thomas, about sinking and floating materials for his robot, and one with Emma, about Tangaroa's perspective on ocean pollution. It is worthwhile contrasting examples of the two concurrent conversations, to illustrate how they unfold.

Thomas: (holding up a round slice of wood) This can go in the water [xx xx x] soggy, can't go in
 Nilma: Yeah, this one can't go in the water, that's true. Ah, I agree with you. It will get soaked.
 Thomas: Those the ones inside
 Nilma: There are some. Here? (she takes out some plastic biscuit packaging) What [do] you think about this? You think it floats?
Emma takes the plastic from Nilma's hand and inspects it.
 Thomas: Yeah of course
 Nilma: Can it go in the water?

- Thomas: Yeah.
Thomas goes to inspect the box more closely and takes out some materials.
- Thomas: I got some – you think this box will work?
 Nilma: Oh, what is that for?
 Thomas: Um, just to make it a little bit beautiful.

The movement of power between the child participants is particularly interesting in this interaction, in the sense that it is relatively shared. Both children are interested in talking with Nilma about their different perspectives. While Nilma spends time with each child discussing their perspective, the children also show some ability to wait for the other to finish speaking. This is particularly evident in Emma's case. Thomas continues building, but when he returns to talk with Nilma, Emma waits patiently for him to speak before resuming her conversation.

Thomas, despite his scientific focus on whether his materials sink or float, also makes the comment at the end of the sequence that indicates his attention is not purely on function. He adds a box to his robot design that will, in his words, "make it a little bit beautiful". Even though there is a temptation to focus on Thomas's responses purely in regards to the scientific, this comment indicates that Thomas is also concerned about other factors that have typically fallen outside science, namely aesthetics. Similarly, in earlier examples, Emma had a lot to contribute in the floating/sinking discussion. These contributions demonstrate that while one perspective may appeal to a child, these perspectives are not considered in isolation, as the children bring other knowledge and priorities into their discussions as well. I think this further supports Kincheloe's (2008b) theory about the importance of multiple perspectives: children do not just draw from one source of knowledge. They have multiple ways of being, and bring these to bear in their educational experiences.

Emma's working theory about Tangaroa

The third portion of this conversation, around the twelve-minute mark, sees a return to the discussion of Tangaroa with Emma.

- Nilma: You told me that how Tangaroa looks after his children. How he guards his children.
 Emma: (carefully emphasising every word) Because. He. Is. Scared. That. They. Eat. The. Rubbish!
 Nilma: Oh. He's scared of his [children] eating rubbish.
 Emma: Yeah, he's scared that everybody eats rubbish, even himself.
 Nilma: Then ... has he got sick?

Emma: Yeah.

Nilma: Oh my. So he doesn't want his children to eat rubbish. Who are the children? Who are the children?

Emma: Little tiny- little tiny baby crab, little tiny shark, little tiny everything!

Nilma: Is this Tangaroa's babies?

Emma: Yeah.

Nilma: So is he looking after [his] babies in the sea.

Emma: Yeah.

Nilma: That's cool. So we can help him to keep the sea clean from the plastic. So Thomas [is] doing a very good job then, we can help him.

Emma: He [Tangaroa] knows. Because he has gotten sick before.

Nilma: Ah, that's why he knows. He got sick eating rubbish, plastics, and he doesn't want his children to eat plastic. Is that right?

Emma: Yeah.

Nilma supports Emma to unpack her current working theories about Tangaroa. Emma has a theory that Tangaroa does not like the rubbish in the ocean because it hurts his children, something he knows (by Emma's account) from his own experience. Emma has a working theory about Tangaroa as protecting the ocean from rubbish for his own family, but this theory, on a deeper level, also shows Emma's developing empathy for the deteriorating health of the ocean. Using a narrative she relates to – a parent wanting to protect his children from illness – she demonstrates her growing understanding of what pollution does to the sea creatures.

This working theory belongs to Emma. Nilma does not try to take over this theory or supplant it with her own knowledge, instead letting Emma's theory stand as the primary dialogue where Nilma is the investigator and Emma the authority. Instead, Emma receives support through Nilma's validating interest, and her continued attention. This, combined with relaxed, open-ended questions, supports Emma to keep talking. Nilma's only closed questions here are used to clarify her understanding of Emma's position.

Throughout this interaction, Thomas and Emma have pursued different perspectives. Apart from the first section of the conversation, these conversations have continued separately with each child, with Nilma as their primary conversation partner. The two children have been respectful of each other, but they talked to their teacher rather than with each other. In this final section of the interaction, we see the two different perspectives of the children converge – just a little.

Emma: ... he doesn't want rubbish in the sea any more.
 Nilma: Yeah I can see that. I wonder how the robot goes the whole day without food?
 Emma: It is a magical robot!
 Nilma: Is it a magical robot, he doesn't need any food? No energy?
 Emma: It is a magical robot!
 Nilma: Huh? How [does] it work?
 Emma: He gets the food off the other one, then eat, he will have energy.
 Nilma: Emma thinks it's a magical one, what [do] you think? How can he eat?
 Thomas: It's not. It's not magical.

From here, the conversation takes a practical turn. In response to an additional question from Nilma about "What can he eat? What do you give him?" the children provide a list of foods that include cookies, water from the sea to drink, cheese and crackers, and they even consider seaweed, after Nilma suggests it. But when Nilma suggests fish Emma firmly rejects this idea. "No," Nilma affirms. "Tangaroa won't be happy, will he."

In this last piece of the conversation, Emma advocates for the idea of magic, in the form of a magical robot. This is a perspective that has some compatibility with the Māori world-view she has been discussing with Nilma, where atua, or deities, have special powers over their domain. Thomas, who has continued predominantly with his science-based approach, firmly (but politely) rebuffs this approach. This is a conflict of opinion, but neither child is upset by the other's perspective or the fact that they do not have a consensus of opinion. They simply disagree and largely leave the disagreement standing before moving on to another part of the discussion.

There is something powerful about this idea of not pushing for a final truth, or avoiding a forced reconciliation of thinking. Such an approach could result in advocating for one of these perspectives over another, inadvertently or otherwise. By letting the opposing perspectives stand Nilma does not force the children to agree, but rather creates space for both perspectives to continue side-by-side, as equitably valid. This is significant. Typically, in education there has not been a lot of room for myths or magic outside the context of imaginary play or fiction. Nilma finds a way for both to sit alongside each other here.

This sequence highlighted the turns of conversation that supported two different perspectives, demonstrating the subtle power that comes from a curriculum – and a teacher - that values different ways of viewing the world.

The sinking/floating experiment

Nilma continued this powerful positioning of diverse perspectives through a series of different activities that incorporated both scientific, and bicultural ways of being. The sinking/floating experiment (as Emma mentioned) previously, was the next activity that the group carried out.

Nilma and I were standing in the bag bay area, as Nilma explained about the additional ocean-cleaning models they had been making, based on more of the plans that children had made, which would be tested that day in the water trough. Nilma talked about how the children were still formulating a variety of working theories around which materials would be most suitable to construct their ocean-cleaning machines. For example, they did not want to use nails in the project because nails sank, opting instead to use the glue gun.

Our discussion migrated to the water troughs outside. These were positioned by the fence, shielded from the road by a line of vigorous shrubs and just to the north of the sandpit. This was where the robot-floating tests would be conducted. Ara and Derek in particular were very interested in this activity, as they had helped design some of the models that would be tested on this day.

- Ara: Put it in the water, put it in the water! (she points to the water)
- Nilma: Why? Why do you want to put it in the water?
- Ara: To see, to see
- Nilma: What you want to see?
- Ara: I want to see is going to sink (her hand, laid flat, is lower) or come up (her hand rises)
- Nilma: Ah. See whether the robot can [float] - do you want to put it in? (Nilma offers the robot to Derek, who nods). It's very exciting, isn't it?
Derek takes hold of one end, Nilma holds the other, and they lower the model into the water.
- Nilma: Slowly. See whether it's going to float.
It floats.

Nilma: It is!

Figure 2: An ocean-cleaning prototype being tested by the group in the water trough



This activity commences with the foregrounding of the scientific perspective – understandable since the entire premise here is to test whether the robot will sink or float. Nilma encouraged Ara to hypothesise about the outcome of the experiment, which Ara does using a mixture of words and gesture to explain what she wants to see.

After the initial experimentation phase is completed, Nilma again introduces the perspective of Tangaroa.

Nilma: And why you think that Tangaroa needs to keep the sea/ocean clean?
Ara: Because maybe somebody can die in the ocean
Nilma: Is it?
Ara: Yeah
Nilma: He doesn't want [that]? Who is in the ocean?
Ara: (emphasising with her hands) All the family!
Nilma: Is that Tangaroa's family? (Nilma indicates a pile of plastic sea creatures nearby that are used in the water troughs)
Ara: Yes.
Nilma: All the sea creatures are over there.
Ara: (she looks over her shoulder) Yes.
Nilma: Okay, so you are going to help Tangaroa keep the ocean clear. Who is Tangaroa?
Ara: Tangaroa is the one who will look after the ocean. (she gestures with her hands)

Nilma: Oooh! How does he look after the sea?
Ara: Don't put any rubbish inside!
Nilma: If somebody puts the rubbish [in the sea], what is he going to do?
Ara: Will hurry and catch it, and put it in the rubbish bin

As this discussion continued, I saw an increased compatibility emerging between the scientific and bicultural perspectives, which allowed the perspectives to be explored together by the same person, rather than alternatively, as happened with Emma and Thomas. So far, Ara has avidly discussed sinking and floating, as well as Tangaroa. This combination of perspectives, discussed through the lens of one child, is illustrative of how dual perspectives can find expression in a critical curriculum.

The common thread is cleaning the ocean, which in the science perspective is discussed from more of a "how to" angle, but through Tangaroa's perspective is framed as "why". Of course, there are more reasons than those shared here as to why we should keep the oceans clean. However, working through the perspective of Tangaroa has helped Ara, as it helped Emma previously, to find an empathetic alignment with why a clean ocean is important.

This is also a reasonably early stage in the children's working theories about the environmental state of our oceans. A genuine connection to caring about the ocean on Tangaroa's behalf, likely supported by both children's experiences as participants in the Outdoor Explorers programme, speaks to a more dispositional approach. As she did previously, Nilma lets these two different perspectives sit side by side.

Timo and the kingfish

Nilma continued to unpack the bicultural perspective of Tangaroa with the children, through the picture book, *Timo and the Kingfish* (Reedy, 2000). This story uses the fishing exploits of a boy and his dog to outline the bicultural practice of throwing the first fish caught back into the sea, in order to honour Tangaroa (see below).

Timo and the kingfish (Reedy, 2000). A brief summary

In an effort to prove himself skilled in fishing like his father and older brothers, young Timo and his dog Pou took the family dinghy out to sea so they could fish. During the secretive trip, Timo manages to snag a mighty kingfish. During the struggle to land the fish, Pou the dog is knocked into the ocean. Tangaroa, atua of the ocean appears and Timo pleads for his dog's life. However, Tangaroa tells Timo that by failing to gift Tangaroa the first fish he caught, Timo has broken a longstanding custom between himself and humans. Timo apologises, saying he had never been taught that, and offers to set the kingfish free for Tangaroa. Taking pity on the boy and his dog, Tangaroa says Timo can offer a smaller fish instead, and reminds him to always remember that the first fish should be offered to Tangaroa. The atua saves the dog. After a long fight with the

On this occasion Nilma was working with Quinnly and Elsa, who were reinterpreting the story through pictures they were drawing. We were working outside on the picnic tables in the middle of the playground, in the midst of a hugely windy day. Several times the children had to catch their pictures to stop the wind snatching them away, causing lots of laughter at each near miss.

Quinnly quickly puts his knowledge about bicultural symbols to use in his drawing.

- Nilma: I wonder what Tangaroa – who put those patterns on his face?
Quinnly uses his pencil to point to something in the book Nilma has.
- Nilma: Tangaroa? (pause) Yeah, I can see that. Koru patterns.
- Quinnly: That's what I did.

A koru is a spiral motif important to Māori, with the word meaning loop, or coil. Koru represent the uncurling of a silver fern frond, with its meaning including new life or growth. The children in the kindergarten had been working with koru for some time.

This work originated with the kindergarten's study of maunga (mountains) and the motif can be found in the work of other teachers in this study as well (see also Tina's work in Chapter Eight).

After seeing Quinnly add koru designs to his picture, Elsa decided to do the same, something Nilma explained to me later when we were talking about the activity.

Yeah that's her [Elsa's] octopus. After she heard about this octopus she drew one. These are the fishes. And this is the kingfish. Yeah. His [Quinnly's] kingfish is down there, by the boat (indicating another part of the drawing). This is the Tangaroa [in] her version. He has more teeth like a crocodile (Nilma, personal communication, 10 September 2019).

Given the prevalence of koru work in the kindergarten at this time it is likely Elsa was familiar herself with the koru motif, and that seeing Quinnly use the koru in his work was a reminder for her.

The scientific perspective is not particularly present in this interaction, however here Nilma provides additional knowledge, through the stories, for the children to meaningfully deepen their understanding of Tangaroa. By using the story book, and providing opportunities for the children to revisit the story multiple times; both are able to develop their understanding in a more organic way. In this manner, Nilma avoids a banking education approach, while still providing opportunities for children's

knowledge to grow. This approach is also consistent with a bicultural approach to teaching, where values and ideals from a Māori world-view are typically conveyed through pūrakau (stories).

Nilma's discussion of Quinnly and Elsa's pictures, conducted with each of them in turn, was unhurried. My personal sense of watching Nilma work was that she was completely happy to let the interaction unfold at whatever pace the children set. She used questions as prompts, but those were to assist her understanding of each child's work – once again, the child was at the centre of the interaction and in control of the pace.

I saw Nilma retell the *Timo* (Reedy, 2000) story multiple times, with different children, with groups of different sizes, and also specifically with the younger children in the kindergarten. Nilma had noticed the younger children had been absent from her previous groups, and she re-presented some of the Tangaroa activities specifically for this younger age group. Nilma said the following about her work with younger children.

Now, we have lots of children, [including] those who have no understanding of Tangaroa, the little ones [the two year olds]. We always get the older ones because they're talking, talking, talking. So yesterday I'm collecting some of the little ones ... they're not talking much. But yesterday they drew pictures and they [took them] home, and they told the story to their parents! That's cool, isn't it? ... Sometimes you know they're under the radar. Sometimes hiding (Nilma, personal communication, 17 September, 2019).

This conscious emphasis provides an opportunity for the very young children in the kindergarten to act in empowering ways. Two of the children shared the story with their parents, who in turn came and asked Nilma about Tangaroa. This was an opportunity for the very young children to be experts in their families about the story, and to provide further learning opportunities for their own parents.

These multiple retellings included an occasion in late September where I filmed a large group who spent around 20 minutes in a collective storytelling group. This storytelling took place on other occasions, including under the fale (thatched house-like structure) and at the water trough.

Such retellings provided familiarity and practice with the ideas in the story, enabling children to learn to see the ocean's health from the cultural perspective of Māori. Because this cultural perspective is new to many of the children, who were first generation New Zealanders or who came from outside the Māori world, practice through retelling provides opportunities to work authentically with new ideas, process a different perspective, and make connections with a child's own funds of knowledge. Nilma discussed how the children's motivation for cleaning the ocean was changing as they came to understand the perspective of Tangaroa. She comments:

As soon as they're free we'll talk about Tangaroa. Yeah. And that day, Emma [said] Tangaroa ate rubbish one day and he got sick, and now he doesn't want his children to get sick. So that's why he wants the ocean clean (Nilma, personal communication, 10 Sept 2019).

This idea of Tangaroa wanting to clean the ocean for his children recurred throughout the inquiry, and it represented a combination of ideas the children had been exploring. The idea of cleaning the ocean was now supported by a cultural reason to clean it. Part of this evolving theory about Tangaroa included determining his role. Nilma recounted another conversation with different children, saying

... so I use the name of Tangaroa as the guardian of the sea¹⁹. Ara said no, he's the boss of the sea. He's the boss of the sea. ... Because Emma said he eats some rubbish, and she said no, he's the boss in the sea, he knows what to do and what not to do. So he's not going to eat ... because he's the boss knows everything. She said that (Nilma, personal communication, 10 September 2019).

In addition to restating that Tangaroa does not want his children to get sick from eating the rubbish, one of the children also finds her own word to define

Tangaroa's role: while Nilma uses the word guardian (see footnote below), Emma settles on "boss", adding "the boss knows everything". Emma gives Tangaroa a title of power, along with stating his control over the ocean, his rules and rationale for a healthy ocean, and him being all-knowing.

¹⁹ The Māori word for guardian is actually "kaitiaki". Nilma uses the translation of atua as a "guardian" loosely here, likely to invoke the idea that atua guard and protect the area of the natural world they are responsible for.

Nilma continued this sense-making process by asking the children directly about their beliefs, which turned into more of a discussion about children's understandings/narratives about fishing and the ocean. Nilma related these discussions back to me during one of our reflections, stating:

Yeah unpacking it, and I asked what they [need to] do, they said it's not safe to go in the water without parents, you need adults. They know. Those [are the] kind of things they talk about (Nilma, personal communication, 17 September 2019).

Water-safety narratives were also emerging from children's sense-making work, as well as children's own fishing experiences. For example, Grayson had gone fishing from the wharf with his grandfather, and became very interested in the picture of the wharf, at the start of the story, because of his personal connection to that aspect. Nilma continued:

Rather than reading the whole story, [Grayson] gets this one and talks about parents, and he was looking [at] what happened at the end, he's not much interested in the beginning, and he found this [picture] again [of Timo, the protagonist, fishing from the wharf]. ... So his interest [was] over there on the wharf. ... He has his own experience. Cause he's said he has gone with Grandpa. He did fishing ... We got one, ten, twenty fish he said. I'll talk to Mum and ask whether they went in the boat or maybe on the wharf. Because that's why he likes it. He didn't talk much about Tangaroa. He said Tangaroa's there, that's all he said. But he talked about his own experience (Nilma, personal communication, 17 September 2019).

Grayson's focus on the wharf does not necessarily mean a disinterest in Tangaroa, but rather suggests excitement for something he has recognised.

This extensive work on developing a bicultural perspective did not mean the children had abandoned science. The children had also begun to critique their ocean-cleaning designs, making changes as they continued the process of testing. These changes included a long hand for one robot so it could "go deep into the water, collect the rubbish", and also the use of solar power to power the machines. Rubbish bins were also added to another machine.

Moving towards a third action research cycle

Towards the end of the school term, Nilma and I began to discuss additional ways to move the conversation forward. Having explored perspectives from science and te ao Māori (the Māori world), we considered asking children about their own cultural perspectives.

- Nilma: This is where he learned the customs, from here. So I'd like to find some more of that over there.
- Raella: With regards to the children, because some of them come from different cultural contexts, do they know those or do you ask the parents?
- Nilma: Today when Summer came, after seeing her country²⁰, I'll ask about hers.
- Raella: Yeah, it'd just be interesting to see them bring their different perspectives together, they may have different ideas or they may have similar ideas, but either way, just to see them do that.
- Nilma: Yeah, I'll talk to [her] parents.

Reflections and conclusions on Nilma's critical pedagogy inquiry

There are a few useful reflections to make, in consideration of Nilma's work as a critical pedagogy inquiry. The first is that a teacher's attention to issues of power supports equity for learners. Nilma's critical inquiry into empowerment with children took two different forms as she used possibility thinking and incorporated multiple perspectives into children's learning, while continuously striving to consciously create an equitable learning environment. This equitable environment was one where pathways to participation were supported, and where strong Western narratives of the validity of science were able to coexist with Māori cultural perspectives and both were viewed as valid ways of being. This practice provided opportunities for access by a variety of children over time, including younger children. Access, inclusion, and opportunities to contribute saw Nilma contribute to the empowerment of children.

The highlighting of different perspectives on ocean pollution, coupled with multiple occasions to practice with those perspectives for her young participants meant that children gained experience with more than one way of being. This approach supports living in a complex world, but a world where cultural and scientific ways of knowing and

²⁰ Summer had just come back from visiting her home country.

being are valued, and of learning to look beyond our own immediate frames of reference to develop understanding of bicultural ways of being.

The second observation is that Nilma's focus on child-led inquiry also sees her avoid a banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2018). She does not feed children information; instead she provides opportunities for them to gain new knowledge through both active experimentation as well as through practice with new ideas, to theorise about ideas they have encountered, including making connections with their own funds of knowledge, and to disagree and be comfortable with disagreement. Avoidance of a confining approach to the acquisition of knowledge, in favour of one that provides numerous opportunities for children to uncover knowledge for themselves, is empowering.

The example of Nilma moving through a critical pedagogy inquiry using inquiry-based learning may also be useful for teachers already using this approach, who may be considering critical pedagogy. The addition of conscious attention to the movement of power, and to the overall empowerment of children became meaningful lenses for her activities.

It is worthwhile addressing the kind of critical dialogue used between Nilma and the children. Critical pedagogy literature lacks examples of what this dialogue could look like for young children, so it is helpful to return to Freire (1970/2018), who notes that "true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking" (p. 92).

What could the children's critical thinking look like here? In analysing the responses of the children, relayed in this chapter, I noted the ways in which children were willing to explain their responses, to talk about complex ideas, to explore different perspectives on the natural world, and to connect their learning with their prior experiences. All of these instances are good examples of how the basis for critical dialogue can be established.

There is much to be said for a teaching approach that is informed by Freirean principles, particularly the avoidance of banking education, the use of child-led inquiry, and the teacher's careful attention to children's self-empowerment. As Freire (1970/2018) writes,

Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence (p. 91).

These elements of love, humility and faith are certainly evidence in Nilma's dialogue with children, as is the mutual trust shown by all participants; in my opinion there is nothing more Freirean than adherence to these ideals.

Chapter Eight: Hearing All Voices in a Conversation -

Tina's Inquiry

In Tina's own words

This chapter begins with Tina's words – her teaching philosophy – as a way of sharing a little of who she is and what she believes as a teacher.

For me my teaching has always been knowing that children are precious, that they've been given to us, to be there to support them to grow. I think for me it's not a matter of they're sponges and we give them stuff. We're there to support them to grow in a rich environment, that's how I think of children.

I feel that every single one of the children, regardless of race, gender or abilities, they have voice, they need to be heard. And that in a group everybody has to be respectful of each other's voices.

That is my heart. I think of children I've taught, whether they're verbal or non verbal, there's something in their hearts they want to say. They need to have a place where they can bring out that voice and be heard.

For me, pedagogy of listening is that there's someone who will listen to you, there's a time and place where you can have each child share and listen something. And listen not just with your ears, but with your heart, with your eyes, with everything. At the end of the day if you don't listen you don't actually hear. Not just physical hearing, but looking at their actions, at nonverbal communication. Listening, and being aware of what they're trying to say. Physical listening is only a really small portion of it. Sometimes they don't have a loud voice, they don't have any voice. They're talking with their eyes or the expression on his face. All of these children have different personalities, so they come in different form, so for me it's like looking at each one individually and they each have a voice, and you need to listen to each one.

A chronology of Tina’s work

Tina’s critical pedagogy inquiry was a deep exploration into how she heard and supported the diverse voices of children in her work with small groups.

The foregrounding of her critical inquiry means that this chapter does not follow a clear narrative thread from start to finish, in the same way that the other teachers’ work has. In this chapter, the term “project” refers to work done with the children, while “inquiry” refers to the critical pedagogy inquiry Tina undertakes. Because Tina’s critical pedagogy inquiry overlaid the project work she did with children, that project work became the *mode* through which the critical pedagogy inquiry was explored, making the projects themselves secondary to her critical inquiry. The operation of both project and inquiry is set out in the table below.

Table 4: Table showing the relationship between Tina's critical pedagogy inquiry, and her project work with children

Cycle	Critical pedagogy inquiry	Project
<i>Cycle 1</i>	Figuring out what the inquiry will look like – Tina works with quiet children and with dissent	Working on the Ōhuiarangi mural
<i>Cycle 2</i>	Supporting a child to find her voice in a conversation, supporting a nonverbal child, supporting children to deal with conflict	Working on the Ōhuiarangi mural (projects 1 & 2 in this chapter) Working on the friendship seat (project 3 in this chapter)
<i>Cycle 3</i>	Tina invited children into her inquiry, by asking them to identify who was speaking, and who was quiet, from a video clip.	While the children were not working on a “project” here, they did use a video clip that came from cycle 2, and involved the cutting of the wood to make koru-sized pieces.

Showing how the critical inquiry and the two projects unfold simultaneously provides an orienting chronology for Tina’s work.

A little background

Tina’s critical pedagogy work took place over two school terms, a time period of approximately four months. During this time she worked with children on two separate, long-term projects, *the mural of Ōhuiarangi*, and *the friendship seat*.

The mural of Ōhūiarangi

Each of the teachers had undertaken different projects to support the children's learning about Ōhūiarangi. Ōhūiarangi was a local maunga (mountain) that the kindergarten children had visited, as part of the kindergarten's bicultural learning. Tina's project was working with the children to build a three-dimensional mural of the maunga. The primary construction material for this mural were pieces of wood from the carpentry area, which had been painted different shades of green as part of a previous activity. Tina discussed the process of painting the blocks.

We noticed the different colour greens of the leaves and the trees [during Outdoor Explorers], and we had the paint swatches from the paint store. We were talking about the different greens and what each looked like – noticing shades of green. Once we were ready, we'd paint it – we'd been for our visit [to Ōhūiarangi] – we'd look at the photos, see which parts would be lighter or darker green, then mix it all. That was an extension of the project again, bringing greens into the centre ... I think with the project work it really does deepen the way. You can actually go much deeper, extend it to different areas (Tina, personal communication, 21 January 2021).

It was through reflection with other teachers, and Jacqui in particular, that the thought emerged to make these carefully coloured blocks into a mural. "I ran with it, once there was a provocation for it," Tina recalled (Tina, private communication, 21 January 2021). When I started recording data, Tina and the children were about a month into their mural project.

The friendship seat

Tina's second project was building the 'friendship seat'. This project began after the completion of the previous mural project, and about halfway through Tina's critical pedagogy inquiry. The children had identified an issue: they had noticed some of their kindergarten friends got sad and needed support, but did not always know. Tina recalled,

Jacqui and Quinnly were talking about somewhere people could go when they were sad. That was the start. Quinnly drew the little bench with Jacqui. When we came back the next term, Jacqui brought that out and said it was Quinnly's idea.

One of the older children had noticed a little one who was upset, and wanted to comfort them. There was lots of new ones [children], lots of upset ones. Lots of tuakana teina, with the older ones looking after the younger ones²¹. So we spoke about having a place where people could go that were sad, and we would know that they needed a friend. From there we started drawing things. We started with a big sheet of paper and a group of children. Saying, if you were sad, and you had a seat to sit on? What do you think would make you feel better? It was things like, it would have a smiley face, it would have rainbows, all these ideas. And the second thing was, what would it look like. They did this big drawing of what it would look like. And then also, what would be on it that would make you feel better? (Tina, personal communication, 21 January 2021).

In discussion with Tina, several of the children decided they wanted to make a place that a child could go when they were lonely and sad, in order to signal to others that they needed a friend. This desire resulted in the collective decision to make a friendship seat. Data collection finished before the project was concluded, but during a subsequent visit to the kindergarten, Tina shared pictures of the finished project.

Action research in Tina’s work

Tina’s work with the children progressed through three broad cycles, which are summarised below.

The first cycle (what will the inquiry look like?) was exploratory, with Tina thinking about what she might like to inquire into. The first cycle comprised a single piece of data, as Tina quickly decided on her topic.

The second cycle (Tina “hearing all voices in a conversation”) focused on expansion of the inquiry, with Tina implementing her inquiry in different contexts and with different children.

²¹ Tuakana-teina, is a Māori concept, but when used in teaching and learning contexts in ECE, refers to older (tuakana) children teaching and supporting younger (teina) children. See the glossary for a fuller explanation.

The third cycle (Tina and the children “thinking about our thinking”) was elaborative, with Tina seeking to bring the children into the inquiry by making the topic visible to them, and by seeking their feedback.

Cycle One (the Ōhūiarangi mural): What will the critical pedagogy inquiry look like?

The first cycle of Tina’s work was exploratory. The focus in this segment is on, firstly, Tina’s support of a shy child, and secondly, Tina’s work with conflicting opinions. Both classroom dynamics became relevant in her subsequent decision (at the start of the second research cycle) to focus her critical pedagogy inquiry on how she could support all children involved in a group to have a voice in that discussion, including those who disagreed with each other. In the interests of maintaining a chronology for Tina’s work, her inquiry topic will be elaborated on more fully at the start of the second research cycle.

Ōhūiarangi: Planning a block mural together

Although it was late May and well into autumn, the weather was still mild enough to enjoy time outside together. Watched by a brilliant blue sky, Tina assembled a group of children under the thatched roof of the play fort to continue working on the Ōhūiarangi block mural. At this point, construction was still focused on building models of the mountain with the blocks, and had not quite progressed to the mural stage, allowing work to take place in different locations around the kindergarten. Despite limited space on the fort’s platform, none of the children appeared inconvenienced by this and worked amicably together. Included in this group were Nina, Summer, Ara, Emily, and Emma. A few other children drifted in and out as the activity progressed, but it was these five who remained the core participants.

Today’s activity had three components. Firstly, Tina scaffolded a group discussion about whether the local mountain Ōhūiarangi was alive or not – and what did it mean to be alive? What was growing on the mountain, and how did things grow? What symbols could the children use in their mural that would represent life? The children had a number of working theories to share about life and growing things, and they drew on their existing funds of knowledge as well. The second component saw the

children take turns creating a collective drawing of their plan, adding their discussed ideas one at a time. The third component saw the group once again use their wooden blocks to create a model of Ōhūiarangi.

From this rich well of ideas, I observed two instances of Tina's teaching. The first was her work with Emily, who seemed quite shy on this occasion. The second was observing what happened when children disagreed. Both are discussed in more detail below.

A quiet voice and wait time

Emily was around three years old at the time of this activity, of Cambodian-Chinese descent, and a first-generation New Zealander in a home where additional languages were spoken. At this point in the activity the discussion had been going on for some time, and the group was preparing to draw. Tina asked each of the children in turn for their perspective on how to start the drawing of Ōhūiarangi.

Everyone had voiced a suggestion, except Emily who had not responded.

"Emily, you're very quiet," Tina said. Emily still did not offer a response. After a few moments of wait time, Tina approached the topic in another way, by reminding Emily that she had visited Ōhūiarangi with her mother on the kindergarten field trip. Emily still did not respond after a few moments of wait time, but she did not withdraw in any visible way either. Tina dropped her voice to a near-whisper, and this time, asked Emily if she would like to be involved. Despite this exchange consisting of only a few verbal interactions, these turns of conversation did take some time because Tina allowed considerable wait time for Emily between questions and prompts.

During this time, the other children had waited reasonably patiently, although there were a few attempts to talk with Tina. Tina responded to these by saying that she was waiting for Emily. When Ara asked why they were waiting, Tina responded that it was because Emily was part of the team. The team concept is one that Tina returns to in the future as well.

Tina changed her question to Emily, instead asking if Emily wanted to tell the children the shape of the maunga (mountain) they were drawing instead.

Nina interjected here.

Nina: I know the shape

Tina: (smiling, indicating Emily) She saw it as well

Although Nina attempted to move the conversation forward here, Tina's response is a gentle but firm affirmation that Emily's experience is also valid.

Nina accepted this response and continued to wait.

Moments later, in response to Tina's most recent prompt of "Do you remember the shape?" Emily quietly answered, "Circle." "Ah!" Tina exclaims animatedly. "Emily said a circle!" There is a sense of celebration in her words.

The point could be raised here that Emily might have felt under some pressure to provide a response. From the time Tina asks Emily's opinion, to the time Emily provides her "circle" response, close to two and a half minutes elapse, a time punctuated with long, silent waiting pauses, Tina's prompts to Emily, and the other children's attempts to move the conversation along. Essentially Tina held the conversation here until Emily is ready to provide a response.

However, in this particular situation Tina's approach works. Firstly, she respectfully extends an opportunity to Emily. At no point did Tina say or imply by her actions or tone of voice that she was in a hurry. Secondly, and crucially, at no point did Emily refuse participation. If she had shaken her head, withdrawn, or given other non-verbal (or verbal) indicators, it is likely Tina would have respected her choice and let the conversation move on. In fact, she does ask Emily, at the start of the sequence, if she wants to say something, and because Emily does not give any indication of withdrawal, Tina provides extended time for the girl's response.

While it is also possible Emily might have been too shy to respond in any way, Tina knows these children well. She is a reflective and engaged teacher, with an affinity for the shy, and for those learning English as a second language. Something that supports this is the conclusion of this conversational sequence, where Tina sees a withdrawal of some kind from Emily after the latter's response of "circle", and supports Emily's non-verbal desire to stop there.

Working with dissent: Three examples

Tina's work with conflicting opinions is also of interest to her inquiry topic. There are three occasions during this activity where conflict occurs.

Conflict One: Asleep or dead?

One of Tina's goals for this activity was for the children to connect their local mountain, Ōhūiarangi, with the earth mother deity in Māori cosmology: Papatūānuku²².

Ōhūiarangi is not a deity, but rather, one of the children of Papatūānuku. To help the children make this connection Tina brought a picture showing an artist's impression of Papatūānuku, the earth mother and used it to prompt the group's discussion.

In the picture Papatūānuku is drawn in a human-like form, lying amongst the hills, as though she is wrapped in them like a blanket. Her eyes are closed. A large sun, representative of Tama-nui-te-rā, (the sun deity) is prominent in one corner of the image.

Tina discusses the picture with the children, but two children in the group are unable to agree on an interpretation. Noting that her eyes are closed, they discuss whether Papatūānuku is asleep, or dead.

Summer: The sun is letting her lie down. By falling asleep!
Tina: So you say she's not dead, then. She's just asleep.
Summer nods.

Summer's idea is different to Ara's, and after a few moments Ara wants to discuss this.

Ara: Her life beat down, and then she died
Summer: I don't think she died, she just sleeping

Tina recognises their conflicting opinions.

Tina: But if you think about it, there were flowers on the mountain, that's growing, trees were growing, if it's dead do you think things will be growing, I wonder.

In this instance, Ara and Summer have different theories about Papatūānuku. Is she dead or asleep? Tina does not overtly agree or disagree with either perspective, but using the "I wonder" statement, shares some observations that invite the children to consider their thinking about whether the mountain is alive or dead. Tina does not require the children to reach a firm discussion and the conversation moves on.

²² Papatūānuku as a deity is viewed as the source of life for all things, including people, and gives many blessings to her children.

Conflict Two: Does Ōhūiarangi have wings?

Another conflict arises later in the activity, during the drawing stage when the children have decided to draw Ōhūiarangi. Emma asks if she can draw wings on the picture of the mountain. In response, Tina suggests Emma consult with the group about this.

Emma: (to the group) Do you think we need it [wings]?

Nina: No

Emma looks at Tina, her uncertainty is clear.

Tina: Why not, Nina?

Nina: (smiling, playfully) Uh, because.

Tina: So she can't have wings.

Nina: Um, I think so, yes.

Tina: Well, Emma was asking about that.

Ara: She can have wings, right now I'm drawing the wings
Ara begins drawing wings on the picture. Emma
leans over to help her.

The drawing the team has been working on is the shared work of the children so it is not surprising that this proximity brings them into occasional conflict over how to proceed. Of interest here is Tina's reaction: even though Emma looks to her for support, Tina's approach is to ask Nina to explain her thinking, rather than taking sides. Nina has been very playful throughout this interaction; asking her to give a reason for her refusal is a subtle way of ascertaining whether Nina is serious in her objection. Nina does not give a specific reason for her refusal, but reiterates her rejection of the idea. Ara initiates a solution by validating Emma's idea and starting on the wings herself. Nobody objects to Ara doing this, and the wings are added.

Conflict Three: The shape of the maunga/mountain

The third disagreement comes at the end of the previous sequence with Emily. After Emily makes her suggestion about starting the Ōhūiarangi drawing with a circle shape, Nina disagrees with this by drawing her own, different shape in the air. Tina brings Emily back into the conversation, asking if she can also draw the shape she's thinking of in the air. "Or write it," Ara adds helpfully.

This disagreement comes in the context of the quiet child. It took a lot for Emily to provide her initial response of "circle", and now that response has been challenged. Once again, Tina demonstrates her ability to support the perspectives of different children by inviting Emily to draw her shape, a response that is both non-verbal and non-confrontational. On this occasion Emily does not wish to respond further, but

again Ara lends support by suggesting another alternative Emily could use to express her ideas.

It is arguable that these conflicts are very civil ones. The children do not get angry or even agitated, and Nina is playful with her responses, even when objecting.

Nonetheless, these small conflicts are indicative of the way Tina responds: she asks questions that offer children the opportunity to rethink their objections, and she also asks children to explain their thinking. She resists making rulings, even when a child seeks intervention as Emma does, with her pointed look to Tina after Nina's objection.

Also of interest is the work that children undertake to resolve conflicts. Twice in this interaction, Ara comes to support the other children (Emma and Emily), either with her actions or suggestions.

Cycle Two (the Ōhuiarangi mural and the friendship seat):

“Hearing all voices”

Tina's inquiry emerges

Tina and I stood near the sliding door that leads from the covered veranda into the playground, snatching a few moments to discuss the research together. Tina said,

At the end of last term I started thinking about- 'cause you know we reflect on our ideas. We're learning as we go along. I kind of got to the point where I felt, well, that I needed to do a little more listening in these groups, the pedagogy of listening. I think I chatted to you about that. But it's just listening and waiting and slowing down and hearing their points of view. So for me, I'm actually making a point of doing that, and so it's the democracy, including them, listening to all their ideas (Tina, personal communication, 3 May 2019).

This statement was the basis of Tina's inquiry topic, which came to be known as “hearing every voice in a conversation”. As we talked further, Tina discussed how being part of a group (even a small one) is not an automatic pathway for a child to belong in a group, as various factors can inhibit the actual opportunity for an individual child to participate meaningfully. Tina wanted to consciously explore how she could support a child's ability to belong, by firstly assessing the different factors that could prohibit a

child's contribution, and secondly, by actively mitigating those factors to facilitate the child's purposeful involvement.

The initial inquiry of hearing every child's voice in a conversation quickly evolved to include "hearing" (recognising and validating) the voices of all children when there was conflict in the group. Tina discussed why this had become important, stating,

Sometimes there's such strong opinions that no one agrees. And so as a teacher then, facilitating the whole thing, how do you move forward?
'Cause no one's agreeing with anything. And that's okay, because that's their opinion (Tina, personal communication, 13 June 2019).

The emergence of Tina's critical pedagogy inquiry comes from her own critical reflection, undertaken as part of ongoing professional practice. Tina's critical reflection has helped her identify that, for some children, a generic opportunity to contribute is not sufficient. Language barriers, cultural factors, age, a child's disposition and preferred method of communication, and the way certain peer groups interact are all power-related dynamics that can impact the realities of contribution (Kincheloe, 2008b). Without intervention, the status quo ensures that confident children gain a powerful position within group interactions; something that works against the democratic practices of collaboration and listening that Tina seeks to promote.

Instead of intervention, Tina adopts a problem-posing approach, taking up the role of an empowered scholar teacher working for change, in the context of her teaching practice (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 166; Kincheloe et al., 2018). This position is supported by Kilderry (2004) who notes the importance of early childhood teachers using critical pedagogy as a way to question the status quo, by providing a rigorous way to address the hidden aspects of education. As Kanpol writes, "The critical pedagogue always seeks just and fair ways to alter a system" (p. 33), a process Tina has commenced through identifying an issue within her practice that she wants to pay conscious attention to.

Tina's inquiry: Three examples

The three examples in this section demonstrate how Tina expanded her understanding of what "hearing all voices" would actually look like within the context of her teaching. The first example focuses on an extended interaction between Ava and Amelia. The

second looks at a series of examples from Tina’s work with Derek, a young child who was learning English as an additional language and preferred to communicate through gesture. The third example looked at Tina’s work with Thomas, a confident child who was learning to accept the opinions of others.

As mentioned in the chronology at the start of this chapter, the critical pedagogy inquiry is discussed here through two different projects: Projects 1 and 2 come from *the mural for Ōhuiarangi*, while Project 3 comes from *the friendship seat*.

Project story One (Ōhuiarangi): Ava and Amelia

The overhead sky threatened rain as Tina gathered a small group of children together to continue work on their mural-building project of their local maunga, Ōhuiarangi. They had gathered their special green wood blocks together, and were very interested in incorporating koru patterns into their Ōhuiarangi mural but there was a problem: the green blocks of wood were too big.

Tina’s group included Ava, Amelia, Reuben and Alexander, as well other children who came and went as the interaction progressed. However the primary focus in this account is on Ava (aged 4) and Amelia (aged 3). This project story is longer than the other two in this cycle, and includes the sections *Amelia is invited to contribute; Amelia’s contributions increase; and Amelia and Ava begin to communicate with each other*.

The project story starts with Tina stating a problem the group has encountered in making their mural of Ōhuiarangi.

Tina: I’ve got a problem. Some of these sticks are too big. If we want to make a koru pattern, they’re too big.

Ava and Reuben, close friends, were excited and filled with ideas. Rapidly they called these out to Tina.

Reuben: We could use little ones! [little pieces of wood]
Tina: But how will we get it little?
Ava: I know. We could get a saw and cut.

Enthusiasm is high, and Reuben and Ava were keen to start. “Hang on, hang on,” Tina laughed as Ava fitted a piece of wood into the carpentry vice and seized the saw, ready

to get underway. "Are we making a plan about this?" "Yes we are," Ava responded seriously. "But we need to do it right now."

Smiling, but respecting Ava's sincerity, Tina suggested to her, "Let's just chat to Reuben and Amelia, 'cause they're part of the team too. Now, have we got an idea about the size we need for the koru?"

This interjection is one of many Tina makes throughout the activity, encouraging the children to work together. She variously uses the words "team", "plan" and "idea" as reference points for encourage the children to listen to each other, as they work on cutting the big block pieces down to a workable size.

Amelia is invited to contribute

Amelia's participation in the group conversation began with Tina's invitation to contribute.

Tina: If you're going to make such a small koru, is that the right shape for it? And the size?
Ava: Yeah. Kind of.
Tina: Kind of?
Ava: Glue it, um, to another piece and we'll make a bit longer.
Tina: But we're thinking of smaller pieces, not longer pieces. Should we measure maybe?
Chorus: No
Ava: Let's just cut (Ava begins to cut the wood with the saw)
Tina: Are we just gonna guess? What do you think Amelia? Hang on, let's see what Amelia says.
Amelia: Um, maybe it has to go a biggest circle.

Ava and Reuben had been animatedly discussing the size and shape they wanted, when Tina directly sought Amelia's opinion. Tina leaned towards Amelia a little, showing Amelia that she had her teacher's full attention. Ava's body language also changed a little. In the video she seems to follow Tina's lead, also turning herself towards Amelia a fraction after Tina does so.

Tina's use of words and body language serve to create a small pause, as well as a shift in the collective attention of the group. Combined, this gives Amelia the opportunity to think for a moment. After consideration she gives her first substantial response, which turns out to be useful for the group. So far the emphasis in the conversation has been

on the size to cut the blocks, while ignoring the fundamental problem of shape. Koru, as spiral motifs, are ultimately circular, while the blocks the children are working with are rectangular. Amelia's contribution ("a biggest circle") refocuses the group discussion on shape.

Tina: That's right, it was a circle, remember? It's went round like this. Oh! Thanks. Cool. So if you want to make a circle with wood, should the - what size should it be?

Tina's repeating of the word "circle" both validates Amelia's idea as well as emphasizing the idea of shape.

Amelia's contributions increase

This small exchange with Tina marks a turning point in the conversation for Amelia. Until this point she had primarily been an observer, but sharing her idea and having that idea validated by Tina supports Amelia's confidence. However, Amelia's response also seems to have an effect on Tina, as her "circle" observation revealed that Amelia had contributions to make. For the remainder of the transcribed sequence, Tina actively invites Amelia to participate on nine occasions, and in all but one Amelia responds directly with an idea that helps to move the project forward.

Moments after the above example, Tina checks the size of the intended piece to be cut with the group.

Tina: What? What do you think guys, is- look. That's the size
Ava's - that's the size Ava's thinking of.
Reuben: Okay.
Tina: What do you think? You don't have to agree.
Ava: We can do that.
Tina: What do you think Amelia, do you think that's
gonna be the right size, before you carry on Ava?
Ava and Reuben respond uncertainly.
Amelia: Ah, maybe wrong
Tina: Ah, Amelia says maybe that's, maybe that's not the right
size. Why's that Amelia?
Ava and Reuben, and Tina make a few unrelated
comments here, of around 4 seconds duration,
before Amelia answers.
Amelia: The koru's not that big

The other children had responded with uncertainty to Tina's initial question here, but Amelia, despite being a fairly quiet participant in the group, responds with more

certainty. Her subsequent explanation of her answer shows that her response of “maybe wrong” is a reasoned one – she has noticed that koru are not large shapes and reached the conclusion that the pieces of wood need to be smaller in order to work.

Amelia and Ava begin to communicate with each other

In the last part of the conversation, a new dynamic occurs. For the first time, Amelia makes a contribution that has not been facilitated by Tina. The first line of the transcript shows Amelia initiating a contribution, rather than being invited to do so by Tina. Tina supports Amelia’s contribution, but Amelia does speak first.

- Amelia: I know a how [t]a do it
Tina: Okay. Are you listening to Amelia? How do you do it,
Amelia?
Amelia: You can put things in then turn it around like
this. Cut, cut, cut! (she gestures)
Tina: How can we cut around? Is there a way to cut
around?
Ava: I know, we could have this thing go to do this.
Tina: I don't know. Do you think that'll work Ella? Ella's
watching. Ella, what do you think? We're trying to
link sizes to a koru.
Amelia: I know how [t]a do it.
Ava has started to cut again.
Tina: (to Ava) Hang on, let's listen to Amelia. Oh, now
she's - ooh.
Amelia indicates using her hands.
Amelia: Now we can cut it around.
Ava: So you let - you hold, um um, you hold the wood
where you want it, where the size want to be on it
Tina: Good idea. Amelia, did you hear what um - Reuben
come and check it out. Amelia's, um - Ava, you tell
Amelia again. Are you listen-
Ava: So, we can um, um- we can do it. So I want to cut,
and I can cut next to it. **(to Amelia) Would that be
a good idea maybe?**
Amelia: **Yeah!**

To this point, the children have been corresponding about the project through Tina, even with Tina’s suggestions to listen to each other. However at the end of this sequence Ava speaks again – this time, directly to Amelia and without prompting. It is significant that Ava, a confident and enthusiastic communicator, embarks spontaneously on this child-to-child exchange, without teacher facilitation. Previously in the project Ava’s priority was to get the cutting started, and she talked primarily to

Tina. These last exchanges demonstrate that the status quo has been successfully subverted.

The movement of the status quo here does not mean that the power between the children has been permanently shifted. In all likelihood any additional unmediated interactions between the three children, even immediately after this one, would see the original status quo returned. However, what is demonstrated here are the possibilities that arise for children and teachers through the use of an intentional, equitable critical pedagogy approach.

Through the teacher's facilitation of the children's multiple entry points into the discussion, the quieter child was able to practice being part of the group conversation, to the point where she was able to create her own opportunities to contribute towards the end of the transcribed segment.

The conversation transcript reveals that the teacher's interventions in support of the quieter child were significantly higher than for the other two primary participants. However, this seemed to have a balancing effect more than a prejudicial one. In the segment discussed, although Ava and Amelia are the focus, neither of the two confident children (Ava and Reuben) stopped participating. They continued to contribute throughout. However, through being guided to attend to Amelia's contributions, they showed an increasing awareness to listen as well as to speak.

Project Story Two: Thomas negotiates conflict

Working with conflicting opinions is the topic of the last story in this cycle. Tina's earlier reflecting shows that her thinking about conflicting ideas is not settled, but rather something she has her own theories about, theories that she begins to test as the next activity unfolds.

Tina and the children are finishing the block mural they have been working on for two terms. This is the same mural that Ava, Amelia and Reuben were cutting the koru pieces for in the earlier story. Today a different group are at work on the final job of the mural: gluing down the pieces. The story focuses on Thomas, but also includes Derek, William, Odeleya and Grayson.

For a long time, Thomas had been strongly interested in pursuing his own ideas, and often encountered frustration in group settings. However, just a few months prior to this activity he had started showing more interest in group work. In response, Tina has been supporting his interest in collaboration, including listening to his ideas and supporting him to manage conflict, if the group's ideas differed from his.

Tina begins the discussion about where to start gluing down the arranged pieces of the mural.

- Tina: We'll see where they fit in. So if you come around here, what's the first thing you'd like to do? To stick down?
- William: This (he points)
- Tina: Which is this part? William says he'd like to stick this down first.
There are a few seconds of disjointed, overlapping discussion and then Tina refocuses the group.
- Tina: William had an idea. We want to know, where do we start the next part of our sticking down? So William, what did you say?
William reaches out and taps the centre block of the yellow sun.
What's that?
- William: Yellow.
- Tina: Yellow. What do you think Thomas, do you agree with William?
- Thomas: No, blue.

Conflict has arisen, and there is no right or wrong to this question. As she has done on previous occasions, Tina refrains from coming up with a solution for the children and instead continues to consult with them about a possible starting point.

- Tina: Okay Grayson. Derek what do you say, want to start with the yellow, like William says?
- Derek: Purple!
- Tina: Purple? Hmm. (she looks at the mural) Can you see purple on here?
- Derek: Arcck! (Note: there was no purple on the picture)
- Tina: What about you Grayson, what would you like to start with?
- Grayson: That one! (he points)
- Tina: The blue! Mmm. What do you think Odeleya?
- Odeleya: (very softly) Yellow
- Tina: Yellow. Mmm. So William and Odeleya say we start with the sun, that's yellow, and Thomas and Grayson and Derek disagree. How are we going to make a plan about what to do next?
- Thomas: I don't know.

By seeking the opinion of all the children present at that point, Tina has provided the children with the opportunity to see each other's positions. There is room to admit uncertainty, as Thomas does with his statement "I don't know". Tina summarises these positions and then invites the children to make a plan with her, as she guides the group to continue unpacking the problem.

Tina: William, what about the boy- the other boys are saying not the yellow. (long pause, Tina and William look at each other) Wanna ask him if it's okay to start with the yellow?

Thomas: No. (shakes his head)

Tina: Ah. Is there a reason why you're saying no?

Thomas: Cause I like blue, it's my favourite colour.

Tina: Ah, okay. Derek, what about you? Come and have a look here. Don't know if you can see from there.

William- William says-

Thomas: Tina. This is not working anymore.

Tina: Well, William says we need to start with the yellow. Are you okay to do that? Or have you got a reason that you want to start with the blue?

Thomas: I like blue.

Two things happen in this sequence. Firstly, Tina suggests the children try a permission approach – asking the others for permission to go with one colour as opposed to the others. Thomas refuses this idea and Tina then asks him if he has a reason, to which Thomas responds with his justification that blue is his favourite colour. As Tina starts to seek the reasoning of others in the group, Thomas states that "This is not working anymore", expressing his likely frustration with the situation. Tina returns to the reasoning process, with Thomas restating his personal preference for the colour blue.

As the conversation continues, the group consensus falls into two camps: Derek and Thomas who favour blue, and the rest of the children who want to start with the sun. The decision is made to start with the sun.

Tina: Ah, just listening to Derek.

Derek: Start! (bouncing up and down)

Tina: Start? Which one?

Derek touches a block in response.

Derek: That one.

Tina: The blue up here?

Derek nods vigorously
(to Thomas) Are you okay with that? [the blue blocks]

Thomas: Yes.

Tina: Grayson. Are you okay if we start with the sun? [the yellow blocks]
Grayson: Yeah.
Tina: It's cool that everyone's agreeing on that, William.

There is some confusion in the dialogue about which block to start with – while two of the children indicate blue, the colour that Tina confirms is yellow. This is likely a misunderstanding of some kind, as the actual interaction moved quickly. However, there were no objections when the sun blocks started being glued down.

In this conflict there are a number of important aspects to note. Tina did not need to consult the children about a starting colour – she could have just nominated one. She also could have decided for the group once it became clear there were different, seemingly irreconcilable, differences. However she did none of these things, and instead let the difference of opinion sit with the group as an issue for them all to solve. When no solutions were immediately apparent, she continued to unpack the reasons for the different colours with the children. In this way, the children saw and experienced conflict, and gained familiarity with one process for working through it.

Watching what happens here for Thomas is interesting as well. Thomas was able to express his frustration clearly, and to offer some assessment on the progress of the group problem solving. The clarity of his statement is both interesting and articulate: even though he is frustrated he does not become angry, and he remains engaged, even when the ultimate decision does not go his way.

Tina returns to the ideas of “team” and “plan” in this interaction as well. She has used these cues before, as ways of prompting the children to work together and to focus their energy on an external goal, the “plan”. Using collaborative team-based language encouraged children to move away from the exclusive enclave of their own ideas, and into a more collective space. Collaboration supports democratic practice, as people work together for a common good.

To this point, Tina's inquiry has been focused on her own teaching practice. She has explored issues of equitable involvement, democratic practice, addressed conflict, and supported children's preferred methods of communication. A critical approach to “hearing all voices” has supported a multiplicity of approaches in her inquiry.

Figure 3: The finished mural of Ōhuiarangi



Tina's inquiry focus shifted in the third cycle of her research from her own practice, to sharing her inquiry with the children.

Project Story Three: Derek and the friendship seat

This story comes from *the friendship seat* project, and took place shortly after the work with Thomas and the group in the previous project story.

On this particular day, I encountered Tina by the washing machine, rifling intently through a sheaf of papers. These papers were children's designs for a new project: the friendship seat. Even a cursory inspection showed a huge variety in design styles. "So what I want to do this morning," Tina began, "Is get some other children's ideas, and see what they come up with." (Tina, personal communication, 23 August 2019).

Tina selected a quiet spot in the room to work in, and invited Derek, Thomas, Narin and Hannah to join her. Nestled next to each other on cushions, the children begin to talk about different aspects of the design that they were interested in, and how these could work for the overall purpose of the friendship seat.

At this point in time, Derek was primarily using body language and gesture to communicate. English was an additional language, with his family having emigrated from China. Derek was a confident gestural communicator, but in a busy group excited

peers could easily overlook this form of communication. This story looks at how Tina worked with Derek's preferred mode of communication, and helped him find ways to have his ideas recognised by his peers.

Derek shares his ideas

The activity started with the children drawing their ideas, an unrushed process that gave children ample time to think through their plan on paper. Then Tina invited them to share their ideas. When it was Derek's turn, Tina got the attention of the group. "Derek's got some interesting ideas here, guys", she says. Tina encouraged the other group members to redirect their attention, saying "Can you listen to Derek's ideas for a minute please? ... Derek, can you explain to the team?"

Despite Tina framing Derek's work positively and encouraging others to pay attention, a long pause follows. Undaunted, Tina reframes with the request, "Will you show them?"

In this sequence Tina provided two different kinds of opportunity to Derek. Firstly, she provided Derek with the opportunity to respond however he wanted too. Tina was well aware of Derek's preference for non-verbal communication, but her initial invitation is nonetheless open-ended, allowing him the freedom to respond as he chooses.

Secondly, after a significant pause with no perceptible response, Tina followed up her additional invitation with a more specific request, one that targeted Derek's communicative strengths of showing rather than telling. This time Derek did respond: using one finger, he traced the outline of the seat that he had drawn. He has responded in a way comfortable to him.

Needing to respond to another child, Tina was unable to see this gesture. However, she continued, "So Derek's turn- he wants to explain something now ... Let's listen." Tina leaned towards Derek, and she inclined her head to show her attention to him. A few seconds passed. "Derek?" Tina prompted again, "Explain to us about this." Her hand lightly traced the outline of Derek's picture as she spoke. This time Derek responded by pointing to something on his picture, which seemed to be the legs of the chair, because Tina began to count these. "Yeah," she said, nodding briefly. "Those are- can we count? It's got four."

Thomas and Derek communicate about the project

Thomas, the same child from the previous project story, also had an observation about Derek's picture. "Ohh!" Thomas exclaimed, noticing an aspect of the drawing. "It might be arms." Tina looked at Derek, presumably for confirmation or otherwise of Thomas's words, but there is no observable response. She continued, "Thomas seems to think it's arms." When Derek still did not respond, she said to Thomas, "Ask him if it's arms. You can ask him." After a thinking pause, Thomas did just that, asking, "Is it arms, Derek?" Tina repeated the question as well. Tina studies Derek's face as she continued, "Oooh! Has our friendship seat got arms?" Derek non-verbally affirmed this to Tina by nodding. "Okay," she says.

The discussion then turned to another part of the drawing, which Hannah believed could be legs or feet. As with Thomas, Tina encouraged Hannah to ask Derek directly, which Hannah did, saying, "Is this feet?" Again, Tina looked to Derek for confirmation, and he seemed to agree, again with a small nod. "Ah," Tina says. "So Derek's one has feet and arms." She nodded at him. "Good job, Derek."

Regardless of the mode of communication, Derek still has ideas that he wants to contribute. Through extended wait times after questions, with multiple opportunities to contribute, and by pitching the questions towards his preferred communicative competencies, Tina provides real opportunities that not only allows Derek the space to contribute in the way he is most comfortable. However, these efforts also support other children to work with him as well. Both Tina and the other participating children meet Derek halfway here. They observe his gestural communications (nodding, pointing) about his picture to try and interpret what he means, checking back with him each time to see if they are correct. Because of these factors, instead of ending up on the periphery of the group, Derek can be at its centre while he presents his work.

This approach is also used in additional footage where Tina and the group build a prototype of Derek's model. A similar approach of asking Derek for his ideas, and using the plan he has drawn as a reference point to check back with him proves an effective way to position him as the project manager, without him being required to say a word – although he always has the option to speak if and when he is ready.

Figure 4: The finished friendship seat



Cycle Three: Thinking about our thinking

Critical pedagogy has, as one aspect of its work, the responsibility to make the hidden, invisible things of the critical landscape visible. In the third cycle, Tina and I discussed the possibility of her bringing some of the children into her inquiry. Would they be able to identify who had a voice and who did not? We talked about how to invite the children into her inquiry, and eventually settled on using a short clip of the original interaction (discussed in Project Story 1) with Ava, Amelia and the koru.

The clip was edited to about 1.5 minutes in length, and the video file was loaded on to a laptop for the small groups of children to watch. While watching back the clip herself, Tina saw that Alexander and Amelia both drew a koru shape with their finger during the discussion, even though their gestures went unnoticed at the time. Tina decided to talk about this with Ava, Reuben and Amelia, and to ask Alexander specifically about the koru he had drawn unnoticed at the time.

This approach, of doing critical pedagogy work with the children themselves, supports another thought Tina had been having about her teaching. She stated,

Look, I really love what Olivia was doing in the studio. She does that so well, where she just brings out the abstract concepts. I was thinking, if I should kind of see if I could bring out a bit of that, just to challenge myself (Tina, personal communication, 13 June 2019).

The challenge of using abstract concepts in her work with children underlies this last phase of Tina's work. We recorded three different sessions, back to back, with three different but small groups of children sharing their observations and thoughts about the video clip. Each group was shown a shortened clip of the koru-cutting work had done earlier in the study, and was asked if they could identify who was speaking (who had a voice?) from the clip. This question was a prompt for Tina to lead children into the critical area that she herself had been working from, to see if they could also identify who was silent and therefore, not having any input into the videoed discussion.

Group One: Amelia talks about listening to the voices of others

The first group involved the three original participants, Ava, Reuben and Amelia. Of the three, only Amelia was interested in extended discussion on this occasion²³. Tina showed the group the video, and while the discussion took a while to progress, Amelia was able to identify that she and Alexander were quiet. This is something she had experienced personally, so it makes sense that she made this connection.

Eventually, Tina and Amelia settled into talking about how we could hear other people's ideas. As she had during the koru work, Amelia had some ideas on this occasion too.

- Tina: If there's some children that are really quiet, and they've got lots of ideas... how can we hear everybody's ideas? How can we do that?
- Amelia: How about we, um, make some special hearing, even people talking.
- Tina: So some special hearing?
- Amelia: Yeah. Even for people talking.
- Tina: For the people that are talking need to have special hearing? Is that what you're saying?
- Amelia: Yeah, um, because um, they have special hearing to hear something else, not them.
- Tina: Ah yes, that's a good idea. So it means you're not just hearing yourself, you can hear some other people too.
- Amelia: Yeah.
- Tina: That I think is quite a good idea.

²³ Ava and Reuben had participated in an extended session of critically-focused Godly plan just prior to this, the revisiting of "the man who got half-dead on the road". This learning is discussed at length in Jacqui's chapter. Both children contributed extensively to that discussion, which likely explains their disengagement here – critical work can be tiring!

In response to Tina's question, Amelia had an idea about special hearing that will help people "hear something else, not them". Amelia's response showed her awareness of the difficulty people can have in paying attention to others, a significant, empathetic insight for a young child, and likely predicated on her own experiences in this activity.

Amelia: You don't have to hear someone else, you have to hear everybody.
Tina: (after a long pause) That's about good listening I think, isn't it.
Amelia: Yeah, we talk to someone (she turns her head to one side) then we talk to someone (she turns her head to the other side) then we talk to someone (she turns her head to the other side again), then talk to anyone to want to talk to
Tina: Uh-huh
Amelia: And then we hear. And if we want to stop talking we just talk but we just hear (she points to both ears) and then we talk too, but if you really don't want to, just say to them, 'I don't feel like talking right now'. And so. (she gives a little shrug).

Amelia elaborated on her idea further, demonstrating how this special hearing might work in practice, but also bringing up the valuable point that sometimes, people do not want to participate, and should be able to say so.

Tina: Do you feel like that sometimes?
Amelia: Yeah, sometimes. Um, all the time I like talking, but even when I like it.
Tina: Do you notice some other children at kindy that are also sometimes don't feel like talking? Have you noticed any of those children around?
Amelia: Yeah. Some people.
Tina: How do you think they're feeling?
Amelia: I think they're feeling- want peace and quiet.

Tina asks Amelia about her observations of others, and in doing so asks her to explore beyond her own perspective, something that is often a challenge for young children. Amelia shares her observations, and she shares some thoughts about what the people she has observed may be feeling.

Tina: Yes- ah, yes. Peace and quiet's a good thing to have sometimes. Do you think those children, when they've had their peace and quiet, and they feel like they've got some ideas, how do you think they'll want to be heard? How do we hear their voices? Maybe someone like Emily?

Emily has come to join the two of them. Amelia begins to talk, but she is facing away from the camera so a part of her conversation is indistinct.

Amelia: I'm going to think now ... If we don't want to hear we just make something out, we ask them, like earmuffs, like this.

She places her hands over her ears to demonstrate, and Tina copies this gesture.

Tina: Earmuffs things, that can make you hear.

Amelia: And then we don't hear anything.

Tina: Ah.

Amelia: And we don't hear anything, but I don't know what, um, um, but we just listen with our ears.

Tina: We do listen with our ears. That's right.

Amelia: We have to listen with our ears because our ears, we listen, for we listen with our ears, we just tell, um, people, 'talking to someone else right now'

Tina: That's right!

Amelia: Um, 'can you stop talking too?'

Tina: That's true! You could say that actually, you could say 'I'm talking too, can you stop for a while, I've got something to say'. Is that what you mean?

Amelia: Yeah

Tina: Yeah? I think that's such a good idea, Amelia. Then everyone can hear everyone else's voices.

Amelia has more to say about hearing the voices of others, which includes listening to others, and also letting people new to the conversation know that you are already talking with someone. In these excerpts Amelia shows her willingness to think through a hard question, to think about what others might want in the same situation, and to think about possible responses or solutions.

Group Two: Summer, Ara, and Bree talk about listening to the voices of others

After the conversation with Amelia, Tina and I decided to try the activity again with a different group. On reflection, we decided that small groups worked better for these complex discussions, so Tina asked just three children, Summer, Ara, and Bree, if they would like to participate. This group was the only one of the three where none of the children were participants in the original koru video clip. Accordingly, this discussion particularly reflects the perspectives of children seeing this footage purely as observers.

Tina: I'm going to ask you these important questions now. Who was talking on the video?

Summer: You.

Bree: You, and Ava, and Reuben.

Tina: Yes! Who are the ones who aren't talking much?

Summer: Eva, and Alexander, and Amelia.

Tina: Alexander and Amelia, they didn't really say-
Bree: Alexander and Amelia

In this first part of the conversation, discussion with the children shows they can quickly identify who able to contribute verbally to the discussion, and who was quiet.

Tina: They didn't really say much. How do you think Amelia and Alexander were feeling while they were standing there?
Ara: I no idea.
Tina: What do you think they were thinking of, we were talking about koru-
Ara: I no idea
Summer: I no idea
Tina: (places her arm on Summer's shoulder) I think you do. Stop for a moment, think about it.
Bree: I think they felt sad.
Tina: Do you think they felt sad?
Summer: I think they felt happy.
Tina: You think- I don't know, I didn't see their faces, why do you think they felt sad?
Bree: 'Cause they didn't have nothing to say.

In the second part of the conversation, Tina encourages the children to think about how they might have felt in the place of the quiet children. The children give answers that range from happy to sad. It is Bree who has a reason for her answer, showing also her growing insight into thinking about the feelings of others.

Tina: Oh. Do you think, that um, they had something to say, right, but Avie and Reuben were talking. How could we have heard what Amelia and Alexander had say?
Bree: They- you- they could said 'excuse me'
Tina: (Nodding) They could have said- but what if they're really quiet and shy and they haven't got a chance to excuse me, maybe the others were talking too much! ... How can they say something?
Summer: I don't know.
Tina: What if you were in that position, Summer? And you had some-
Bree: They could tap you.
Bree makes a tapping motion with her hand.

The children begin to problem-solve, with Tina pointing out the verbal solution Bree originally proposes might not work for a very quiet person. Bree rethinks, and comes up with a gestural cue that would allow a quiet person to join in.

Group Three: Alexander and Harris talk about listening to the voices of others

The last group consisted of Alexander, who had been part of the original group, and his friend Harris. Alexander was just finding his voice at the time of this activity, and still preferred gestural communication.

- Tina: It's okay. So Alexander – Alexander. Do you want to listen to Tina for a minute? Can you see that there? Who gets to talk in that video? Who's talking?
- Alexander: Tina.
- Tina: Me! (laughs) Always me! What other children are talking?
- Harris: That (points).
- Tina: Reuben.
- Harris: Yes.
- Tina: And who else?
- Harris: I don't- see me.
- Tina: Did you see your friend Alexander?
- Harris: No.
- Tina: Alexander, who do you think was talking in that video of the children?
Alexander reaches over and points to someone on the screen.
- Tina: Tina! Tina was talking. Who else?
Harris points to someone on the screen.
- Tina: Ava was talking, yup, yup.
Harris points to someone on the screen.
- Tina: And Reuben.
Alexander points to someone on the screen.
- Tina: Did you hear Ella? No?
Both children are pointing now.
- Tina: I can see Alexander's hat. And Amelia. But guess what? Who isn't talking? Who didn't say much?
- Harris: Um, Alexander.

This sequence takes a little time to unfold, but Tina is patient, supporting the details of the interaction to be teased out gradually using both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, as suits each child. She affirms Alexander's largely non-verbal contributions by repeating them verbally and watching his responses carefully, thus also allowing her to confirm she has understood Alexander correctly.

- Tina: Alexander. Alexander, did you have something to say in that video?
Alexander shakes his head – no.
- Tina: Didn't you have anything to say?
He shakes his head 'no' again.
- Tina: Did you remember about the koru shape? I could see you making a shape like this (she demonstrates)

when Tina said, “can you remember about the koru?”

What did you do?

Alexander draws a koru shape on the desk in front of him.

Tina: (whispering) That’s right. You drew a shape like that.
(long pause) Tell me something, Alexander. When someone else is talking so loudly, how does that make you feel? (long pause) How does it make you feel when someone is talking like Ava and Reuben, and Alexander – do you want to say something too?

Alexander nods.

Tina: What would you like to say?
After a brief interruption, Alexander responds quietly.

Alexander: Panda.

Tina: (whispers) Alexander. (normal voice) Do you think you’ve got some ideas to say?

Harris: Yes.
Alexander shakes his head.

Tina: Are you sure? Because you made a shape like this.
She draws a koru on the bench. Alexander copies the koru shape.

Tina: That was your idea.

As occurred in the previous section, Alexander’s thinking, and the thinking of his friend Harris, takes some time to draw out. Tina used the gestures she saw Alexander make in the original video, of drawing the koru, as a further prompt to support his responses. Alexander copies the koru drawing gesture she makes. His initial response is potentially quite playful, bearing no obvious connection to the discussion topic, but playfulness is encouraged at the Kindergarten.

Harris: I have an idea too.

Tina: How can you tell Reuben and Ava your ideas?

Alexander: Um
Alexander draws on the table in front of him with his finger.

Tina: You’d just draw it? (pause. Then, to Harris) What about you?

Harris: I’d draw it.

In the last section of the conversation, Alexander and Harris consider strategies for sharing their ideas if they are feeling very quiet. Alexander thinks for a moment – and then responds with a gesture. He draws on the table with his finger. Harris verbalises his own idea, which also involves drawing. While the children’s responses are unclear here, they are contributing, a process that Tina affirms by noticing them drawing koru on the table.

Asking the children to look into their thinking

The responses from the three groups were quite mixed. In all three groups, there was at least one child who was able to see the absence of opportunity to contribute. This was true for Amelia, who directly experienced this lack of opportunity as a participant. However, Bree, Ara and Summer, as well as Harris in subsequent groups, were also able to identify the children who were not talking in the group, despite not participating in the original koru activity.

Amelia, Bree and Harris were also able to theorise about how quiet children could find their voice, coming up with a variety of ideas between them. This kind of theorising is abstract work. The children were working in the critical landscape, an intangible space. They considered problem-solving possibilities for situations they had experienced or recently witnessed, but which were not currently before them. Putting yourself into the position where you can think about something from someone else's position requires empathy, a trait that is still developing in young children.

In the act of recognising a problem, and reflecting about possible courses of action, the children themselves enter the critical landscape that Tina has been working from herself.

Reflections and conclusions on Tina's critical pedagogy inquiry

The emergence (Freire, 1970/2018; 2004) of Tina's critical pedagogy inquiry came from her own critical reflection, undertaken as part of ongoing professional practice. Tina's critical reflection helped her identify that, for some children, a generic opportunity to contribute was not sufficient. Tina demonstrates the point made by Clark (2020), that teachers may need to make more effort in supporting children with additional needs. Factors such as language barriers, cultural factors, age, a child's disposition and preferred method of communication, and the way certain peer groups interacted affected the realities of contribution for some of the children Tina worked with. However, her efforts to create opportunities for the children provided pathways for them to communicate effectively.

Through her inquiry, Tina worked to build a more equitable learning environment within her teaching sphere. This equitable environment is created by her attention to

an issue she has made visible within her own teaching practice, using consistent, diligent effort.

The equitable learning environment shows democratic practice in action, something Tina intentionally prompts using the idea of “working as a team”. Tina returns to this idea several times, and uses the language of teamwork to encourage consultation, collectivism, and power sharing amongst the team members.

The equitable learning environment Tina created addressed important issues of power distribution in group settings. She identified early in the study that group work dynamics were naturally weighted in favour of confident, verbal children. By consciously seeking and actively scaffolding opportunities for quiet and silent children, Tina ensured that power was redistributed more equitably in group settings.

In addition to this work, Tina increased children’s awareness of “the other” by encouraging children to listen to each other, including encouraging children to ask each other for feedback, or seek the permission of the group. In the last research phase, Tina actively encouraged children to think about the quiet child: how might that child have felt? What could support that child? This movement outside of their own immediate experience is a significant counterbalance to neoliberal narratives that are centred on the interests of self.

By doing so, Tina also encouraged children to develop their own working theories here about what exclusion could look like, and to think about how they could address exclusion in practice. While the children at the kindergarten were used to discussion, this is a new kind of conversation, where they were learning to see something that existed in the negative, (e.g.: someone who was *not* speaking). The children were also encouraged to think about why that person might be encountering barriers, as well as problem-solving about how to overcome those barriers. This discussion itself makes something visible: the process of learning to see fresh perspectives through new experiences, including the practice of empathy.

Chapter Nine: Dreaming About This Place – Olivia’s Inquiry

In Olivia’s own words

Olivia also shared her teaching philosophy, a preface to her work in her own words.

My philosophy is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. It rests on the innate curiosity of children and aims to assist them with understanding their world and who they are in it. I encourage critical thought and love wondering with children about what they experience, think and feel and on encouraging children to make sense of their world. I value the children as central to their own learning, not simply an empty vessel waiting to be filled with knowledge. Children are able to pursue their own interests and revisit and build upon ideas at their own pace by using multiple symbols and languages.

I believe that listening to children’s voices, and using their voices to lead projects are meaningful so that I can deepen their learning experiences. I see learning as a collaborative process where children, teachers and families work together exchanging ideas and learning from each other. Working collaboratively with children and encouraging them to dialogue with each other, to make explicit what they think, and to engage in interaction, discussion, and intellectual argument in order to negotiate and build meaning with each other is important. In this way children have opportunities to co-construct knowledge with other children and their teachers. However, as a teacher, being playful with the children is also valued. Teachers should engage with children through their playful spirits, while at the same time bringing their knowledge and skills into both the environment and children’s learning experiences.

A little background

Olivia was on the cusp of commencing a new inquiry with the children when I began collecting data. She had just finished a previous inquiry focused on belonging, one of the strands of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). The kindergarten had been using maunga, the local mountains, to explore a sense of belonging.

During the work on the maunga, Olivia had asked the children to imagine what the maunga might look like before they visited, and to support this thinking, the children had made models, drawn pictures, and theorised extensively in discussion. The kindergarten had also visited two local maunga, Ōhuiarangi and Maungarei, in order to gain personal experience of walking each mountain. After visiting Ōhuiarangi, Olivia

had encouraged the children to revisit their earlier work and reflect on their maunga models based on the knowledge they now had from their first-hand experience. Similar activities had taken place after their visit to Maungarei.

As this prior work drew towards a natural conclusion, Olivia considered where her work with the children could move to next, and felt that the answer lay in the future. In her own words, she stated that she wanted to:

Talk about the future ... You talk about the past, for this place ... What are you dreaming of? What are you dreaming about this place? (Olivia, personal communication, 7 June 2019).

The future made sense. Moving forward, and considering how the community that the children lived in could change for the future, was a new and exciting possibility. Olivia gestured broadly to the world outside the window, as she continued,

This is the place we have strong relationships with. What are we dreaming about for this place? So we need to think about something, and then, we can, maybe dream- we talk about dreams. Dreams can become true and can be your dreaming ... And we can have a talk about our future, what will it look like around here. And what about the people? What about us as citizens now? So we can have a voice, maybe, even though, later on this is your place [the children's] anyway. Look forward, to this generation, and to the next generation, what kind of people do you want to be? What kind of people do you want to see in this area? This place? So we can have a talk, maybe about democracy, I don't know. Maybe they [the children] don't know that word. Maybe about fairness? About respect, about culture. ... [and] this community of people too (Olivia, personal communication, 7 June 2019).

Olivia labelled this wondering about the future as “dreams”. In this same conversation, she discussed how some preliminary discussions with children had required clarification of the word “dreams” – initially, the children had thought Olivia meant the kind of dreams you have when you sleep. Olivia had clarified that she meant a daytime dream – the kind you have on purpose.

Action research cycles

Like Nilma, there are only two action research cycles in Olivia's work. This is due to Olivia identifying her research topic at the outset. The first action research cycle saw her identifying children's different dreams for their community and country.

The second cycle comprised all the expansion work that Olivia and the children carried out with each of the different dreams, including their respective journeys towards some kind of critically-informed action.

In the other three case study chapters, the teacher's work is told through the progression of their individual action research cycles. Olivia's case is different, partly because I began following her work right at the start of a major topic, but mainly because Olivia's orientation to critical pedagogy resulted in a series of mini inquiries that are best told as stories, which each one exemplifying the various "dreams" children had for their community and country. A "story" approach preserves the narrative of these stories. Across all of the stories, the identification of the "dream" consistently occurred in the first research cycle, while the elaboration and exploration of that dream took place in the second research cycle.

Olivia's inquiry: What are our dreams?

The majority of Olivia's teaching work took place in the studio. As mentioned in Chapter Five, this is separate art and project space at the kindergarten. This was the case for the four stories related here: *a birthday party for New Zealand*, *the pillow project*, *under the bridge*, and *Chinese Barbie*.

Each of these stories unfolds and resolves in uniquely, in response to the children's ideas throughout the inquiry. *A birthday party for New Zealand* is the work of the same small group of children, and concludes after a few weeks. *The pillow project* is largely the work of one child that also concludes after a few weeks. *Under the bridge* has input from a variety of participants and is the shortest, concluding after just one session. *Chinese Barbie* is the dream of one child, but finds support from many children and operates the longest, nearly two terms in length.

Rather than problem-posing an issue or concern with the children, Olivia used a possibility thinking approach, framed as a "dream" concept, to invite the children to

participate critical pedagogy inquiry. By asking children to dream with her, children were still able to nominate their inquiry topic, as they would do in problem-posing an issue or concern. Olivia wove rich discussion into the activities, building children’s understanding as well as their knowledge.

Each story is told in turn.

Dream One: A birthday party for New Zealand

Nina, Summer, Ara and Chloe are gathered together in the studio with Olivia, who has a very important question to ask the children. Spirited and playful, they are excited about working with Olivia today. Olivia begins:

Okay. Today I really want to hear your ideas. I know you guys are good at idearing. Okay? Okay. Just put your thinking hat on. Think with me.
... And have a dream with me.

As she speaks, Olivia mimes putting a “thinking hat” on her head, a gesture a few of the children’ copy.

“Shall we come closer?” Olivia continues, physically drawing the children into tighter circle around her. The group begins to settle down. “We’re going to have a dream together.” Olivia continues talking about the “dream”:

A very serious one [dream]! ... We are all living in New Zealand. Okay?
And if I’m going to ask you to make a big-big-big-big-big-big-big-big-big-big dream for New Zealand – like a big wish. Like a big wish for New Zealand. I wonder what will it be?

Olivia continues to talk with the children about what a dream is. To help the group settle into the work she suggests they lie down and close their eyes so they can think more about their dream for New Zealand. The children try this – with a little giggling – but this action also helps them focus more. When Olivia asks the group her question again, they are ready for conversation.

Olivia: Ara, what is your dream for New Zealand?
Ara: A birthday cake.
Olivia: Ooh, a birthday cake. What is a birthday cake for?
Should I write it down – birthday cake – first, and we can go back to her later. What about Summer?
Summer: A giant birthday cake with all the colours and all the candles!

Olivia: So you are thinking about a giant birthday cake?
 Okay, what about you, Chloe?
 Chloe: A leaf cake.
 Olivia: Okay, what about Nina? Were you dreaming about
 something different? Or something similar?
 Nina: Sobol! Sobol cake!
 Olivia: So you are all thinking about cake? I wonder why.
 Summer: Because we love cake!

Some of these answers are playful – leaf cake and sobol cake for example (“sobol” is a made-up word). Olivia provides an opportunity for different dreams, by asking each child present for their dream, however the group consensus returns each time to cake. When prompted, Summer provides a reason on behalf of her group for their choice, noting their mutual love of cake, a statement that is not contested by other members of the group. Olivia continues to unpack the children’ cake idea with them.

Olivia: So you love cake. Who are the cakes for?
 Summer: The cake is for-
 Olivia: For New Zealand, why is the cake for New Zealand?
 Nina: Everybody blow out the candles.
 Summer: Everybody in the world!
 Chloe: And eat the cake!
 Olivia: So everybody can blow the cake in New Zealand?
 So what’s the cake for, actually? Everybody blow
 the cake, then what?
 Summer: It’s for New Zealand’s birthday.

While the conversation continued for some time, the dream for the children has been identified: to have a birthday party for Aotearoa New Zealand. Further discussion revealed that the children saw the cake (a giant cake, in later iterations) as central to a party for Aotearoa New Zealand that included drinks, yummy food, and presents.

The idea of the cake being for Aotearoa New Zealand is worked out amongst the group, even though in the opening dialogue of this segment Olivia asks and answers her own question regarding who the cake is for. That said, none of the children correct or amend her idea. Additionally, Olivia prefaced the activity by asking the children about their dream for Aotearoa New Zealand, so it is possible that the group always intended the country as the recipient.

In the last sentence of this excerpt Olivia re-asks the question to the group and Summer responds that the cake is for New Zealand and as with previous assertions, nobody contests this.

Having both seen the original interaction, as well as watched the video on multiple occasions since, I am still intrigued at how Olivia takes the children's idea at face value, and does not at any point question the merit of the idea. Her acceptance of the children's ideas validates them. Instead, Olivia focuses on understanding more about the children's dream. The cake idea originally had the feeling of being something the children came up with randomly, however through unpacking their thinking with Olivia the children were able to articulate the cake proposal with increased clarity.

The dream progresses

A few weeks later when I returned to the kindergarten, the cake dream had progressed. Olivia shared with me a clay model the children involved in the birthday cake project had made to represent their ideas. Olivia explained:

Last time when you were here the children talked about how they really wanted to celebrate New Zealand's birthday. They drew a picture about the cake that they wanted; they wanted lots of chocolate icing. A very big one, a giant cake for everyone to come and celebrate in New Zealand, where they bring their own present. And now after that I asked children to come back and they tried to make the cake using their own design. They're working together and they think about which shape would be better for the cake, because they can show their love to New Zealand as well. And they put lots of big sprinkles, chocolate sprinkles on top (Olivia, personal communication, 3 July 2019).

I admired the model, which was attractively displayed on the shelves adjacent to the studio. The model was a collaborative effort, showing several figures grouped around a large cake. Sticks bearing bright red pompoms functioned as flickering candles. Next to the model, a small handwritten card set out the children's explanation. It reads:

Our dream for NZ. We want to celebrate NZ's birthday. We can order a giant birthday from a cake shop. Then invite all the people to bring their presents to the party at Chipmunks²⁴ (Olivia, personal correspondence, 3 July 2019).

The card bears the names of the authors, Ara, Chloe, Nina, Summer and Tui, another girl who had joined the group and their dream during the clay modelling session.

²⁴ Chipmunks is the name of a popular children's playland situated close to the centre.

Figure 5: The clay tableau of the birthday party for Aotearoa New Zealand



The idea of a party for Aotearoa New Zealand is a big idea. The model the children have made to represent their ideas is as rich in details about family and friendships as it is about the unfolding process of the children's thinking around celebrations.

Olivia's explanation continued. She pointed to each figure in the clay tableau, explaining each child's contribution and accompanying explanation. Ara made one figure for each of her family members because she wanted her whole family to join the party. Nina spent a long time trying to figure out how to make a three-dimensional figure, and finally worked it out after watching Ara at work. Summer made herself, and she also made a present for the party. Tui, who joined the group after the original discussion, made a couch.

In the original conversation the children had mentioned presents, which makes sense in the context of a party. Olivia explained the presents more.

These are the presents, this is the volcano toys. These are their Barbies inside. And this is the couch for people to sit on when they want to (Olivia, personal correspondence, 3 July 2019).

These details add richness not only to my understanding of the model, but also to the overall birthday narrative the children are discussing. Olivia then turns to a discussion about the birthday itself.

They were very excited, they were thinking about all New Zealand ... And they are so happy, they sing the happy birthday song to New Zealand. And

we wonder, which day is New Zealand's birthday. And they are very keen to have a big party. They're all singing together and look so excited about it, look like their dream comes true already. This is what they make it and sing the song, this is what they make after they decide party, they dream up the party (Olivia, personal correspondence, 3 July 2019).

The party for the New Zealand dream had moved from a vaguely expressed idea to become a fully-realised scene with details, visual expression, and personal context. The children have both drawn and modelled their dream, but perhaps most significantly, had the experience of taking their own dreams seriously.

Dream Two: The pillow project

The second dream came from Lauren, with initial support from Hannah. The project illustrated the willingness of the teachers to accommodate individual dreams as well as group ones, and to recognise Lauren's enthusiasm and care for others in her community. I was not present for the discussion that initiated this dream. Olivia shared this with me later, including parts of the children's dialogue that she had transcribed.

In a manner similar to the children and the birthday cake for New Zealand, Olivia had invited Lauren and Hannah into the studio, and similarly asked them if they had a dream for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Olivia recorded Lauren as saying, "Everywhere have pillow for people to use when they are tired – if they need." Lauren had then drawn a picture showing the land covered in pillows, conveniently located everywhere for anyone who needed to use one. "God provides pillows for people," Lauren had added. "He knitted them."

Hannah had agreed with what Lauren said. Her picture showed her and Lauren lying down on the pillow outside of the shops.

Olivia had continued the discussion with the two children. This discussion comes from Olivia's planning records rather than a transcribed recording.

Olivia: Do all people have a house?
Hannah: Yes
Lauren: I heard it from my Mum. Not all people have their houses. Then they lied on pillows.
Olivia: Will it be enough to provide pillows only? Will it be enough in winter?

Lauren: Blankets too
Olivia: Who are the people who will use these pillows and blankets?
Lauren: Me
Hannah: Hannah, Lauren and baby.

Lauren's dream comes from something she has identified from her own funds of knowledge: an empathetic recognition that not all people have homes. Lauren seeks to remedy this problem in her picture by providing pillows, and following Olivia's suggestion, blankets as well (this conversation took place during the Aotearoa New Zealand winter).

Figure 6: Lauren's picture showing "the land covered in pillows"

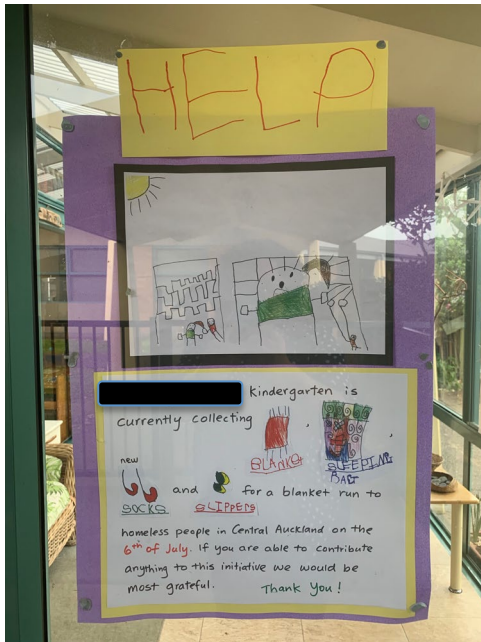


A few weeks later Olivia resumed this discussion with Lauren, Micah and Emily. After recounting what Lauren and Hannah had shared in the first session, Micah added that he, his mum, and sister had also seen people on the street in the inner city of Auckland. His mother had given one of these people money, and he felt that people without homes needed help. Emily had added that she felt people definitely needed houses because they were sad.

Discussions like this one saw children continue to draw on their own funds of knowledge from their experiences in the community, cementing the realisation that not everyone had homes to live in.

Lauren's dream eventually took on the form of a project she undertook at the kindergarten, where she collected items to donate to the local homeless shelter. She made a sign with Olivia's help and hung it in the entrance to the kindergarten.

Figure 7: Lauren's sign for collecting for the homeless shelter



Interested, in her project, I sat with her in the playroom and asked her a few questions about her dream. The following two excerpts are taken from two short recordings made one after the other.

- Raella: Right! Can you tell me about your project?"
Lauren: Yeah. Got a beanbag, blanket, slipper and socks!"
- Raella: Why did you want to collect those things?
Lauren: For people that didn't have homes.
Raella: Oh wow! How did you know about those people?
Lauren: From Miss Olivia

In this conversation Lauren credits Olivia for the source of her knowledge, perhaps forgetting that she had her own knowledge about homelessness, and/or possibly remembering the conversation she and Hannah had with Olivia.

I also asked Lauren about her next steps in the project and Lauren was not sure where she was taking the collected items, although Olivia later confirmed that Lauren and her mother were taking the items to the shelter the next day. The project also drew to a

natural conclusion for another reason: Lauren had turned five and was heading to school, thus ending her time at the kindergarten.

There are a lot of elements and dimensions to homelessness. However, exploring the complexity of homelessness was not the goal in this instance. Instead, the focus was assisting Lauren's to figure out what she could do to evoke change, and then to carry out that plan. Lauren's actions here constitute praxis, as Lauren takes action that she has carefully considered, in order to assist with a problem (homelessness) that has become visible to her.

Dream Three: Under the bridge

In the third term, a new dream arose spontaneously during one of the children's Outdoor Explorers excursions. While walking under the motorway bridge Ara, Narin, Nina and Hannah all noticed that new graffiti had been added to the underside of the bridge during the term break, and they did not like this. In the learning stories that record these episodes, Olivia wrote about how Ara had shared her concerns about the appearance of the under-bridge area with the other children, and expressed her desire to make the space beautiful with her friends. Nina suggested painting beautiful pictures to cover the walls. In discussion with Olivia a new dream arose here: to redesign the space under the bridge and make it beautiful.

A number of children participated in this project. As with the pillow project I was not there when this dream started. Instead, this dream was shared with me via four different learning stories for the children involved, and from discussion with Olivia. I did however see how the children's dream unfolded back in the studio, as Olivia worked with different groups to both unpack and extend their thinking about their dreams for "under the bridge".

Olivia started by taking several pictures of the underside of the bridge. Using the iPad, she imported these pictures into a drawing app that allowed the children to alter the picture, thus providing a realistic medium for visually representing their dream. There are three episodes, two of which are told through learning stories, and the third of which I observed and recorded.

Learning stories are the primary form of assessment in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE. As the name suggests, learning stories are narrative assessments, where teachers (and

children!) can tell and retell stories of learning and competence that include reflecting on the past, and planning for the future (Carr & Lee, 2012).

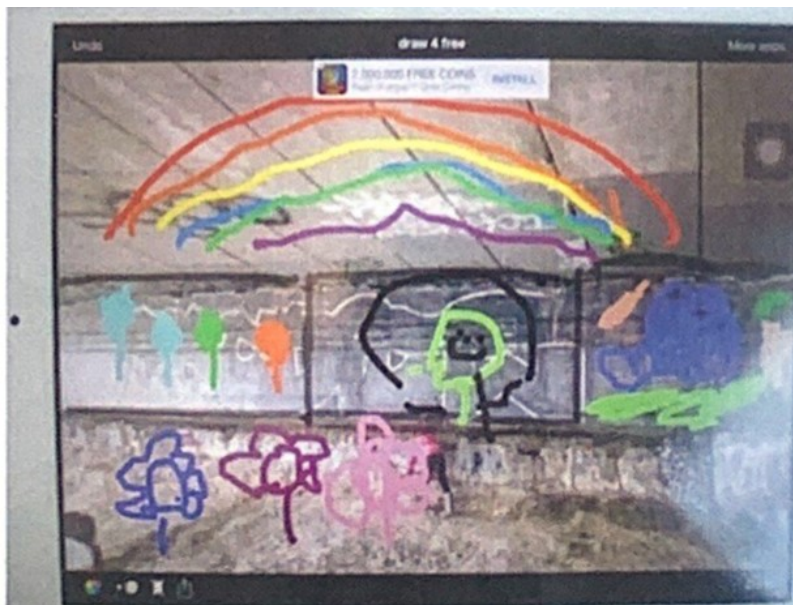
The learning story episodes are related first, while the observed episode is recounted in more detail.

Ara, Narin and Hannah

Ara, Narin and Hannah were all part of the group that had first noticed the new graffiti under the bridge. Olivia gathered the children together with the iPad, providing them with an opportunity to create their own vision for the under-bridge area.

Ara talked about wanting to draw pictures on the walls, including a big rainbow. When it came to the actual drawing, Hannah drew a picture of lollipops, Narin drew a river, and Ara drew her family. All three children then took turns and created a big, vibrant rainbow on the roof of the bridge. Ara also suggested planting flowers, an idea the other children loved.

Figure 8: Ara, Narin and Hannah's design for the "under the bridge" project



Nina and Ava

Nina was part of the original group that observed the graffiti under the bridge. After Nina shared her concerns with Ava using the photos Olivia had taken, both children decided to come up with their dream for the area under the bridge.

Interestingly, at the start of drawing her own ideas, Nina shared the observation that drawing on the picture was not a good idea, because it felt like she was doing graffiti as well, an idea that Ava agreed with. With this in mind the children decided on a new course of action: using a grey colour that was similar to the bridge to cover over the graffiti under the bridge, and also using a light blue colour for the walls. Ava suggested hanging up colourful lighting in the area to make the space special at night, something both children worked on in the picture. Nina then suggested planting grasses on the floor and building a waterfall, so that both children would be able to play with their friends here. The two children were very happy with their plan.

Figure 9: Nina and Ava's design for the "under the bridge" project



Bree, Eva and Elsa dream about the area under the bridge

In her discussions with the children, Olivia drew out their thinking through a variety of points; she started by discussing their memories of being under the bridge on their Outdoor Explorer walks, then moved on to the graffiti specifically. Discussion after this turned to how the group could redesign the under-bridge space to make it more beautiful.

In the opening moments of the conversation, the children identified elements from their memories of being under the bridge that were important to them, such as throwing rocks in the water (Bree), picking up rubbish (Eva), and the pillows and couch that belonged to a man living under the bridge (Bree). With the children thinking about the under-bridge space, Olivia then asked them about the new graffiti under the bridge.

Olivia: ... Okay, last time when I went out for a walk I took a few photos of this area, the area under the bridge. And the children noticed that there's a lot of rubbish, definitely. They love throwing rocks, and the couch disappeared, but there's two blankets there, and they noticed that there's lots of graffiti, drawing, around underneath the bridge, on walls.

Bree: Walls.

Olivia: Yeah. Do you remember those kinds of drawings? Do you remember that?

Bree: Yeah.

Olivia: I wonder why people are drawing around the area? Do you like those kind of drawings?
Bree shakes her head.

Olivia: Why? Why don't you like those kind of drawings?

Bree: Scribbly.

The remaining two children agree with Bree; they also do not like the graffiti. Olivia asks her next question.

I wonder, Bree, if she doesn't like it, you don't like it, and she doesn't like it, and I don't like it. This area, lots of children don't like it, cause they don't like the graffiti around, they don't like that there's a lot of rubbish there, and they feel like this is not so beautiful. I wonder, if we are going to think or something, how can we make this area look beautiful again?

The children have a variety of suggestions. Bree wants to plant pink, purple, yellow and blue flowers. Elsa wants to add a rabbit house, while Eva wants to add a doghouse. Eva would also like to install a rubbish bin – it was her who identified early on in the conversation that the under-bridge area had a lot of rubbish.

Olivia nods, thinking about the conversation that has unfolded thus far. She has another question.

Olivia: I wonder, what about the things [graffiti] on the wall?

Bree: We could scrub them off. Get a ladder and scrub them off.

Olivia: Just rub them off? I wonder if everything comes off on the wall, what will it look like? Shall we have a little play? I got the programme here, let's see.

Olivia explains how they can use the iPad app to draw over the graffiti in the pictures, or even to get rid of it. They can also add in their other ideas about the flowers, rubbish bin, and animal homes. Olivia continues

And you can draw your ideas down by using your finger, so your finger can do magic! I wonder what will happen when you use your finger to draw something on it? You might be making your dream come true. Because we think, what is our dream for this area?

The conversation continues with the children taking turns to work on the drawings. They add flowers, soil, water, a rubbish bin, and the rabbit and dog houses. These discussions unfold matter-of-factly, as the children talk about the colours they want to use with Olivia, the sizes of the objects they are drawing, and where these objects should be located. As an exemplar of this overall discussion, the following portion shows the discussion about the rubbish bin, addition of a sky area, and the rabbit house.

- Olivia: Red. And where is the best place to put the rubbish bin?
- Eva: In here.
- Olivia: I wonder what shape will it look like and how big will it be.
Eva draws a tall, thin rubbish bit that reaches up to half way in the picture.
- Bree: Ginormous!
- Olivia: It's a very tall rubbish bin. And how can people put rubbish in? (indicating the picture) There's wheels there [on the rubbish bin].
Eva continues to draw.
- Olivia: Wow! So where can people put the rubbish in?
Eva demonstrates briefly before discussing what the underside of the bridge will look like.
- Elsa: The sky!
- Olivia: And the sky.
- Elsa: Yes.
- Olivia: So you want this area to be a sky colour or just rub it out?
- Child: Rub it out.
- Olivia: Do you want to clean that graffiti?
- Elsa: Sky in here (she points to the top of the picture where the underside of the bridge forms a ceiling over the area)
- Olivia: Shall we have a try and see what it will look like? And we can compare which look is better?
- Bree: Scrub.
- Olivia: You say scrub and she wants to put the sky colour. Can she have a try and put the sky colour, and let you see what it looks like?
Bree nods.
- Olivia: I can save it, and see what it looks like. But before you do it, she really wants to add one more thing.

About the rabbit house. Where do you want to put the rabbit house before we do the graffiti?
Elsa: Mm, there.
She points to a place above the flowers.

Olivia also helps Elsa as she draws the bunny house, finding a place on the ground where it will fit. Elsa draws the bunny house as a tall, narrow shape.

While ordinary in nature, this kind of discussion is also makes visible the reality of giving a dream life, with lots of dialogue about the details that make this revised world real. However, it is this mutual dialogue that also lends gravity to the work. Dreams, by their very nature, are unreal in the sense that they exist without substance. The discussion about whether to rub out the graffiti or paint over it, the size of the rubbish bin and the location of the rabbit house, show the process by which dreams transition from the world of the imagination into the world of the real. By encouraging the children to attend to real-world detail, the children consciously negotiate the process from dreaming to actualization.

Figure 10: Screen-capture image showing Bree, Eva and Elsa's first design for the "under the bridge" project



This discussion also reveals one of the challenges faced in realising a dream, as two of the children had different ideas about how to get rid of the graffiti. With support from Olivia, the children are encouraged to try both options and see what they like. Elsa and Eva spend time colouring the roof sky blue and adding a sun – but these ideas are not favoured by Bree, who instead wants these areas to be pink, noting “the sun and the sky are out of it”. Bree’s likely meaning seems to be that these things belong in the sky

itself and not under the bridge. Instead she proposes the alternative colour of pink. After Olivia saves the first picture, Bree creates a second picture that instead uses pink on the wall and ceiling of the under-bridge. After comparing the two pictures, the children elect to use the pink version. It turns out that Elsa and Eva also like the colour pink.

At the end of the activity, Olivia asks the group's general opinion. "Do you like this design? Do you think the area will look beautiful if it look like that?" The children nod, their eyes fixed firmly on their design.

"I love this design as well," Olivia notes as she saves their work. "You guys are very good about talking and listening to each other, and thinking about your ideas again, I quite enjoy the time with you." The group concludes by looking at the pictures the previous two groups had created.

Figure 11: Bree, Eva and Elsa's second design for the "under the bridge" project



Dream Four: Chinese Barbie

Calvin was nestled on the floor of the studio with Thomas and Olivia. It was his turn to discuss his dreams for New Zealand. After some settling-in discussion, Olivia turned to the serious question at hand. She framed the question by getting both children to imagine themselves as older, in order to think about what they might want to see in New Zealand at that time in the future.

Olivia: So think about this, if you are the daddy, like his age
 maybe, or maybe younger than that, (to Calvin)
 maybe like your sister, or maybe when you're ten
 years old or something, you're going to have a look

around New Zealand, think, what do you really want to see? ...
 Calvin: I want to see some, um, um, um, Barbies.

During his subsequent conversation with Olivia, Calvin shares some of his early thoughts about his Barbie idea. These include the Barbie wanting a mama, being a toy, and coming from his home. Around eleven minutes into the conversation, Calvin talks more extensively about his idea.

Calvin: I want to play with my Barbie 'cause my Barbie talk like Chinese.
 Olivia: Can talk Chinese? Wow, where does that Barbie come from?
 Calvin: From my home.
 Olivia: Calvin, can you tell us more about your Barbie dream?
 Calvin: And unicorns.
 Olivia: You want toys like unicorns and Barbies? You think when you ten years old you'll still like Barbie? And like, Daddy's age, still like Barbie or maybe like different kinds of stuff?
 Calvin: Barbies and unicorns.
 Olivia: So you think you still like Barbie and unicorns. Calvin nods.
 Olivia: Why do you like Barbie. Do you want have more Barbies in New Zealand? Is that what you want?
 Calvin: I don't have Barbie, I just want Elsa Barbie.
Calvin gets his Elsa Barbie and brings it to Olivia.
 Olivia: Elsa is a kind of Barbie.
 Calvin: She makes snows.
 Olivia: So you want more Barbie toys like this?
 Calvin: Yes.
 Olivia: Why?
 Calvin: Because I like her.
 Olivia: What kind of thing do you like about her, that you wanna make her come true?
 Calvin: Because I want to make her hugs.

In this sequence of dialogue, Calvin's evolving thinking about his idea is evident. He contributes different ideas –unicorns, the character Elsa from the *Frozen* movies, and the idea of a Chinese-speaking Barbie. Calvin also articulates some preliminary reasons why he would like such a Barbie: he likes the doll, and he would like to hug her. Olivia continues the discussion with Calvin.

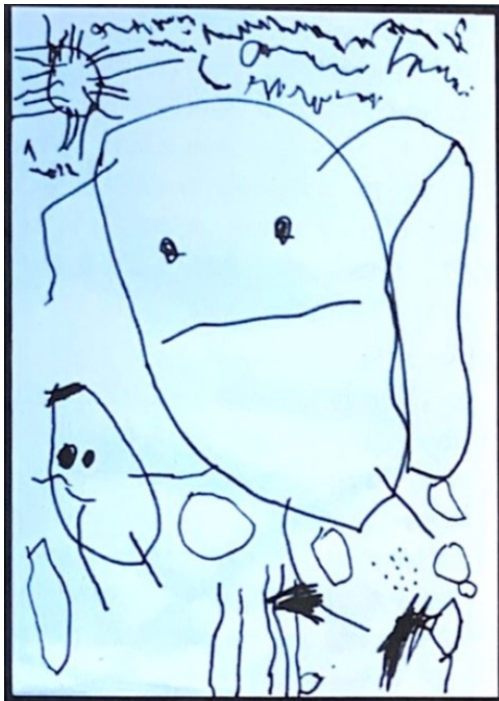
Olivia: Okay. So Barbie's quite important to you – or Elsa. You talking about Elsa or Barbie?
 Calvin: Barbies.
 Olivia: Yes? Is she called Barbie or Elsa?

Calvin: Uh, Barb- Elsa.

Calvin changes between the two figurines twice in this excerpt, showing how his thinking is still evolving. He does not reach a firm decision in this discussion, but the conversation shows how he is working through his different options.

Olivia encourages Calvin to draw a picture of his dream. The picture, recorded below, shows two figures. The largest figure is the Barbie, and the smaller figure is Calvin. The two are holding hands.

Figure 12: Calvin's picture showing his Barbie idea



Calvin: (singing to himself) A Barbie drawing! A Barbie drawing!

Olivia: So this is your Barbie. And Barbie's got two ponytails.

Calvin: Yeah

Olivia: So this is your dream toy. You really do want to have a Barbie.

Calvin: Yeah.

Olivia: And give her a cuddle

Calvin: Yeah.

Olivia: If the toys become human or something, that would be so interesting aye. She can listen to you, and play with you, and cuddle you, can't she.

Calvin: She's a human.

Olivia: Now if she becomes a human that would be so interesting too, isn't it?

By the time he finishes drawing his picture, Calvin has worked through his previous thinking and reached some decisions. He is focusing on Barbie, and Barbie is a human. While Olivia reiterates this idea before Calvin affirms it, he did raise the possibility of a human doll earlier in his conversation.

Calvin's thinking about the Barbie continued past the recorded episode. When Olivia wrote about this later in Calvin's learning story, she talked about how Calvin wanted to have a Chinese Barbie that looked like his sister – a Barbie who could speak Chinese and go everywhere with him, and play with him. The picture above that was originally described by Calvin, as a Barbie holding hands with him, was later re-interpreted by Calvin as a picture of his sister Caro, in Barbie-form.

Calvin's thinking moved a lot during the recorded episode so this latest permutation of a sister-Barbie is not hugely surprising, although there are definitely seeds of his final idea in his first conversation. For example, the idea of a Barbie speaking Chinese was mentioned here, as was the idea of the doll being human. Calvin is very close to his sister and adores her, so the idea of having a doll with him that he could always cuddle and play with makes sense for him. Olivia shared Calvin's dream with his father and sister Caro when they came to collect him from kindergarten later that afternoon. After getting permission, Olivia took a picture of Caro to use as a model for their continuing explorations.

Searching for a Chinese Barbie doll

Olivia continued working with Calvin, Ara and Elsa in the studio. This part of the account is taken from Calvin's learning story, where Olivia writes, "we decided to search some pictures of Barbie from the website, and see if we can find a Barbie doll who looks Chinese like us." The "like us" refers to all the members of the group Olivia had assembled on this occasion. Each person involved, including Olivia, identified as Asian, and were mainly from China.

Olivia noted that there were lots of different Barbie pictures online. Ara observed that Chinese people have black hair, a point Calvin agreed with. There was a Barbie in the pictures with hair that colour, but Ara and Elsa pointed out that this Barbie's face did not look Chinese, and her skin was dark brown. Calvin listened carefully to his friends' opinions and agreed with them. Ara found another Barbie doll whose face, she

thought, looked Chinese. However her hair was not black! Olivia thought that Calvin was a bit disappointed by this.

Later, the little group recounted finding two Chinese Barbie dolls on the website. Their hair was the right colour, and they were wearing Chinese costumes. However, Calvin looked carefully at their faces and said the faces did not look Chinese. Ara and Elsa also checked the photos and observed that their Chinese friends do not look like that. Calvin commented that these pictures did not look like him, or his sister.

These observations were informative, but it was clear that more investigation was required.

A few days afterwards Olivia assembled a larger group of children, including Calvin, to explore the Barbie idea more. The group included Chinese, Korean and other children from Aotearoa New Zealand. She printed off different Barbie pictures for the children to look at, and asked the group what they thought: which pictures possibly showed a Chinese Barbie, and also, who were the Chinese children in the group? These children put up their hands and allowed their peers to have a look at their faces and make some observations about what made someone “look” Chinese.

The first observation the children made was that their Chinese friends had black hair and black eyes – however they also realised that their Chinese friends weren’t the only ones with these characteristics, as a Korean friend in the group had the same colour hair and eyes.

Then Olivia shared Calvin’s dream with the group and asked them, how could they make Calvin’s dream come true? He really wanted a doll that looked like his sister. Could the group design a doll that looked like her?

Figure 13: Calvin's second picture, showing his sister Caro



Olivia had two pictures of Calvin's sister, one taken from the front, and the other taken from behind. The children began by drawing Caro, and quickly noticed that she looked a lot like Calvin. Their pictures immediately looked more like Caro rather than any kind of Barbie. Calvin also drew a picture. However, when it came time to decide which picture looked the most like Calvin, every child thought theirs did. After some discussion the group decided to ask Calvin's dad and sister Caro for their opinion when they picked Calvin up that day.

To Olivia's surprise, one of the two pictures that Calvin's family selected was the one that had been drawn by Calvin himself, without knowing he was the artist. Dad told Olivia that the picture had made him feel comfortable.

Exploring the detail of what makes a Barbie become a Chinese Barbie

The investigative project continued. Calvin was not always in the group – Olivia actively encouraged children to work on other people's dreams throughout the project, not just their own.

The next phase involved focusing on the details of Barbie to try and understand not only what would be needed to make her look Chinese, but also what would be needed to make Barbie look like Caro. In a group with Reuben, Nina and Eva, Olivia showed them two images side by side. The first was a picture of Caro, and the second was a picture of one of the Barbie's that a previous group of children had worked on. This Barbie's face had been cleaned to remove all the commercial paint, and the children had tried painting on a face that fitted their idea of a Chinese Barbie more accurately.

Reuben, Nina and Eva look carefully at the picture. Olivia continued:

I would like today to have a look ... you think that Barbie, the shape of the Barbie's face didn't look like his sister as well. Do we agree? Do you think the Barbie's look like her [Caro] or not?

All three children did not think the painted Barbie looked like Caro, although Nina did venture that the picture looked familiar. Olivia asked why. The children appeared to think hard here: there were long pauses in their conversation, followed by a few half-formed answers, before Eva responded. Eva lent over the picture, tracing the outline of the mouth of painted Barbie, and then the outline of Caro's mouth.

Eva: She lips – this one is different

As the children continued the discussion they also came to the conclusion that the doll's eyes did not look like Carol either.

Olivia: I hear what you say. I think it doesn't look like her as well. These eyes are a bit bigger than her (indicating Caro's photo)

To continue their observations Olivia firstly got the children to look at each other's faces, and then to study their own faces in a mirror, particularly their eyes. After studying each other's eyes, Olivia encouraged the children to draw a picture of Caro's eyes.

As is often the case in the studio, the children took turns, working on the same piece of paper. Nina drew Carol's eyes first.

Olivia: Look at the way that she draws. Does she [Caro] look like that?
Nina: Yes, that's good.

After Nina, both Reuben and Eva take turns and discuss their pictures in a similar way. Then comes the final stage of the activity: Olivia cleans the face off painted Barbie, and now it is this group's turn to try and recreate authentic eyes for her.

Olivia: If she's Caro, I'm going to ask you to use your design for your eyes. I wonder, what will she look like? I'm going to give you a very small paintbrush. And we're going to have a little play. And see if she look like his sister or not.

Olivia demonstrated the kind of delicate work it would take to paint the eyes by dabbing the brush playfully on each child's hand, and then each child took a turn at painting on Barbie's eyes.

As each child finished, Olivia got them to compare their painted Barbie to both the picture they drew of the eyes, and the picture of Caro. Olivia took a photo of each child's painted Barbie face, then wiped it clean so the next child could take a turn.

Figure 14: Children taking turns to paint a more authentic face on the Chinese Barbie



When the group finished, Olivia brought Calvin into the studio and showed him painted Barbie, with the last child's work still in place.

- Olivia: Do you think she looks like your sister?
Calvin: One of her eyes too big
Olivia: (shows him Reuben's version). What about this one? Does this one look like your sister?
Calvin: Yeah
Olivia also shows him Nina's picture. At first Calvin likes the picture, then later he isn't so sure.
Calvin: It's just looking like she's crying
Olivia: I see what you're saying. So you like Reuben's one more.
Calvin: Yeah.
Olivia: We will try to use the dolls that you like more.

Indeed, there is a selection of Barbie-like dolls, and with this variety come subtle differences in face shape, although predominantly they are blue-eyed and blonde-haired.

- Olivia: I remember that you thought this dolly looked like your sister more, that's why we tried to paint on her.
Olivia then returns to Calvin's earlier statement, of the eyes

being a bit too big. Calvin looks at the doll again, carefully.

Calvin: This one (pointing at the smaller eye). Good.

Olivia: This one is good? Good. So you think the other one is very good.

Olivia continues to seek Calvin's his opinion, and Calvin has the opportunity to evaluate the practical work of the Barbie dream with the image he has in his head, and the images of his sister Caro. This gives him the opportunity to remain an influential part of the dream-realisation process, even if he is not directly involved in the activity.

Mulan the Chinese Barbie

Ava, who had been working on Calvin's Chinese Barbie project, brought her Mulan doll from home for comparison. The Mulan doll comes from the Disney movie of the same name, with Mulan being the Chinese heroine of the movie. Olivia immediately assembled a group in the studio to discuss this new Barbie.

Olivia: Do you think she looks like your sister?

Calvin: Yes.

Olivia gets out the picture of Caro, and lays the Mulan Barbie next to it for comparison.

Olivia: (to Calvin) Ava thinks that Mulan's eyes look like your sister. But then you mention the eye shadow. Your sister doesn't have eye shadow. Do you think that your sister looks like that? Are you happy about that?

However, Calvin was not ready to talk about the way that the Mulan Barbie looked because he had noticed something else – the doll smelled “disgusting”.

Olivia: The smell is different than your sister. Ooh, interesting.

Olivia suggested the children “have a smell of themselves” which caused a lot of giggles, but she did observe that they all smelled different. After everyone had smelled both themselves and the Mulan Barbie, Olivia continued the discussion.

Olivia: Yesterday you drew the eyes for that Barbie. Eva said her eyes and her hair ... looked like your sister. Do you agree or not?

Calvin: Her hair is a bit different.

Olivia: His [sister's] hair is a bit short.

The discussion continued, with different children being asked their opinion about whether the painted Barbie or Mulan Barbie are similar to Calvin's sister. The children also noticed the different clothing that Mulan Barbie was wearing.

Calvin: Her dress is not like a school dress.
Ara: Her face [Mulan Barbie] is not like her face [Caro]
Olivia: What kind of difference can you notice?

The children are not sure how to respond to this, so Olivia brought out the painted Barbie and laid her next to Mulan Barbie and the photo of Caro.

Olivia: Which one looks like her face more? Calvin, you say that one [painted Barbie], compared to that one [Mulan Barbie]. Look at the shape of her face.

The children were again invited to respond, and one at a time, indicated a preference for the painted Barbie.

Olivia: What can we do? This dolly has got his sister's face, but this dolly has got his sister's hair colour.
Calvin: Her face [Mulan Barbie] is not like hers [Caro]
Ara: We can change faces.
Olivia: But what about hair? How can you change her hair, or do you want to change her hair and see and turn it to black, I wonder what would she look like? If she got black hair, what would you think?
Calvin: Yeah! It be beautiful.
Olivia: Will it look like your sister?
Calvin: Yes.
Olivia: Shall we have a think about how we can change her hair colour? To black.

Olivia encouraged the children to attend to difference here, by providing opportunities to make comparisons between Caro's photo and the two different Barbie dolls. By encouraging the children to identify the specific features that they thought did, or did not align with Caro's picture, the children were able to reach a gradual consensus about which doll most accurately represented a Chinese Barbie. Interestingly, it was not the doll that was marketed as an actual Chinese Barbie. Olivia's careful attention to face composition and hair in the discussions has meant the children can look past superficial details, such as the doll's clothing. However, the children have their own solution for the clothing as well.

“Change the dress,” Ara says. Painted Barbie was wearing a frilly pink ball gown. In conversation with the children in turns out they wanted the Mulan Barbie and the painted Barbie to swap clothing, as Mulan was wearing a more traditional Chinese-styled dress.

“So you think this dolly will look like your sister if we put it on,” Olivia says. After gaining Ava’s consent to change the doll’s clothes (since Mulan belongs to Ava), Olivia makes the swap.

Olivia: Okay let’s see. I wonder, now she’s got the Chinese costume you say, she’s got the black colour eyes, what do you think Calvin?

Calvin: Great.

Olivia: What about you Ava? Do you think she looks like a Chinese person now, when she put her costume on like that?

Ava: Yes, she does.

However, Olivia is not finished yet.

Olivia: If the doll looks like that, can I call her Chinese?
The responses to her question are mixed and somewhat distracted, so Olivia takes a different approach.

Olivia: Does Eva look like this?
Olivia holds up painted Barbie next to Eva. Next she holds the painted Barbie next to Ara.

Ara: I have Chinese dress.

Olivia: But do you put it on everyday?”

Ara: No.

Olivia: What about Olivia? I don’t have that dress, can I call myself Chinese?

Ara: Yes.

Olivia holds up Mulan Barbie, now wearing a pink frilly dress.

Olivia: She’s got the Chinese hair colour, and she’s got a different dress. Does she look like Chinese?”

Calvin: No. Because you changed the dress.

Olivia: But the change doesn’t look like her. That’s interesting. (to Eva) Can we call her Chinese?

Eva: Yes. Because she have that hair.

Eva reaches out and touches the doll’s black hair.

In this last part of the conversation Olivia invites the children to consider the complexities of how culture is presented to us. The Mulan doll came packaged as Chinese, but during the children’s analysis they become more specific about what makes someone look Chinese, and contrasted this against their own experience of what it means to look Chinese. There is some realisation amongst the group that clothes –

an external factor – are not the defining quality here. There is no consensus amongst the group about what makes someone look Chinese. However, this is part of what makes this conversation interesting: the children have entered a thinking space and are uncertain. In that uncertainty, the group is exploring complex ideas about identity, such as facial features and hair colour, and their own experiences with friends and themselves, to make sense of the idea of what it means to look Chinese.

A letter for the Barbie company

The final part of the project comes towards the end of Term Three. The children have been working on the Barbie project now for nearly two months.

Now, they are going to write a letter to the Barbie company, on behalf of Calvin. Olivia gathers a small group in the studio to prepare the letter.

Olivia: Last week the children made a decision. The children decided to write a letter to the Barbie company, to tell the Barbie company that we would like to make our friend's dream come true but we don't know how. Our friend Calvin, he really wants to have a Chinese Barbie that looks like his sister. We try to put the eyes to look like his sister, with black eyes and black hair, but the colour doesn't look so black. And the one that Ava brought didn't look like his sister much. But we would like to write a letter. I know you're good at talking and writing. We'll make a draft first. Now, I know this is not your dream. But I so appreciate that you would like to have your friend's dream come true. Because you're very kind to your friend, and you want to help your friend. No matter what you want, come and have a try. ... Think about it as if you're Calvin. You try very hard for everything, but the Barbie doesn't look like your sister. How would you feel?

Reuben: Sad.

Ava: Sad.

Olivia: Why?

Bree: Because he doesn't get what he wants.
Olivia writes this down.

Olivia: And what else?

Reuben: The makers don't get their own way to make the Barbies.

Olivia: (talking as she writes) "The children tried very hard, but the dolly doesn't look like his sister." This is our feeling. We try very hard to tell the company about our feelings. We can ask. We can talk to them. What else?

Bree: We can say, 'can we please have a Barbie?' Bree suggests.

Olivia's work with the children has seen them develop empathy for Calvin's situation. This is not their dream, but it matters to them that their peer can realise his. The express compassion in this conversation for Calvin's situation, and clearly express their feelings about the situation. Olivia continues the conversation.

Olivia: I wonder, they don't know what his sister looks like.
Bree: We can tell them we want black hair and black eyes.
Ava: I have a great idea. We could take a picture of Calvin's sister and send it with the letter.
Olivia: This is a good idea. And I wonder what else? I know you guys did lots of drawing, how can we use it? Do you want to use them as well, the drawing that you did? Shall I say we can give them some of our drawings?"

Olivia has brought up the drawings because the previous week she had also shared a video of how Barbies are made with the children, and in that video, the process started with a drawing.

Olivia: But I have a question. How can we show them we tried very hard?
Ava: We could write it on the letter.
Olivia: What about the dolly we tried to make? How could we share it with them?
Ava: We could wrap it up in the letter.
Olivia: Do you want to send the whole dolly? So we can put it in the box and send it to them, and the photos, and the letter. Is that what you think?
Reuben: Yeah.

All the children are happy with Olivia's suggestion, and spend the remainder of the time writing out the letter themselves, with support from Olivia.

Reflections and conclusions on Olivia's critical pedagogy inquiry

In reflecting on Olivia's work, three critical pedagogy observations come to mind.

The first observation is that encouraging children to think about possibilities for their community facilitates their emergent democratic participation. Children were not lectured about civic responsibility, but instead had opportunities to engage as citizens in exploring future possibilities for their friends and community.

The second observation is that learning to think beyond the self is to rebuff neoliberal ideas that prioritise the interests of self and of economic efficacy.

The best examples of this were the Chinese Barbie story, where multiple children took action in support of Calvin's dream, but there were other examples. The children negotiating with each other about how to beautify the area under the bridge is a goal with no economic benefit. However, the children showed their appreciation for beautiful spaces by reconceptualising the unattractive under-bridge area. Lauren began a collection project to support those without homes – people she had not met but had begun to develop empathy for.

The third observation is that through the future thinking work Olivia provided significant opportunities for children to explore their ideas within a critical pedagogy framework of democratisation and empowerment. By providing a variety of contexts in the learning activities for children to work through, children acquired the knowledge, authority and skills they needed in order to inquire and act upon what it means to live in a democracy. For example, in the work on the Chinese Barbie, Olivia encourages the children to undertake a comparison that moves between the doll they are working on, reference pictures of Calvin's sister Caro, and their own cultural knowledge about what being Chinese looks like. This careful work helps the children identify comparative details, and make connections between themselves, each other, and the dolls in order to develop a fuller understanding of what can be meant by the term "Chinese Barbie". The children were able to see that clothing and a name were not enough to make something Chinese (as was the case with the Mulan doll).

The next chapter looks back across all the case study chapters, and draws together findings that have arisen from observing the work of all four teachers collectively.

Chapter Ten: Collated Findings From The Case Studies

Introduction

This chapter draws together evidence from across the four teacher case studies to identify strong themes across and within the case study data.

The findings are ordered through the four elements of the Freirean inquiry framework, as:

1. The emergence of the critical pedagogy inquiry;
1. Use of critical dialogue;
2. Critical consciousness is realised; and
3. 4. Undertaking praxis, or action-in-reflection.

The chapter concludes with general findings about critical pedagogy in an ECE setting.

1. The emergence of the critical pedagogy inquiry

The element of emergence looks at how critical pedagogy inquiries developed within each of the four case studies and establishes two findings. The first finding relates to how critical inquiry topics worked with the inquiry in the kindergarten's teaching spaces, and the second reveals how the inquiries could be both teacher-directed and child-led.

Critical inquiry topics can be wide ranging and work in conjunction with content-based classroom inquiry

Each of the four teachers in this study approached critical pedagogy differently, as seen in Table 4 below. Table 4 summarises the aims teachers had for their critical pedagogy inquiries.

Table 5: Teacher's critical pedagogy inquiry and associated topics

Teacher	Critical pedagogy inquiry	Topic that critical pedagogy unfolded through
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Tina	Equitable involvement in small group activities; “hearing every voice”, firstly for the teacher and later with the children	Began with building a three dimensional mural of Ōhūiarangi with blocks; finished with the creating the friendship seat
Nilma	Eco-cultural literacy with an emphasis on bicultural perspectives	Cleaning the ocean and ocean sustainability
Olivia	Conceptualising possibilities for the future	“What is your dream for New Zealand?” Included the birthday party for New Zealand, collecting goods for the homeless, reforming the space under the bridge, and the Chinese Barbie doll.
Jacqui	Critical dialogue	Group work and Godly Play, particularly “The man who got halfdead on the road”

The table also reveals how a critical pedagogy inquiry can be woven through an otherwise conventional inquiry topic. No topics or critical pedagogy approaches were stipulated at the outset of this study with teachers. For example, Tina could have conducted the mural work without a critical focus and the topic work itself may have proceeded in a similar manner. Nilma could have addressed ocean pollution without introducing a bicultural perspective. Jacqui could have conducted Godly Play sessions without using critical dialogue, or without delving deeper into the hard questions the children were grappling with. Olivia’s work is the exception here as inquiry into possibilities for the future community is itself rooted in the child as a democratic citizen, with a voice worth hearing.

Each teacher’s inquiry also developed in different, but organic, ways. Tina and Nilma had clear problem-posing approaches from the outset. Problem-posing is an element of critical pedagogy, whereby a facilitator reframes the group’s thinking as a problem to be solved.

The problem Tina posed was initially conducted as a teacher inquiry about hearing every child’s voice. By posing an issue about her practice as question to be investigated, Tina paid explicit attention to facilitating opportunities for every individual child to contribute. Tina developed approaches to enable every voice to be heard.

The problem-posing Nilma undertook happened in her work with children, as she reflected their concerns about ocean pollution to them in the form of a question they could inquire into and answer (“How can we clean the ocean?”).

Olivia had a slightly different take on the problem-posing approach: using possibility thinking. Her inquiry question to the children was phrased not as a problem, but as an open-ended investigation. Jacqui’s inquiry evolved, rather than being explicitly stated.

Critical pedagogy inquiries could be both teacher-oriented and child-initiated

Critical pedagogy inquiries took place in two ways.

The first way that critical work took place was as teacher-oriented inquiries, where teachers applied a critical pedagogy lens to their own practice in order to identify an inquiry for personal investigation. Jacqui and Tina used this approach. While the children were directly involved as participants, particularly in Jacqui’s case, the children did not select the inquiry topic, although they did benefit from the work that was undertaken with them. Using a critical lens, Jacqui and Tina undertook close examinations of their teaching practice, using a critical lens to address matters of equity, fairness, democratic practice, and power sharing. They sought change in their work with children with the aim of creating a fairer world, both in the kindergarten community, and beyond.

Tina recognised and supported equitable, democratic involvement in small groups, which aligns with the humanising goal of critical pedagogy. Tina also paid specific attention to power dynamics. Jacqui worked on a specific element of the critical inquiry framework (critical dialogue), which used multiple perspectives to explore moral dilemmas with children, thus providing them with new frames of reference for analysing the world around them.

It is possible to view Tina’s work as a form of self-review. Self-review is the intention process of investigating aspects of teaching practice in order to bring about improvement, and to evaluate the impact of teaching practices on children’s learning.

There is potential for self-review activities conducted by teachers and teams to also adopt a critical pedagogy focus. Identification of a self-review topic is often itself an act of critique. However, like Tina, such self-review would need to have a critical pedagogy

focus of some kind, not simply involve critique of something that was not working and needed to be fixed. Without a critical focus, such a review or inquiry could quickly become teachers, as “experts”, looking at the worlds of children and making changes according to what *they* thought was best, rather than actively working with children and families to work out together for a fairer world. The review approach of “expert” is distinct from Tina’s inquiry, which inquired into what she could do personally about inequity about in small group settings. This is particularly true since the last phase of inquiry saw her work directly with children on the matter of inequity in small group settings.

The second way critical inquiry unfolded was through teachers and children inquiring together using a critical pedagogy approach, as Olivia and Nilma did. Their inquiries took place with children as co-constructors. Children identified the inquiry topics with the support of teachers, who reframed the topic through problem-posing.

The problem-posing approach was what helped reframe questions in critical ways. For example, the issue of ocean pollution took on a transformative approach when Nilma asked the children how they could clean the ocean, a perspective that was further enhanced when she reframed the ocean as “Tangaroa’s ocean”. Olivia’s use of problem-posing, which drew on possibility thinking, focused on children thinking as citizens. These teachers also provided support, structure for the inquiry, and resources to carry out the work.

Inquiry work is regularly undertaken with young children in ECE. The ability of inquiry work to take on critical perspectives is significant. There is potential for many inquiry topics to adopt critical aspects. It is worthwhile noting that for the co-constructed inquiries with children, not every aspect of the inquiry involved critical dialogue or critical investigation. Those aspects happened in moments, but not continuously.

2. Critical dialogue was established with young children

In establishing critical dialogue with young children, the teachers used a variety of dialogue-building approaches that are already in use in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. The approaches identified in this study were open-ended questioning, including the “I wonder” prompt, and working theories. Two other dialogue-building approaches were

also used: possibility thinking, which is less well known, and lastly, comparative analysis.

Using authentic teacher questions and prompts

All the teachers in the study used authentic teacher questions in their inquiry work, and these questions supported critical dialogue with young children.

A particular open-ended statement the kindergarten teachers used frequently was the “I wonder” prompt. This prompt was particularly prevalent in the data of Olivia and Jacqui. Three observances of the use of “I wonder”, as it pertained to critical dialogue, are set out below.

“I wonder” as an invitation to reflect

Jacqui used the “I wonder” prompt as an invitation to reflect the most frequently. This use typically came at the end of sequence, and acted reflectively, encouraging children to think again about what had just been discussed. For example, when Jacqui says “I wonder if boys are angry” after the examples from the boys showing that none of them felt that way, she encouraged reflection on this idea by drawing attention to it, possibly even indicating that the original idea was worth reconsidering. In this instance the question had that affect; Ava offered a reworking of her original idea after this statement.

The second example comes from the sequence below:

Jacqui:	What made them become robbers?
Summer:	I don't know
Ara:	Their family are robbers
Ava:	Turn into robbers?
Jacqui:	I wonder why.

As in the first example, the use of “I wonder” here directs attention to the previous statements. Jacqui’s use of an accompanying “why” question suggests that the answers the children have given do not fully explain how the men became robbers.

A third example came at the end of the “man who got half dead on the road” discussion. Jacqui stated, “I wonder what this whole thing really means”. This is a more generalised reflection than the previous statements, and coming where it does at the

end of the discussion, it is also somewhat rhetorical in nature: she does not expect an answer, but invites the children instead, to reflect on the what they have discussed.

“I wonder” as an invitation to speculate

“I wonder” is also used as an invitation to speculate. This was observed most frequently at the start of Godly Play when the props were being extracted from the golden box; Jacqui would encourage the children to generate as many ideas as possible about what the props could be. Questions included “I wonder if the sheep have names”, and “I wonder what this place could really be?” Speculation encouraged playful responses and was helpful at the start of the Godly Play sessions to draw the children into the work. Wondering encouraged ideas and thoughts, given and received without being assessed as right or wrong.

The use of “I wonder” in this context also served to get the children thinking about symbolic representation, as they speculated about what the elements could be, rather than dwelling on what they actually were.

“I wonder” used to redirect attention to a particular idea or point

The “I wonder” prompt was used most frequently to direct children’s thinking to a particular point. The function of “I wonder” in this circumstance was to invite children to respond to a particular idea, without indicating the teacher’s position on that idea – only that it might be relevant and worthwhile thinking about.

Olivia used the statement to direct the children to the point of that day’s activity: the graffiti. “I wonder, what about the things [graffiti] on the wall?” She began by inquiring about the graffiti from the children. In this way, the children were oriented to the topic by thinking of a response from their own perspective. In the Chinese Barbie work, Olivia asked, “I wonder what she [the Chinese Barbie] looked like”. This question, like the previous one, oriented the children to a particular topic, the appearance of the doll, but otherwise gave no indication of what kind of response the children should give, leaving it open to them.

Jacqui also used this kind of “I wonder” prompt. “I wonder what a neighbour does?” she asked, seeking clarification from the children of their understanding about the concept of neighbour. “I wonder if you have ever heard the good shepherd calling your name?” This question has a religious inference, as the “good shepherd” is a metaphor

for Jesus Christ. However, the children were still able to respond however they wished. Jacqui also invited the children to consider a particular perspective with her question, “I wonder if this story would be different if it were about children. Do you think it would be?” While the last part of the question is more directive with the inclusion of “would”, this statement remains reasonably open.

Using wait time

All of the teachers in this study used wait time effectively. There are two instances in particular that merit attention.

The first example is actually a series of examples, and comes from Jacqui’s work with “the man who got half-dead on the road” discussions. The use of wait time is not new in teaching, or even in the use of critical work. Sandretto (2011) discusses the importance of wait time in the context of critical literacy, noting that students need space and silence to engage in deep thinking.

There were multiple instances of this kind of thinking wait time during this discussion where Jacqui’s questions to the children were initially met with silence as the children thought about their answers. On the video the children were clearly concentrating, taking time to formulate answers to challenging questions.

The second is Tina’s work with Emily. While the space between Tina’s question, and Emily’s eventual response of “circle” was not completely silent, Tina was clear to the group, including Emily, that she was willing to provide as much time as Emily needed to either respond, or presumably show some sign of wanting to stop. At around two and a half minutes, Tina used wait time to support Emily’s engagement. Wait time became an equaliser for a child who was still finding her voice.

Ensuring children have wait time is not just about supporting children’s ability to think but also about power-sharing. Teachers can have considerable control over dialogue in the teaching space. Wanting children’s critical engagement, but wanting that engagement within the teacher’s timeframe, is contrary to democratic practice. Ensuring children have the time they need to respond shows the relinquishment of the teacher’s power, and is mana-enhancing for all participants.

Possibility thinking

Olivia and Nilma used possibility thinking in their work. There is one example in Nilma's case study, and four examples in Olivia's case study. Like working theories, the term "possibility thinking" suggests ideas that are still in flux, and subject to change as they continue to be explored. However, possibility thinking is forward-focused, and considers what the future might need – what is possible (Craft, 2010, 2013).

In Nilma's work, the children thought of possibilities to solve the problem of ocean pollution, and developed the ocean-cleaning robots as a result. Nilma supported the children to both design and build prototypes of their robots, supporting them to see the future, and its possibilities, as something real – something they were preparing to change with their ideas and actions.

In Olivia's work, the possible future being imagined was the children's community and country. Olivia used the word "dream" to describe her possibility thinking with children. Several options were generated, from the individual (Calvin's Chinese Barbie), to the local (the reconceptualising of the under-bridge area, the collection for the homeless), to the country itself (the birthday party for New Zealand).

Olivia took these possibilities seriously and the possibilities, expressed as dreams, took shape through her validating questions. Using art approaches (the clay birthday party tableau), social justice work (the collection for the homeless), digital media (under the bridge reconceptualization) and artefact work (the Chinese Barbie) children were able to see the various dreams realised in different ways. Possibilities became real.

Using working theories to make children's thinking visible and to engage in critique

Teachers also noticed and supported children to extend their working theories. As Hedges (2014) notes:

working theories are built from prior knowledge ... and open to revision on the basis of new information and experience. As a creative form of knowledge, they are modified and improved in a continuous manner (p. 40).

This study shows examples of teachers engaging and supporting children to modify their theories, using critical approaches such as multiple perspectives to supply new evidence and ideas for children to consider in their theories.

Ava's theory of "boys are angry" is a good example of how this worked. Her theory was quite succinct, stated in one sentence. Rather than "correct" this thinking, or ignore it, Jacqui undertook an immediate inquiry with the boys present to investigate the accuracy of this statement.

Because Ava is not directly challenged (e.g.: told she is "wrong"), she has the opportunity to rethink her initial theory while the group explores it, rather than being put into the position where she is forced to defend her idea. She comes up with a new theory, which she puts back to the group, and this idea is more accepted in the sense that nobody disputes it.

Jacqui takes a similar approach again when talking about the neighbour issue in Godly Play with a large group. After the children re-establish their theory about the robbers being unable to have neighbours because robbers are bad, Jacqui provides a series of different perspectives for the children to consider their commonly held working theory from. While the children do not completely relinquish their theory, there is evidence in the transcripts of them rethinking theory through as they offer their morally-negotiated suggestions. This theory is the most complex idea the children tackle during the research.

Use of multiple perspectives and contexts

Teachers in this study used multiple perspectives in their work to provide children with alternative points of view for consideration.

Tina introduced another perspective through the video clip she showed children in the third cycle of her research. This video made the perspective of the quiet child visible. The dialogue that followed invited the small group to think about the situation in the video from the perspective of the children who were not talking in the video.

Nilma used a picture book to explore a bicultural perspective at length with children. For the majority of the children, as first-generation New Zealanders, this bicultural perspective was new to them. Nilma ensured there were lots of different modes for exploring the story, and lots of time for the explorations, over days and weeks.

Nilma also provided space for a scientific perspective on ocean ecology to sit alongside a cultural perspective, providing validation for two distinct perspectives. Writers have

identified the challenge of having bicultural knowledge recognised as valid and equal as well as recognising the strength of positivist discourses such as science (Durie, 2010; Ritchie, 2017b). Her positioning of these two discourses side by side was a powerful counternarrative that validated both and detracted from neither.

Jacqui used a different approach. Using dialogue, she would provide different contexts for children to consider within the course of a discussion. This was particularly evident in the case of the “man who got half-dead on the road”. In this discussion Jacqui changed contexts nine different times. Each time, children were able to respond to the new context, and had opportunities interpret the behaviour of the characters in the parable in a new way.

The selection of the contexts themselves merits attention. While Nilma’s work explored an unfamiliar context with children, Jacqui’s contexts specifically targeted familiar, local contexts. These are listed below.

The contexts:

1. Who could love the robbers?
2. Who is our neighbour at kindergarten?
3. Who will be Jacqui’s neighbour?
4. The robbers as baddies
5. The children as bad guys
6. Are there bad guys at kindergarten?
7. The man under the bridge
8. Back to the parable – the Priest.
9. Are we kind all the time?

The use of familiar contexts moves the unfamiliar into familiar territory, thereby encouraging children to compare what they already know about one area, to what they are thinking about in another. For example, in the sequence where Jacqui asks, “are their bad guys at kindergarten”, the “bad guys” idea from the parable is combined directly with their own kindergarten. The children had to think anew about what “bad guys” meant, and whether that label could apply to their own kindergarten. There was a lot of wait time in this segment!

By the time Jacqui moved back to the parable and asked about the Priest, the children had experienced enough – and had done enough thinking – to have new thoughts

about the Priest's action. This included Ava's "bad-good" assessment, which was a new position and showed her growing critical consciousness.

Critical dialogue as building context

Some critical dialogue was not critical in terms of critique, but it was critically focused in terms of building understanding of new and multiple contexts so that children could develop enough knowledge to engage in critique. This was the case with Nilma's work. While Jacqui used clear examples of critical dialogue, Nilma's exploration of bicultural and scientific perspectives was quite different. Children needed occasions to learn and practice different kinds of knowledge to gain enough perspective for critical engagement.

Critical dialogue as comparative

Olivia built critical dialogue using comparative language. This was evident through the children's work to create a genuine Chinese Barbie. There were four examples.

Firstly, Olivia helped the children search the Internet for a Barbie who "looked like us". Olivia encouraged her group, who were on this occasion all Chinese, to look closely at the pictures they found online, and to compare the images they found with their own experiences of being Chinese, and of knowing other Chinese people. The children identified differences between themselves and the online pictures, including hair, facial features, and skin colour. They were able to make these distinctions even when the doll was pictured wearing traditional Chinese clothing.

In the second example, another group doing a similar activity to this one used each other as the basis for their investigation. The children explored each other's faces and shared observations about what made somebody "look" Chinese.

In the third example, the children moved to a more specific example: how could they make the Barbie look like Caro, Calvin's sister? This involved comparisons between her photo, pictures the children had drawn, and the Barbie dolls Olivia had brought to the studio. In this activity the children tried to paint a face that would match Caro's, and this resulted in very detailed observations about lips and eyes.

The fourth example centred on the Mulan Barbie, brought by one of the children to assist in their investigations. Observations included hair colour, face shape, and clothing, as the Mulan Barbie was wearing a traditional Chinese costume. While this

discussion started with the doll, the children in the group who were Chinese also looked at their own clothing and agreed that clothing did not make you Chinese.

These examples, briefly recounted here, use comparative language to explore cultural difference. The observations are made matter-of-factly, with children encouraged to look deeply at the question of what makes somebody look Chinese. The respectful nature of the investigations, in which children identifying as Chinese were positioned as experts, makes the details of difference visible. However, it also allows differences to be explored in context, as part of the children's lived experience, and through their peer relationships.

Additionally, the point can be made that Olivia, like Jacqui, also moved the children through a series of different contexts, combining the familiar with the unfamiliar, to invite new thinking. Where Jacqui's contexts were invoked using dialogue, Olivia used physical, real-world examples (dolls, the children themselves, pictures) to assist the children in gaining new perspectives on what made a Barbie look Chinese – or for that matter, what made a person look Chinese.

3. Critical consciousness was possible with young children, and took different forms.

Critical consciousness involved learning to see the world in different ways. The observations in this section are inferential, since the data cannot be definitive on what the children did, or did not see, differently. However, the data does suggest two ways that children's views of the world changed.

The first example is the children seeing things that were previously invisible to them. The work with Tina is the clearest example of this. By showing the children the video clip and asking them who was silent, a few children from the three groups could identify that some people in the video were not speaking. This was a good start, as it can be challenging to recognise something that is absent. Three of the participants in this work, who were able to identify that there were silent participants in the video, also came up with ideas to help those silent children. This suggests the realisation that the silence of the children's peers required support.

The second example of critical consciousness involved seeing the world from new perspectives that supported children to draw comparisons between contexts. Sandretto (2011) refers to the development of multiple perspectives as the point of critical literacy. To think a different way about the world, one has to see that difference. The use of multiple contexts provided a contrast to children's current experiences, allowing them to learn from seeing their own lives in relief against a different context.

For example, Jacqui's ability to shift contextual perspectives provided useful movement for children's emerging critical consciousness, as she used a succession of familiar contexts to bring new understanding to an unfamiliar context. Olivia introduced new contexts through physical artefacts: the Barbie dolls, pictures, and even the children themselves. This process helped make cultural differences visible to children.

Changing the context also helped children enlarge their thinking around a particular matter. Nilma helped children develop bicultural reference frames. In this instance, the change is that the child's world grows larger and increases their personal frames of reference.

4. Undertaking praxis, or action-in-reflection

Praxis for children and teachers took a variety of forms.

Some forms of praxis were structurally embedded in the kindergarten's philosophy laid a strong foundation of counternarratives to neoliberalist ways of being. Beauty, wonder, openness, and collaboration: all these values are evident in the teaching and learning experiences of the kindergarten. The ongoing practice of the kindergarten's philosophy and values stands in contrast to neoliberal priorities such as individualism, economic priority, evidence-based ways of thinking, and efficiency. These counternarratives were strengthened and refreshed as teachers continually introduced new perspectives and contexts for children to experience, as in the work of Nilma and Jacqui.

Some forms of praxis resulted in artefacts that represented children's thinking and ideas. This was most evident in Olivia's work. The Chinese Barbie was an artefact that changed several times to reflect the children's growing understanding of cultural

difference, and their current thinking about what would make the Barbie doll look Chinese. The clay tableau of the birthday party for Aotearoa New Zealand was another example that brought children's thinking together in a collaborative effort. A digital form of praxis was the digital photo that three separate groups modified different ways to reflect their desire for change to the under bridge area.

Praxis also existed through children and teachers taking action on things that mattered to them. This happened for Tina, working through her inquiry about hearing all voices in a conversation. Her conscious efforts to foreground the quiet child, and to attend to conflict democratically saw her make transformative changes in her small group work. This also happened in Olivia's work with Lauren and her project to collect materials for the homeless, as well as for the group of children who wrote a letter to the Barbie company, asking for a more representative Chinese Barbie for their friend Calvin. These examples show people building the kind of world we want through social action.

General findings

These last findings are general observations about critical pedagogy in the ECE sector as a whole.

Critical pedagogy is both workable and valuable in ECE settings

The kindergarten in this study demonstrated the potential of a critical pedagogy approach in ECE. While critical pedagogy influences were evident in the kindergarten prior to the study commencing, a concerted focus on implementing critical pedagogy saw a sustained and intentional programme unfold over the two months the study took place. All the teachers involved were able to use critical pedagogy approaches to support their own teaching, to further the kindergarten philosophy; and to realise outcomes from the curricula and external philosophies the kindergarten subscribed to.

The ability of critical pedagogy to be constructively implemented in an early childhood setting is consistent with the work of Vasquez (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2010). Even though the work of Vasquez, and this study, took place in different countries, both studies used critical approaches to work with young children. I concur with Vasquez's observation that children show high levels of engagement with critical work.

Critical pedagogy is flexible and responsive in the teaching context

Critical pedagogy is a flexible, responsive approach for teachers. No two teachers took the same path in terms of their inquiry or implementation, allowing critical pedagogy inquiries that were responsive to the needs of children, and flexible for the teachers using the approach. This finding reiterates the position that critical pedagogy needs to be made and remade by those using it (Macedo, 2005), and Giroux's (2009a) statement that critical pedagogy is not an a priori method.

The teachers in this study have demonstrated this finding by allowing their inquiries to emerge naturally from their work with children, including their own reflections on their work. The inquiries were able to change, as with Tina changing her teacher-inquiry to a child-teacher inquiry in the third cycle of her work. The inquiries responded to issues that arose with children during Jacqui's second revisiting of "the man who got half-dead on the road". The inquiries were able to move from a teacher-equity focus to working directly with children, as happened in Tina's inquiry. With Olivia's work, a number of critical pedagogy inquiries were undertaken concurrently and followed with different groups of children.

Critical pedagogy as curriculum-compatible

Te Whāriki overtly embraces criticality in the 2017 version. In the previous 1996 version, criticality was embedded in aspects of the principles and strands, encouraging analysis, comparison and evaluation. Additionally, the nature of *Te Whāriki* encourages each ECE setting to implement its own programme – using the metaphor of a woven mat – making the point that just as each mat is unique to the weaver, so is each implementation of *Te Whāriki* unique that setting. There is a significant commonality between *Te Whāriki* and critical pedagogy, as both encourage practitioners to interpret their core ideas with relevance to context.

The data in this study has also revealed no issues between critical pedagogy implementation in this ECE setting, and *Te Whāriki*. However, the lack of issues with implementation is considered specific to this teaching context. Historically, the teachers at the kindergarten had taken a measured and thoughtful approach to not only implementing *Te Whāriki*, but also other teaching approaches and philosophies that the setting drew on. This meant that the teachers had considerable resources to draw on when working with new approaches. For example, they had already

developed shared understandings of the strands and principles within *Te Whāriki*. This common understanding provided a sound basis from which to implement new approaches with conscious reference to *Te Whāriki* in their ECE setting.

Critical pedagogy work with young children happens on a continuum

There was a vast range of critically informed work in this study. Jacqui regularly used critical dialogue with young children. Olivia's work focused on socially just outcomes and representations of children's thinking. Tina turned the critical lens on her own teaching, as well as conducting critical work with children. Nilma worked at validating eco-cultural and bicultural literacies.

Different teachers, working with different material, and using their own strengths as educators, saw a range of work emerge. Some work ventured significantly into critique and analysis; some work focused on exploration of issues or perspectives to inform overall thinking.

According to Freire, there is no one way to "do" critical pedagogy. This study supports the premise that there is no one way to gauge the depth, scope or quality of critical pedagogy learning. The data suggests this work happens on a continuum, with some of the exploratory, foundational work happening at the emergent stage, and the deeper explorations with comparative work and extensive critical dialogue towards the other end. The use of a continuum creates space for many kinds of critical work. This finding may be particularly significant for ECE settings, as part of adapting critical work for younger children.

Critical pedagogy in ECE is supported by through slow pedagogy

The use of slow pedagogy (Clark, 2020) benefitted the teaching and learning of critical pedagogy. Slow pedagogy gave children time to think through their meaning-making.

Jacqui's efforts to unpack challenging moral ideas gained much more traction the second time around. The children remembered the story, and one of them was even the first to raise the issue that had evaded the group on the previous occasion. Olivia's possibility work also benefitted from time, as she used the studio to think and "dream" with children. With their projects secure, children were able to return to this work and

continue thinking and theorising. This happened with the clay tableau of the birthday party for Aotearoa New Zealand, and with the Chinese Barbie project.

Slow pedagogy also allowed the teachers to prepare additional resources to continue extending the children's thinking. Jacqui had time to think about how to represent the moral issues raised in one of the parables to the children. Nilma gathered resources for the children to build a prototype of the ocean-cleaning robot. Tina spent time with children looking at nature to decide what shades of green to paint the blocks for their mural of Ōhūiarangi.

Olivia was able to source different Barbie dolls, paints, and special paint brushes. Children had the opportunity to bring in resources to support inquiries, as Ava did with the Mulan Barbie.

While the teachers at the kindergarten typically employ a slow pedagogy approach in all their work, that approach was particularly beneficial for critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy does not favour easy answers, and challenges both children and teachers. Opportunities to rethink, revisit, and linger amongst learning experiences gave children time to process complex ideas. Olivia's work with the Chinese Barbies happened over a series of weeks. Tina and Nilma's work unfolded over a period of months. While the critical dialogue in Jacqui's work tended to unfold in single episodes, the fact that she kept returning to the practice of critical dialogue meant that this, too, happened repeatedly over time, although in different contexts. The two episodes of "the man who got half-dead on the road" happened some weeks apart.

The extended time frames of the critical pedagogy enacted at the kindergarten, particularly the work that took place directly with children, may be a unique feature of critical pedagogy's application to ECE. Unhurried children benefitted from time to think, consider, and explore different perspectives over time. Teachers in ECE, in Aotearoa New Zealand, have the opportunity to return to meaningful, sustained critical inquiry work, day after day, week after week. There are no requirements at present forcing teachers to move on from an inquiry, to satisfy testing or qualification regimes. Critical pedagogy inquiry work can last as long as the children's interest holds.

Not everything with the children worked

The children did not take up every opportunity to engage in critical work.

Jacqui's invitation to discuss why the group needed to look after nature was glanced over and then ignored. Tina's invitations to children, to inquire into their quiet peers, were taken up by some children, but not by others.

Not every invitation worked, and not every inquiry developed. Nobody appeared discouraged by these non-starters, or lack of. Neither the children nor teachers made an issue out of any lack of progress. These non-starter events were offset by the overall frequency of invitations to work critically. This frequency meant there were regular invitations to engage in critical work, but it was always the children's decision to engage – or not - with the issue raised.

An attendant observation is that not every moment of teaching needed to involve critical work. The teachers also moved in and out of other kinds of work at the kindergarten. The case studies, related as a narrative, show the inquiries from start to finish, but in between these episodes teachers were undertaking other investigations and activities of different kinds.

Additionally, continual involvement in critical pedagogy work would have been exhausting for both children and teachers. While my study did not set out to gauge the aspect of energy expended during critical work, my observations of the children and teachers during this study, combined with my own experiences of critical work, led me observe that critical work is mentally taxing. To have required continual involvement by all participants would have been unrealistic, especially over the time period involved. Instead, what the teachers had in particular was a disposition of criticality, whereby their mindset towards critical work meant that they identified and acted on opportunities for critical engagement as they arose, as well as intentionally creating opportunities for critical work.

There was space in a critical pedagogy curriculum for playfulness.

Taking children's ideas seriously, combined with allowing space for playfulness, created a productive tension in the development of critical pedagogy. Playfulness is important to learning at the kindergarten. There is much evidence of playfulness taking place, even in the midst of all the serious critical pedagogy work. This element of playfulness remains important. While gaining an education is serious, becoming an engaged, democratic citizen is serious, and critical work is serious – children are still children and

have a right to fun. Adults also have a right to have fun, for their own wellbeing and job satisfaction, as well as to model playfulness as part of relationship-building.

There are many examples in the case studies of children combining playfulness with their investigative work. In the work with dreams, two of the children contributed fictional cakes with great enthusiasm. In the preface to one of the Godly Play sessions, a child brought up a robot pig. Ava jokes with Tina about cooking her in the pot. Alexander playfully suggests “panda” in response to a question. The discussions are frequently filled with laughter, affectionate teasing of the teachers by the children, and jokes.

I did not observe teachers rebuffing the playfulness and fun. The most frequent reaction I noted was the teachers laughing along with the children. They also frequently acknowledged the children’s playfulness in dialogue, as Jacqui does.

Child: It could be a robot pig.

Jacqui: Maybe it’s a robot.

Olivia took a similar approach with the inventive “leaf” and “sobol” cakes.

Janks (2010) wrote of “productive tension” (p. 27) in her work on critical literacy, and I think that is a useful phrase to describe the relationship between fun and playfulness on the one hand, and serious critical investigation on the other. One does not have to be sacrificed in order for the other to happen.

Critical pedagogy was supported through democratic practice

Teachers at the kindergarten placed a high priority on democratic practice. Democratic practices were evident in the work of each teacher. Jacqui regularly consulted with all children in her group work, providing opportunities for all group participants to contribute to the discussion. Nilma’s equitable relationship with children had space for Emma to provide a “reminder” about a promised activity, as well as for children taking the lead in their learning. Tina supported children to listen to each other and work collaboratively, as part of a community. This included children working through conflict and being able to accept ideas that were different from their own. Olivia’s work, like Nilma’s meant children’s inquiries took the lead.

A significant aspect of practice was the teachers’ attention to supporting collaboration amongst children. Children were supported to consult with each other, listen to each

other's ideas, and take action for the good of their peers, themselves and their community. Consultation, sometimes framed as discussion, was a regular feature of work at the kindergarten. No activity started without this feature, and it was common for these discussion and/or consultation periods to run for around fifteen to twenty minutes before the "doing" part of the activity would commence. While one function of this discussion period was to explore children's thinking, another function was to set the collective direction the group would take on the project.

Collaboration ranged from small things, like working on the same piece of paper, to big projects, like the friendship seat. The regularity of collaboration meant the children were well-accustomed to working and thinking together.

Regular opportunities to practice collaboration meant there was a culture of respect around collaboration.

Democratic practices of consultation and collaboration functioned as powerful counternarratives to neoliberal ideas. Where neoliberalist thinking prioritises the individual, collaboration focuses on the public or community good. These stories of everyday democratic practice show how counternarrative work can resist pervasive neoliberal thinking.

Democratic practices also support the developing child citizen (Milligan et al., 2020). By exploring the complexity of society, making links to real-world social issues, and working on active responses to those issues, children are apprenticed into critically-informed citizenship. They are not practicing being engaged citizens – they *are* being engaged citizens.

Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the key findings from across the four case study chapters. The purpose of this summary has been to bring together the threads of each teacher's story, to establish the ideas and approaches that will form the basis for further theorising. This theorising will be the subject of the final chapter.

Chapter Eleven: Theorising and thinking further about critical pedagogy, in ECE and beyond

Introduction

This final chapter returns to the research questions underpinning this study and draws on the findings to support these.

1. How might teachers enact critical pedagogy in an early childhood setting with young children?
2. How can critical pedagogy support the belonging and empowerment of young children?

Each of the research questions is addressed in turn. The chapter also identifies areas for future research, before making recommendations for policy and practice.

In this chapter I will discuss my working theories about critical pedagogy and ECE, from the early stages of theorising through to my current thinking, within the framework of revisiting the research questions for this study. This thinking includes the framing of the critical landscape with respect to ECE (question 1), and elaborating on the relationship between critical pedagogy and *Te Whāriki*, as represented by the principle of empowerment, and the strand of belonging (question 2).

The chapter continues by discussing challenges, barriers, and tensions regarding implementation of critical pedagogy in ECE, and why critical pedagogy matters in ECE. The thesis concludes with my thoughts about future research, and recommendations for policy, moving forwards.

Early theorising: The critical pedagogy landscape

My early theorising about what critical pedagogy implementation in ECE could look like, took the form of visual models. I developed four models in all, with the intention of finding a visual form that represented the operation of critical pedagogy in an ECE setting. However, the use of models did not help the teachers in their practice of critical pedagogy, with one teacher suggesting she found the model she saw to be confusing.

This early work was not without merit: the most useful outcome of this model phase was realising that McLaren's (2015) foundational principles not only underpinned, but identified the teaching and learning spaces where critical pedagogy could operate. (McLaren's foundation principles are stated as culture, politics, and economics, p. 122-128).

As data collection progressed I found myself increasingly referring back to these foundational principles as a landscape - a *critical* landscape - and realised that this was the part of the early modelling that held the most relevance for the kindergarten. I moved away from the idea of models completely, and instead developed the critical landscape concept as a metaphor.

The aspects of the critical landscape

The critical landscape metaphor focuses on identifying the spaces and places where critical pedagogy inquiries takes place: the cultural, political, and economic worlds. The dehumanisation that Freire (1970/2018) writes about happens within these spheres, through laws, policies, practices, discourses, and systems, to name a few.

The critical landscape does more than provide a location. Different aspects of the critical landscape metaphor are used to explain the inquiry process undertaken as part of a critical pedagogy investigation. These aspects are:

- The starting point = the emergence of critical inquiry
- The journey = the development of the inquiry through critical dialogue and developing critical consciousness
- Features of the landscape = perspectives, values and context of the inquiry
- The horizon = praxis, action-in-reflection

Each will be discussed in turn.

The starting point: The emergence of critical inquiry

The first aspect of the critical landscape metaphor is the starting point. Every physical journey starts somewhere, and similarly, every critical pedagogy also has a starting point. One advantage of having a clear starting point is being able to assess your progress in relation to your point of origin.

The idea of a starting point is also useful for people new to critical pedagogy. In this study, Nilma stayed close to her starting point during her inquiry. Her intention to learn to work critically, coupled with her use of the contrasting literacies of science and ecocultural perspectives, were her starting point. She was still exploring the area around that starting point when data collection finished, but her exploratory steps can be hopeful and helpful for those who are likewise starting out, and provide an indication of what beginning work in the critical landscape can look like.

This last point yields another benefit of having a starting point in the landscape: it supports the idea of exploring a little before undertaking a critical pedagogy inquiry. Of the four teachers, only Olivia had a clear idea of what kind of inquiry she wanted to undertake at the start. Even then, Olivia spent time exploring different “dreams” with children until the Barbie dream emerged from her investigations with children as the one that would be explored at length. For all the other teachers, their specific inquiry emerged as each teacher began to reflect and theorise about her work with children, the children’s interests, and how these could be extended as a critical pedagogy inquiry.

The journey: the development of the inquiry through critical dialogue and developing critical consciousness

The metaphor of journey represents the inquiry process itself. In the same way that we journey through a space, such as on a hike or a trip of some kind, inquiry moves us from one point of knowledge to another.

A critical inquiry journey does not have to be linear in order to progress. Jacqui spent most of her time focusing on critical dialogue, with an eye on the developing critical consciousness of the children. Jacqui’s inquiry was also much more condensed than the other teachers, with her powerful work on “the man who got half-dead on the road” (second episode) taking place within a twenty-minute timeframe. While the topic of this work came from the children, the inquiry into critical dialogue belonged to Jacqui as a teacher-initiated inquiry that was implemented with children.

A critical inquiry journey is also an opportunity to explore from a variety of perspectives – it is these multiple perspectives that help young children to learn about the world in different ways. Olivia’s work with Calvin and the Chinese Barbie supports this point. Olivia used a variety of experiences, some planned and some spontaneous, to explore different ideas about what would make a Barbie doll actually look like a Chinese Barbie

doll. She included comparative work for the children to develop their knowledge base, and made sure there were opportunities for the children to test their ideas – their theories – in different ways, through dressing the dolls differently, and even changing the face and hair of one doll.

Features of the landscape: Perspectives, values, and context of the inquiry

Another aspect that emerged from the landscape metaphor was the idea of paying attention to features of the landscape. In the same way that a person's journey through a physical landscape will be unique, every critical pedagogy journey is unique. In a physical landscape, many features may draw our attention; an interesting outcropping of rock, a lake or stream, the desire to see the view from the top of the hill. The landscape features that draw our attention are those we invest our time in exploring further. We may not visit every feature in a landscape, particularly if we are engaged in detailed exploration. A critical inquiry, similarly, will not expend valuable cognitive resources on trying to address every feature encountered. Instead, choices are made, regarding what to attend to, based on the features encountered in the critical landscape. Responding to such features orients us to an inquiry in context-specific ways.

Olivia showed her ability to pivot between a variety of landscape features as she explored the different dreams of children with them, responding to what children identified as important. This was different from Tina's approach, where Tina focused on one landscape feature (equity of opportunity), and focused on expanding her inquiry around that. In her work on critical pedagogy, Jacqui used a variety of perspectives on one feature of the landscape, the question of whether the robbers were bad, to enable the children's understanding of a complex socio-economic issue to grow. Her approach is akin to taking multiple photos of a feature from different angles, in order to develop a dimensional picture of it. Nilma spent time developing two concurrent narratives, one a scientific perspective, one a cultural perspective. Extended work from different perspectives supports children to develop both academic content knowledge, and cultural knowledge.

The horizon: Praxis, action-in-reflection

The last aspect of the landscape metaphor is the horizon. I like the idea of the horizon as an aspirational space: a place of light, leading us forwards. Taking action is hopeful,

and critical pedagogy is meant to be hopeful, and even hope-restoring. Freire (1970/2018) himself often wrote about hope.

There was hope in the work of Nilma, as children developed a sense of belonging with a bicultural narrative, as well as a scientific one. There was hope in Tina's work of inclusion and equity, as well as in children's ideas about how to support inclusion. There was hope in the dreams of the children Olivia worked with, dreams for our country and community. And there was hope in Jacqui's work with critical dialogue, as children practiced seeing a complex idea from different perspectives, pushing their moral reasoning to its limits – and in some instances, showing an emerging critical consciousness of the world around them in all its imperfect glory.

Just as the physical horizon can appear to recede as we approach, so too can our initial aims and learning outcomes for a critical pedagogy inquiry shift as we approach what we thought was the end of the inquiry. New learning, new perspectives, and newly obtained critical consciousness can expand our thinking beyond what we could previously see, suggesting new possibilities for thinking and action.

It is possible to think of critical pedagogy learning as a series of working theories about the cultural, political and social worlds. These theories reshape and reform as we pay attention to them, as we make our thinking visible, and as new experiences inform us. In this sense, the pursuit of obtaining the horizon – of finality – recedes in importance as we come to see critical pedagogy as a continual work-in-progress, and as subject to development as we think and act, and act and think. The activities of a critical inquiry may end, but theorising goes on, towards the horizon, as our collective and individual sense-making continues.

Theorising about the critical landscape metaphors

The purpose behind the critical landscape metaphors was to create an identifiable construct to which teachers (or users) of critical pedagogy could begin to attach critical pedagogy-specific meaning. The critical landscape metaphor sets out a space, a process, and a purpose. In that sense, this is an *orienting* metaphor. The critical landscape metaphor sets out the broad brushstrokes of an extensive pedagogy. It is not a shortcut to understanding the nuances, extensions, and variations inherent in that pedagogy. That process will still require study, support, and practice, as is the case

generally for learning new disciplines. However, having the critical landscape metaphors to return to could help those learning about it to keep track of where they are in that learning, as well as to have an idea of how that learning is progressing, where that learning is heading towards.

In putting forward the metaphor of the critical landscape as the metaphor of this study, it is recognised that in different cultures, contexts, and languages, other metaphors may be more appropriate than that of landscape. I take the position that metaphor is a useful explanatory device, but that the metaphor may be reconceived by other groups, who may use “landscape” as a starting point, but find metaphorical expressions that better reflect their own situation. For example, I would be interested to work within a te ao Māori immersion setting, and explore critical pedagogy in that setting. At a minimum, I might expect one adaptation in a bicultural setting to be the use of te reo Māori to express the critical landscape metaphors. As was the case with *Te Whāriki's* strands and principles, such expression would likely not be a direct translation of the English words, but rather an expression in te reo that was approximate, but culture-specific. However, I think there is room in this approach for practitioners to create their own metaphors to explain their worldview of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy and *Te Whāriki*

This study concurs with, and advances the position advocated by Ritchie (1996), where she makes the theoretical case for *Te Whāriki* (1996) as showing significant compatibilities with a critical pedagogy approach. A key change for critical work, between the 1996 and 2017 versions of *Te Whāriki* was the statement in the 2017 version that advocated explicitly for the use of critical theories “to examine the influence of social conditions, global influences and equity of opportunity on children’s learning and development” (p. 62). The same passage further states that “the use of critical perspectives is reflected in the principles of *Te Whāriki*, and in guidance on how to promote equitable practices with children, parents and whānau.”

This study has used critical pedagogy to promote equitable practices in ECE in general, with a particular focus on the use of critical theories in teachers’ work with children. In the 2017 curriculum update, the principles are explicitly mentioned as reflecting critical perspectives, but the strands are not. However, the strands themselves become

relevant as these contain the goals and learning outcomes for the learning of young children. While the strands of *Te Whāriki* are not explicitly mentioned as reflecting critical perspectives in the 2017 update, and while those same strands suffered some dilution from the 1996 to 2017 versions (as discussed in the literature review), room for critical work with young children still exists. Where teachers adopt the use of critical theories, and use that same theoretical lens to guide their work with children, critically-focused approaches enter the curriculum as a process for sense-making about both the tangible, physical world, and the intangible, critical landscapes that children and teachers occupy.

Belonging and empowerment as examples of critical pedagogy within *Te Whāriki*

In order to provide an example of how critical pedagogy can operate through *Te Whāriki*, one strand and one principle were selected as lenses through which to view critical pedagogy work.

I had been thinking about the curriculum strand of belonging – *mana whenua* due to work on a recent research project (Mitchell et al, 2020). Through this project I had come to see belonging as an essential part of ongoing learning – it was not just for children who were new to an ECE setting. Understanding that around two thirds of the children at the kindergarten were first generation New Zealanders, and having participated in prior research (the previously mentioned TLRI project), that had explored their sense of belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand, I had begun to see belonging in a new light. As a result, I wanted to understand more about the relationship between critical pedagogy, and belonging.

The curriculum principle of empowerment was selected because empowerment (whether expressed through humanisation, through critical consciousness, or through praxis) is a key learning outcome of critical pedagogy work. My reason in selecting empowerment was to understand more about what empowerment looked like for young children who remain very much within the care of adults (whether teachers or parents).

Critical pedagogy and belonging

Critical pedagogy supports the development of belonging for young children in four specific ways.

- (i) Critical pedagogy creates a space to explore diverse ways of being as a part of our holistic experience as people. The critical aspect of this exploration meant that diversity was not raised as something to specifically notice or visit in a tourist-like fashion, but instead was incorporated into learning as a part of a web of organic human experience. Through critical work, observations and comparative work were encouraged but not singled out or criticised. Difference was not “othered” and instead positioned alongside powerful narratives, and validated as part of multiple ways of being. By creating space for a diversity of ideas, practices, and peoples, children were able to find both acceptance and validation of who they were, and what was important to them.
- (ii) Belonging is supported through the foregrounding of collaboration, combined with recognition of the individual’s needs. The idea of working for a common good was well embedded in the kindergarten, however at no point was the individuality of a child subsumed in the group identity. Instead, children learned to belong through opportunities to contribute their own ideas and skills, while teachers were able to adapt the group situation to support the unique needs of its members.
- (iii) Experiences with belonging included teachers acting as guides through the critical landscape, providing opportunities for children to gain experience with challenging moral, social, eco-cultural, and equity-focused ideas. Just as teachers guided children to engage with the physical landscape, thus supporting their connection with the earth itself, and with their local community, children were also supported to engage with the critical landscapes around them.
- (iv) A sense of belonging is fostered through a bicultural perspective. Bicultural learning connected children with the land, and with Māori ways of being, and knowing. This supported a sense of belonging with the country as a bicultural entity.

Critical pedagogy and empowerment

Critical pedagogy also supports the empowerment – whakamana of young children, in two ways.

- (i) The foregrounding of democratic practice enabled children to take up the role of being an active, engaged citizen through acts of everyday democracy. Making decisions about their learning and learning environment, being supported to work out differences for themselves, learning to listen to others, and learning that they could take action on things they wanted to change created an environment of civic mentorship for young children, as they learned to work for the collective good of their kindergarten and local community.

Because young children were supported as democratic citizens, undertaking transformative action became a way of life for them. Having an idea for change was worth something, because children were able to explore possibilities for taking action. Working for the good of the kindergarten and local community, and even considering matters of global importance, helped children experience how their ideas were powerful – and that those ideas mattered.

- (ii) Empowerment is grounded within a humanising approach that acknowledged the collective responsibilities we have to each other. Learning to collaborate, listen to each other, and work with different, even conflicting ideas supported children to develop practices of respect for everybody's respective journey toward becoming "more fully human" (Roberts, 2016, p. 1). Empowerment, as mana enhancing, became an endeavour for the collective rather than an individual pursuit. Working for the collective good and as part of a collaborative kindergarten community also carried social responsibilities. Children were never divorced from this reality.

***Te Whāriki* and critical pedagogy**

Thinking about *Te Whāriki*, and its relationship to critical pedagogy, the two examples used previously (belonging, empowerment), are illustrative of how this critical approach can contribute to the development of curriculum in ECE.

Belonging, through a critical pedagogy lens, addressed power structures in relationships. Teachers worked intentionally to incorporate equitable collaboration, and to recognise and validate diverse ways of being. These actions recognise that belonging is about far more than being happy at kindergarten – this is also about addressing the barriers that inhibit our ability to belong because we are excluded, or feel/look/act different than others in the group.

Empowerment, through a critical pedagogy lens, provided examples of realistic, significant things that children could do to take action for themselves, and for others around them. Like the work of Vasquez (2014), children showed enthusiasm for this work, as they planned and then took action.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section, these two examples, of one strand and one principle, are illustrative rather than definitive. These examples also took place in a kindergarten where considerable unpacking of the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* had already taken place amongst the teaching team, resulting in shared understandings of each strand and principle that were already well-embedded in the team's collective consciousness. The examples given are illustrative of possibility, but the possibility realised in this study was hard-won by the considerable work that took place in the years prior to this work commencing.

In another ECE setting, conflicts between *Te Whāriki* and critical pedagogy are possible. The 2017 version, as noted in the literature review, has introduced discourses in the strands which could be interpreted as compliance-based. As a reminder, the Belonging strand has as one of its goals, "They [children] know the limits of acceptable behaviour ... showing respect for kaupapa, rules and the rights of others". It is possible to interpret this strand through a compliance lens, even though other interpretations are possible. This is one example, but many others, foreseen and unforeseen, could arise depending on context and participants. Rather than be despondent, I would note that a key purpose of critical pedagogy is to uncover, confront, and contest that which makes us uncomfortable. If work with critical pedagogy raises issues for discussion in *Te Whāriki*, then I would argue that critical pedagogy is doing its job.

Contributing factors to critical pedagogy teaching and learning at this kindergarten

The long-serving teaching team at the kindergarten was one factor that positioned them for success in implementing an intentional critical pedagogy programme.

However, understanding the pre-study position of the kindergarten also conversely serves to illustrate the potential barriers for other ECE services seeking to commence this kind of work. This discussion of barriers will start by outlining the strengths and capabilities already present in the kindergarten these strengths are identified as having contributed to their critical pedagogy implementation.

The kindergarten in the study was primed for a critical pedagogy approach because of their longevity together as teachers, and the kind of teaching approaches they were already using. All the teachers were experienced in using inquiry approaches, and in supporting children to have extended discussions. Children were regularly invited to explain *why* they took a particular point of view, and were accustomed to articulating their thinking on a variety of topics. They were familiar with using a variety of media to represent their thinking as well, including drawing, clay, loose parts play, carpentry, and other forms.

Additionally, the children at this kindergarten, from a middle-class socio-economic suburb of South Auckland, were well-positioned for critical pedagogy learning. The families of the children were highly invested in their learning, and had (and this is a generalisation) ensured their children were well-resourced, in terms of personal knowledge, parental support, social competence, and schooling discourses.

The way the kindergarten was managed contributed to the success of critical pedagogy work as teachers had a lot of autonomy over their work, time to focus on teaching, and resources to prepare intentionally for teaching. While the kindergarten was overseen by a church board, which the head teacher also sat on, that board was very hands-off in terms of how the teachers ran their programme.

Lastly, the philosophy and the culture of the kindergarten had orientations towards democratic practice and social justice. The team had also foregrounded authentic practice of *Te Whāriki*. The head teacher also held the firm belief that education was a political act, a key aspect of critical pedagogy.

Barriers and challenges to entering critical pedagogy

Combined, the factors just mentioned above supported a critical pedagogy approach in the centre. However, the same factors that set this kindergarten up for success, will likely become barriers in ECE settings where limitations on time and resources, and the imposition of agendas from management, including for-profit orientations, hinder not only critical approaches, but often, hinder a teacher's ability to teach effectively.

Entry into the world of critical pedagogy itself remains a challenge. There is theory to read and make sense of, ideas to reflect on, and work to do together as a teaching team in order to develop some commonality of thought. All of this takes time, and this is assuming the teaching team can get ready access to current critical pedagogy literature, and critical pedagogy mentors. Teachers typically do not have access to university libraries or journal databases. While use of the critical landscape metaphor can provide a useful and orienting framing, time is still required to unpack each aspect of the expanded metaphors, and develop shared understanding as a teaching team.

In the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE community, there is much familiarity with dispositional learning (Carr, 1999). Teachers typically concern themselves with the dispositions that children are acquiring. However, Neumann (2013) argues for more emphasis on supporting teachers to develop critical dispositions. This involves not only the ability to act, and a sufficient base of theoretical knowledge, but also, the will to take action on critical work. Actively developing the disposition of criticality positions teachers to both identify and act on opportunities for critical learning, whether planned or spontaneous. A disposition of criticality could also be considered for children. By immersing them in a culture of questioning, inquiry, and analysis within the critical landscape, children could also develop a disposition of criticality.

This research with the teachers at this kindergarten, has provided observations of positive orientation towards critical learning experiences, and their ability to enact critical learning shows that they have a disposition for criticality. I conclude that this disposition is a significant factor in the kindergarten's successful implementation of critical pedagogy.

Why critical pedagogy matters in ECE

I will conclude this section with ideas about why critical pedagogy matters.

Critical pedagogy empowers children to be thinkers and theorists about their own lives and experiences. With Jacqui, children began challenging their own theories about the moral world. With Olivia, children thought and planned for the future of their community. With Tina, children theorised and problem-solved about how to support the quieter children among them to convey their views. With Nilma, children thought about possibilities to solve ocean pollution.

Critical pedagogy encourages empathy and understanding as children learn to explore perspectives other than their own. Jacqui encouraged empathy for the robbers – the bad guys. Tina supported advocated for empathy for quieter children, by asking more confident children to wait and to listen. Nilma’s work with bicultural narratives supported the development of cultural empathy, as children developed a sense of affinity with Māori ways of being. Olivia encouraged empathy for the dreams of peers.

Critical pedagogy supports children to become critically literate through a socially-just mindset, one where children are positioned as agents of change in their own right. The world becomes bigger for children when they learn to see the critical landscape – or at least, catch glimpses of it. Working with Olivia to write a letter to the Barbie company, gathering blankets and socks so the homeless get to be warm as well, reimagining the under-bridge area as beautiful and useful, figuring out how to support each other in groups, developing empathy for others – all of these actions do more than empower. They support children to read the world differently – to “read” it (Freire, 2005) through the lens of the critical landscape.

Lastly, critical pedagogy does something for teachers and whānau as well. Critical pedagogy supports these adults to see children as capable collaborators and agents of change. This is also a position supported by *Te Whariki*, which, in its open pages, describes children as “competent and confident”, “global citizens”, and “adaptive, creative, and resilient” (pp. 6-7).

Future research

Critical pedagogy is well theorised but under-researched when it comes to practitioner implementation in teaching spaces with children. There are few teaching and learning studies on critical pedagogy. This field remains wide open for research at all levels, not just in ECE. Regarding critical pedagogy, I argue that we need to theorise less and practice more.

The critical inquiry framework was grounded in the work of Freire, but also tailored to meet the needs of the kindergarten by foregrounding biculturalism (as opposed to class, as was done in Freire's work). This study also viewed critical pedagogy inquiry as a framework, situated within the place-based metaphor of the critical landscape. Connections were made between the elements of the critical inquiry framework and current approaches and practices used in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the framework is flexible and responsive, different contexts, with different needs to those of this kindergarten, may require the model to be adapted for that context.

This study demonstrates how wider application of critical pedagogy, using a conceptual framework approach, is possible. The critical inquiry framework is likely to have validity for some ECE contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly those similar contextual frames to those of the kindergarten in this study.

A larger scale study than this one, with multiple researchers, teachers and centres involved would enable a more detailed, comprehensive exploration of how critical pedagogy can be implemented in ECE. Cross-sector research would also be helpful in developing illustrative examples of how critical pedagogy practice develops as children grow older, gain more experience with life, and obtain new perspectives about the world they live in.

Recommendations for policy and practice

Given that *Te Whāriki* endorses critical theory, a change to the curriculum is not essential to validating critical pedagogy as a teaching and learning approach. However, policy change could be addressed at the micro level, by early childhood organisations as well as individual centres. Organisation and centre policies can encourage local

adoption of criticality, critical pedagogy and critical literacies, as socially just, contextually located, critical approaches.

At the macro policy level, resources to support professional development for teachers, and ongoing support for teachers and organisations to work through implementation of critical pedagogy would support wider adoption. Such measures would also be supported by government policy changes that sought for all ECE teachers to be qualified. Pay equity with the primary teaching sector, and employment conditions that allow teachers to meet together during work hours, would support the development of critical pedagogy, as well as support democratic, socially just employment conditions for ECE teachers. The development of a disposition of criticality, the honing of established teaching approaches for critical purposes, and the confidence to teach in a way that can be challenging and confronting – all these things are possible, but take time.

Funding for release time and mentoring programmes would show a true commitment to developing critically-aware global citizens from early childhood onward, rather than leaving such a weighty task for time-poor, under-resourced teachers to trial new ways of teaching unassisted.

Another macro policy issue, which is addressable at the national level, is the matter of teacher ratios and the time given to teachers for noncontact work. Policy changes that implement higher staffing ratios and allow for increased non-contact time, particularly where teachers can meet as teams during work hours, create opportunities for teachers to have important conversations about curriculum, learning, theories, and of course, criticality. Critical work must be meaningfully reflected on, discussed, challenged, and confronted by teachers before it is ever implemented with children. The teachers at this kindergarten were able to pursue this work because they had enough time to come together during work hours after children had left, to unpack their ideas, respond to literature, and consider curriculum together. Critical pedagogy is committed to democratic, humanising practices and to socially just outcomes. This should apply to teachers as much as to children.

In terms of practices, teachers do not necessarily need new teaching approaches – this kindergarten’s work has shown that existing practices can be re-tasked for critical purposes.

The development of networks, and of facilitators for those networks would support teachers working with this approach. Such networks could be virtual, but would provide a space for discussion, shared ideas and mentorship – a collaboration for the collective good.

Conclusion

This chapter claims that critical pedagogy is a practical, workable approach in ECE, albeit one that contains some barriers to entry. The findings of this chapter demonstrate the nuances of critical pedagogy classroom practice, as implemented through a critical inquiry framework. The topics used for critical inquiry can be wide ranging, and can be both teacher-initiated and child-initiated.

The thesis gathers together examples of observed practices used by the teachers in this study, which it is hoped might be illustrative for other ECE contexts and settings. These examples are used to form working theories about the critical landscape, and about critical pedagogy and its relationship with *Te Whāriki*. Such theories could be further tested for relevance in other settings, possibly even other countries (without the emphasis on *Te Whāriki*), and across a number of ECE providers. This chapter also discusses challenges and barriers to implementation, and makes a case for why critical pedagogy work is important to incorporate with young children.

In the introduction, I quoted Marta Navichoc Cotuc who stated, “the world is constructed of the acts of each one of us” (cited in Rogoff, 2011, p. 286). This study has yielded a profusion of “acts”. Teachers have enacted critical pedagogy, and children have taken critically informed action as they have thought, reasoned, compared and considered the perspectives revealed through traversing the critical landscape with the guidance of their teachers. Critical work was not solitary work for those in the kindergarten. It was infused with life, revealed through dialogue, and enlivened with playfulness, but always and continually, created as common practice. Through the acts – and the interaction – of the children and teachers, the possibilities that exist for critical pedagogy in an early childhood setting were revealed.

This study has established:

- that teachers can enact a critical pedagogy curriculum in an ECE setting with young children, in Aotearoa New Zealand, and
- that critical pedagogy *can* support the belonging and empowerment of young children.

This study validates the statement made by McLaren (2015a) who wrote of the need for a rigorous critical theory, one that would enable us to interpret, to understand, and to transform our everyday experiences. The critical inquiry framework, based on the work of Paulo Friere (1970.2018), has been that rigorous theory. The critical inquiry framework was specific enough to provide direction, but broad enough to embrace the uniqueness of each group, and each teacher, that worked with it. The resulting transformation of children and teachers' everyday experiences had impact, and made sense, because this transformation emerged naturally, even logically, from the inquiries that had proceeded them.

The work at the kindergarten remained true to Freire's key purpose for critical pedagogy: humanisation. The various critical pedagogy inquiries, the approaches used by teachers, the transformative acts undertaken, never lost sight of the people at the heart of the work. To revisit McLaren's (2015a) words one last time, "enough said" (p. 27).

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Appendix 1: General information sheet

Exploring belonging through an empowering curriculum: An exploration of critical pedagogy with young children from immigrant backgrounds

Background

Aotearoa New Zealand is an increasingly diverse society as families from immigrant backgrounds come to our country seeking to make a home here. An influx of families from immigrant backgrounds has meant a corresponding increase in children from these groups coming into Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education. This project focuses on young children in early childhood education (ECE), and explores the role that critical pedagogy can play in supporting children to develop a sense of belonging in this country, and in their respective early childhood settings.

Research Questions

1. How can critical pedagogy teaching and learning experiences support the belonging and empowerment of young children from immigrant backgrounds?
2. How can a close analysis of critical learning experiences assist pedagogy in early childhood settings?

What I plan to do:

Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten already demonstrates aspects of critical pedagogy practice, and I would like to document these practices by gathering the following information:

- Video of typical learning/play experiences at Pakuranga, to use as a baseline
- Video of both planned and spontaneous critical pedagogy learning/play experiences
- Where video data is identified as being a transformational moment, then parents/whānau and children involved in that data will be invited to view that video, in order to provide multiple perspectives for interpretation
- Audio, written and digital reflective work with members of the teaching team
- Documentation from the centre, including planning documentation, images of displays, and learning stories

Analysis:

The researcher will work with the teachers, children and their families to critical pedagogy learning experiences, with the aim of enhancing teaching practice and developing children's learning experiences.

Researcher and Teachers involved:

Raella Kahuroa, as the researcher/doctoral candidate, and the teaching team from Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten.

Contact Details: *Raella Kahuroa* (Researcher/PhD Candidate):

Supervisors:

Associate Professor Linda Mitchell

Professor Margaret Carr

Appendix 2: Participant teacher information sheet

Exploring belonging through an empowering curriculum: An exploration of critical pedagogy with young children from immigrant backgrounds

This letter follows our information discussions between ourselves, and also Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten, to collaborate with my doctoral study. This study compliments the TLRI study being undertaken in your kindergarten with immigrant families and a Marsden Fund study with refugee families. Linda Mitchell is the Principal Investigator for both these studies, and the Chief Supervisor for my PhD. The Marsden Fund is paying my scholarship for my doctoral study.

The aim of the research is to develop theories and practice strategies around critical pedagogy in early childhood settings, while also sustaining and contributing important cultural aspects from their home country.

The research project is being carried out from November 2018, for eight to twelve months. I am inviting you to participate as a teacher-researcher from Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten.

What your involvement would mean

If you agree to participate, we would collaboratively on the data generation and collection over the next eight to twelve months. Specifically, I would ask to:

- Work with you, regarding introductions to families, including new families throughout the year
- Work with you as I seek consent from families for their children to participate in the project
- Join your staff meeting 3-4 times during the year to provide professional development on critical pedagogy (1 hour x 4 occasions maximum over the year)
- Observe your teaching, with the aim of capturing critical pedagogy learning taking place with children (Time: as part of teaching practice)
- Reflecting on critical pedagogy learning with you (Time: as part of teaching practice)
- Review of phase 1 data and discussion (1 hour x 2 sessions over the 12 months)

The estimated time for the participant teacher's involvement is set out by each item. It totals 6 hours and ten minutes of time over a period of 12 months maximum, with the majority of the activities being part of typical teaching practice. It is my intention to minimise the impact of the research on your personal time. If any additional resources are required for this project, I will purchase these myself.

I am enclosing an information sheet and a consent form for you to participate in the project. I am happy to discuss any aspect of this. Please feel free to contact me regarding the project..

Ngā mihi,

Raella Kahuroa

Appendix 3: Participant teacher consent form

Exploring belonging through an empowering curriculum: An exploration of critical pedagogy with young children from immigrant backgrounds

I consent to being the participant teacher in Raella Kahuroa's doctoral research project. The project has been explained to me, and I understand that the activities involved will be to:

- Work with you, regarding introductions to families, including new families throughout the year
- Work with you as I seek consent from families for their children to participate in the project
- Join your staff meeting 3-4 times during the year to provide professional development on critical pedagogy (1 hour x 4 occasions maximum over the year)
- Observe your teaching, with the aim of capturing critical pedagogy learning taking place with children (Time: as part of teaching practice)
- Reflecting on critical pedagogy learning with you (Time: as part of teaching practice)
- Review of phase 1 data and discussion (1 hour x 2 sessions over the 12 months)

I understand that I have the ongoing right to withdraw from the research project at any time, in negotiation with the researcher. However, any data gathered and analysed for the doctoral project at that time will remain in the project.

I agree to take part in this project.

I agree/do not agree for my real name (first name only) to be used in any publication or presentation about the project (please cross out the one that does not apply).

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Doctoral Researcher: Raella Kahuroa, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato

Appendix 4: Parent information letter

Kia ora,

Exploring belonging through an empowering curriculum: An exploration of critical pedagogy with young children from immigrant backgrounds

My name is Raella Kahuroa, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Waikato. This letter is seek permission for your child and yourself to be involved in my doctoral research project, which will take place at Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten, where your child attends.

My doctoral project has a relationship to the current Teaching and Learning Research Initiative fund grant (TLRI) that Pakuranga Kindergarten is already involved in. I work in a research capacity on that project, which is how I came to know the Pakuranga team.

The big aim of my doctoral research is to develop theories and practice strategies on how a critical learning approach known as critical pedagogy can support a sense of belonging and empowerment for children from immigrant. The understandings and strategies developed with teaching team at Pakuranga will be used to further the research relating to cultural belonging, and to critical learning approaches in early years education.

I am an experienced early childhood teacher, and have previously completed my Masters Degree at the University of Waikato. My doctoral studies are being supervised by two very experienced and renowned researchers within the early childhood sector, Associate Professor Linda Mitchell, and Professor Margaret Carr. Linda Mitchell is the chief investigator for the TLRI project currently underway at Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten, while Margaret Carr is one of the writers of the original early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (1997).

This research project is being carried out for between 8-12 months, from November 2018. Because I want children to be able to come and go freely from activities, I am seeking consent for as many as children as possible to participate, however, this consent does not guarantee that your child will choose to get involved with the project.

What your involvement would mean

If you are happy for your child to participate, we would ask you to talk with your child to find out whether your child is willing to take part. I would like to gather the following data about your child:

1. Video recordings of your child, of events where your child is:
 - Participating in critical learning activities
 - Continuing play or activities in the wider kindergarten environment that seem to have been influenced by critical learning approaches
2. Copies of relevant excerpts from your child's portfolio (e.g., learning stories)
3. If relevant, a discussion with your child about some of the video collected during the activities that includes them. This discussion will be conducted by the researcher and recorded in some way, either video or audio depending on the

child's preference, and will be held at Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten during your child's session times. One of your child's regular teachers will be present while this discussion is held.

4. If relevant, a discussion with one or both of you, as parents/caregivers about selected portions of the video data collected. Other parents may also be involved in these data analysis sessions. While all data will be made available to you, only specific portions identified by the researcher as significant to the research topic will be presented back to parents for their analysis/interpretation. This analysis will help to provide multiple interpretations of the data. The time involved in this would be no more than one hour. Where this analysis is conducted with other parents, the data in this discussion will not be able to be withdrawn later by participants, due to its interactional nature.

We would also give you a copy of all video taken concerning your child, and advise of any excerpts copied from your child's portfolio. You are able to elect whether this research uses your child's first name, or whether you wish to nominate a pseudonym with him/her.

What happens next

I will hold an initial parent information evening at Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten close to the commencement of the research, which you are invited to attend. For all families joining the kindergarten after this time, I am happy to meet with you separately and answer your questions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss anything.

I look forward to talking with you.

Kind regards,

Raella Kahuroa

Doctorate Student

Appendix 5: Data collection consent form

Exploring belonging through an empowering curriculum: An exploration of critical pedagogy with young children from immigrant backgrounds

Permission from parents/whānau to gather examples of child's work, excerpts from portfolio, photographs, video recordings, including access to video data collected during the related TLRI project, and recordings (audio or video) of discussions held with each case study child.

As part of my doctoral research, Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten is working with me on a research project exploring roles that early childhood education (ECE) can play in strengthening belonging and empowerment for refugee and immigrant children in Aotearoa New Zealand through critically-informed teaching and learning.

During the course of the research project, assisted by the teachers at Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten, I may collect photographs, gather learning stories and other excerpts from children's portfolios, examples of children's work, and video recordings which show children and teachers interacting in the centre, and hold discussions with your child about their views and experiences, including their perception of the data. I would like your permission to use items collected about your child in my doctoral research.

Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten will not be named in this research, and a pseudonym can be used for your child.

CHILD'S FULL NAME:

(First name) (Last Name)

I give permission for:

Please <u>CIRCLE</u> Yes or No	To be collected and analysed for this project	To be used in presentations and articles	To be used in academic publications	Data from TLRI project is able to be used
Examples of my child's work	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Not applicable
Learning stories and excerpts from child's portfolio	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Not applicable
Photographs of my child	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Not applicable
Video recordings of my child	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Discussions with my child	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Not applicable

I understand that data collected during the data discussion meeting with other case study parents is not able to be withdrawn from the study, due to its interactive nature. Please initial: _____

Would you like your child's first name used in this study? YES / NO (please circle)

If no above, please indicate state the psuedonym (alternate name) your child can be known by in the research:

Would you like your first name to be used in this study? YES / NO (please circle)

If no above, please indicate state what psuedonym (alternate name) you would like to be known by in the research:

Parent/Caregiver's Full Name:

(Please print)

(First name)

(Last Name)

Signature:

Date:

Contact Details:

Doctoral Student

Raella Kahuroa

Doctoral Supervisors:

Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Chief Supervisor)

Professor Margaret Carr

Appendix 6: Cantonese translation of general information sheet and parent consent form

附录 4: 给家长的信息

您好,

通过有效的教学大纲增强归属感: 对移民家庭幼儿批判性教育法的探究

我是 Raella Kahuroa, 怀卡托大学的博士生。此信的目的是征求您的同意希望您和孩子能参加我的博士研究项目, 该项目将在您孩子就读的 Pakuranga 浸信会幼儿园进行。

我的博士项目与目前 Pakuranga 幼儿园已经参与的教学研究计划基金拨款 (TLRI) 有关。我参与了该项目的调查研究, 正因如此认识了 Pakuranga 的教学团队。

我的博士研究的一个重要目标是通过探讨一种称为批判性教育法的批判性学习方法如何能够帮助移民家庭的儿童建立归属感和提高学习能力, 从而得出相应的理论和实践策略。与 Pakuranga 教学团队的共同探讨以及制定的教学策略将继续用于推进有关文化归属感的研究, 以及关于幼教中批判性学习方法的研究。

我是一位经验丰富的幼儿教师, 已在怀卡托大学完成了硕士学位。我的博士研究由两位在幼教研究方面非常有经验的知名人士 Linda Mitchell 副教授和 Margaret Carr 教授指导下进行。Linda Mitchell 是 Pakuranga 浸信会幼儿园目前参与的 TLRI 项目的首席研究员, 而 Margaret Carr 则是原版幼教大纲 TeWhāriki (1997) 的作者之一。

本研究项目从 2019 年 4 月开始, 为期 8-12 个月。因为我希望在研究过程中孩子们能够自由地活动, 所以我希望得到尽可能多的家长同意孩子参加, 但是, 您的同意并不保证您的孩子一定会选择参与该研究项目。

您需要如何参与

如果您同意孩子参与, 我们希望您能与孩子交流, 看您的孩子是否也愿意参与。我希望能收集关于您孩子的以下资料:

1. 您孩子在以下活动中的录像:
 - 参与批判性学习活动
 - 在幼儿园其它环境中继续玩耍或参与活动, 而这些环境有可能受到批判性学习方法的影响
2. 您孩子档案中的相关摘录 (例如, 学习故事)
3. 如有需要, 与您的孩子讨论收集到的学习活动视频中他们参与的部分。这些讨论将由调查员安排进行, 并将根据孩子的选择通过录像或录音记录下来, 并将在您孩子在 Pakuranga 浸信会幼儿园上学时间内进行。在与您孩子讨论时, 一位平常教导您孩子的老师也将在场。

4. 如有需要，与作为孩子父母/看护人的一人或双方讨论收集到的视频中的选定部分。其他家长也可能参与这些数据分析会议。虽然您可随时查阅所有数据，但只有研究员确定的对研究主题具有重要意义的特定部分才会回播给家长进行分析/解读。此分析将有助于提供对数据的多种解读。分析会议的时间不会超过一小时。如果分析会议有其他家长参与，由于数据的相互牵制影响，本次分析讨论中的数据将无法被参与者随后撤回。

我们还会为您提供有关您孩子的所有视频的副本，并提供从您孩子的档案中复制的任何摘录的建议。您可以选择在此研究中使用您孩子的真实名字，或者您与孩子一起选择一个假名。

接下来

我将在接近研究开始前在 Pakuranga 浸信会幼儿园举行初步的家长信息晚会，并会邀请您参加。对于所有在此之后加入幼儿园的家庭，我非常愿意与您单独会面并回答您的问题。

欢迎您有问题随时与我联系

我非常期待与您会面。

此致

Raella Kahuroa

博士生

附录 5: 数据收集同意书

通过有效的教学大纲增强归属感: 对移民家庭幼儿批判性教育法的探究

父母/家庭同意收集孩子的作品样本, 档案摘录, 照片, 视频录像, 包括读取相关 TLRI 项目期间收集的视频数据, 以及与每个案例研究儿童进行讨论的录音 (音频或视频)。

作为我博士研究的一部分, Pakuranga 浸信会幼儿园正在与我合作开展一项研究项目, 探索幼儿教育 (ECE) 通过批判性教育和学习, 在为新西兰的难民和移民家庭儿童增强归属感和提高学习能力中所能发挥的作用。

项目研究过程中, 在 Pakuranga 浸信会幼儿园的老师的协助下, 我将从儿童档案中收集照片、学习故事和其他摘录、儿童作品样本, 以及展示儿童和教师在幼儿园互动的录像, 并与您的孩子讨论他们的观点和体验, 包括他们对所收集数据的看法。我希望您允许我在博士研究中使用所收集到的关于您孩子的资料。Pakuranga 浸信会幼儿园的名称将不会在本研究中被提及, 并且您的孩子还可以使用假名。

儿童全名: _____

(名)

(姓)

我同意:

请划圈 是 或 否	收集并在本研 究中分析	在报告与文章中 使用	在学术出版物 中使用	TLRI 项目 中收集的数 据使用
孩子的作品 样本	是 / 否	是 / 否	是 / 否	不适用
孩子的学习 故事、档案 摘录	是 / 否	是 / 否	是 / 否	不适用
孩子的照片	是 / 否	是 / 否	是 / 否	不适用
孩子的录像	是 / 否	是 / 否	是 / 否	是 / 否
与孩子的讨论	是 / 否	是 / 否	是 / 否	不适用

我明白, 由于数据的相互牵制影响, 在与其他案例研究家长的数据讨论会议期间收集的数据无法从研究中撤回。请签名:

您是否希望在本次研究中使用您孩子的真名? 是 / 否 (请划圈)

如上述回答为否, 请列出您孩子在本次研究中使用的假名 (别名):

您是否希望在本次研究中使用您的真名? 是 / 否 (请划圈)

如上述回答为否, 请列出您在本次研究中使用的假名(别名):

父母/看护人全名: _____

(请填写) (名) (姓)

签名: _____ 日期: _____

联系方式:

博士生

Raelia Kahuroa

Appendix 7: Data release form

Data release form

I understand that this video data is provided for the enjoyment, and records, of my family and child. Due to the presence of other people's children in the video data, and the ethical restrictions this data was collected under, this video is unable to be put on social media platforms of any kind, or shared digitally with others.

This restriction is made to ensure that the images of children, their names, and their conversations, are respected and remain private. This confidentiality also ensures the safety of the children involved in the research. If you have any questions about this, please contact me directly.

Date:

Name:

Signature:

If you would like me to contact you when my thesis is submitted, so that you can read it online, please write your email address here: